

The Green Economy Initiative Green Economy Initiative Launch

The UNEP-led Green Economy Initiative was launched in October 2008 to assist



governments and other decision-makers in shaping and focusing policies, investments, and public spending towards low-carbon and environmentally-friendly sectors, such as clean technologies, renewable energies, green buildings and construction and sustainable transport. The overall objective of this initiative is to make the case to significantly increase investment in the environment as a means of promoting sustainable economic growth, decent job creation and poverty reduction, while at the same time reducing greenhouse gas emissions, extracting and using fewer natural resources and creating less waste. A key output is the Green Economy Report, which was launched at the UNEP Governing Council in February 2011. This Report explains core principles and concepts for the transition to a green economy, covering eleven sectors such as transport, buildings, industry and water. One chapter of the report also focuses on cities. It positions them as the platform for delivering environmental sustainability and economic growth. Other activities of the Green Economy Initiative include the provision of advisory services on ways to move towards a green economy in specific countries.

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Cities as Leaders Towards a Green Economy



On 21 February, UNEP launched the "Towards a Green Economy: Synthesis Report for Policymakers". The following article extracts the key aspects from the Report chapter on 'Green Cities'.

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Bus Rapid Transit-a Contribution to Green Economic Growth Lessons from Latin American cities Green Building Councils



Rapid urbanization and economic activities in Latin American cities since the 1970s have led to an increase in mobility and growing demand for transportation. The lack of efficient, reliable and safe public transport systems in this region has promoted the transition from buses and trains towards private cars: From 1970 to 1990, the Latin American car fleet increased by approximately 250 percent, reaching 37 million vehicles

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Greenhouse Gas Emissions Monitoring in Negombo, Sri Lanka



Negombo in Sri Lanka, a city of less than 100,000 inhabitants, joined the UN-Habitat Cities and Climate Change Initiative early 2010. In partnership with a local university, the city developed a baseline study of its emissions.

The Negombo work has broader implications for the work of UNEP and UN-Habitat. Via a Joint Work Programme with the World Bank, the three agencies developed an *International Framework for Reporting Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Cities*, released in March 2010.

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Transitioning to the Green Economy in South African Cities



The sustainability challenge in developing countries demands new approaches to city growth that advance both social and ecological interests. South Africa is burdened with one of the highest levels of inequality in the world, and the challenges of uplifting those disadvantaged by apartheid are complicated by environmental issues which no longer allow for 'clean up later' approaches.

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City Development Strategies Can Play a Key Role in Supporting Green Urban Development



City Development Strategies (CDS) help cities integrate strategic development approaches and long-term perspectives into their urban planning. The Cities Alliance promotes this kind of action-oriented process as a way to promote inclusive urban

growth and improve the quality of life of all urban dwellers. In the context of green growth, a CDS can also fully support the transition to a green urban economy through its various project phases.

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Recent Events

COP10 in Nagoya and the City Biodiversity Summit



During the International Year of Biodiversity, the Tenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) took place in Nagoya, Japan, from 17-30 October 2010. Noting the lack of global progress made toward meeting the CBD target of reducing the loss of biodiversity, the Nagoya Protocol was adopted and – particularly important to cities – the *Plan of Action on Subnational Governments, Cities and Other Local Authorities for Biodiversity (2011-2020)*. This Plan provides the opportunity for cities and local authorities to

support national governments in implementing CBD objectives.

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COP16 in Cancún Recognizes Need to Engage Local Authorities



The UN Climate Change Conference COP16 concluded in December 2010 in Cancún, Mexico, with the adoption of a "balanced" package of decisions that set all governments more firmly on the path towards a low-emissions future and support enhanced action on climate change in the developing world.

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New Publications

The Green Economy Report



The Report explains the core principles and concepts underlying a green economy and makes the case for the more sustainable use of natural, human and economic capital. It uses economic analyses and modeling approaches to demonstrate that investment in greening the economy across a range of sectors can drive economic recovery and lead to future prosperity and job creation, while at the same time addressing social and environmental challenges. The Green Economy Report consists of a Synthesis Report and individual sectoral reports. One of these 'green sectors' reports is designated to green cities.

[» Click here to download the report](#)

GREEN Economy - Developing Countries Success Stories



The economic analysis in the Green Economy Report builds in part on the encouraging signs and results of many initiatives around the world. A number of these come from developing countries and illustrate a positive benefit stream from specific green investments and policies. If scaled up and integrated into a comprehensive strategy, these green policies could offer an alternative development pathway, one that is pro-growth, pro-jobs and pro-poor. This report illustrates eight green case studies, including examples from cities.

» [Click here to download the report](#)

30 WAYS IN 30 DAYS - UNEP:

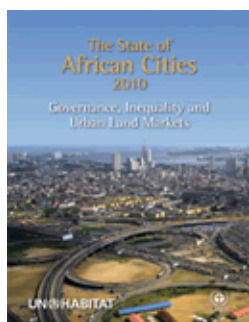
inspiring action towards a low carbon, climate resilient future



UNEP's 30 Ways in 30 Days show that across the world, in myriad ways, from community based programmes to entrepreneurial endeavours, solutions are available to move countries, communities and businesses towards low emission climate resilient growth.

» [Click here to download the report](#)

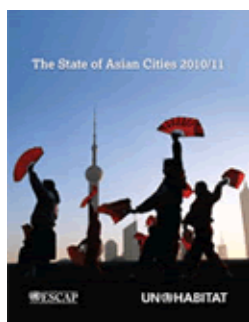
The State of African Cities 2010



With the subtitle Governance, Inequity and Urban Land Markets, The State of African Cities 2010 uncovers critical urban issues and challenges in African cities, using social and urban geography as the overall entry points. While examining poverty, slum incidence and governance, the report sheds more light on inequity in African cities, and in this respect follows the main theme of the global State of the World's Cities 2010 report. Through a regional analysis, the report delves deeper into the main urban challenges facing African cities, while provoking dialogue and discussion on the role of African cities in improving national, regional and local economies through sustainable and equitable development.

» [Click here to access the report](#)

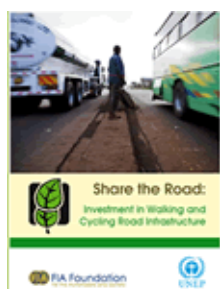
UN-HABITAT State of Asian Cities 2010/11



This first-ever State of Asian Cities Report 2010/11 is a result of the collaborative effort between UN-HABITAT and its three partners, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), UN Environment Programme (UNEP), and the United Cities and Local Governments – Asia-Pacific Regional Section (UCLG-ASPAC).

» [Click here to access the report](#)

Share the Road: Investment in Walking and Cycling Road Infrastructure



This report makes the argument that investments in non-motorized transport are a triple win opportunity in the areas of environment, safety and accessibility. It analyses past and current investment trends and the costs involved in road infrastructure. Finally, recommendations for action are made targeting various stakeholder groups.

» [Click here to download the report](#)

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Upcoming Events

UN-Habitat Expert Group Meeting: What Does the Green Economy Mean for Sustainable Urban Development?

17 to 19 February 2011 in Nairobi, Kenya

UNEP Governing Council

21 to 25 February 2011 in Nairobi, Kenya

Chatham House The Future of Cities 2011. Centers of innovation for urban solutions

28 February to 1 March 2011 in London, UK

CSD-19, 4th Implementation Cycle: Policy Session

2 to 13 May 2011 in New York, USA

ICLEI Local Climate Solutions for Africa

27 February to 3 March 2011 in Durban, South Africa

UN-HABITAT Governing Council

11 to 15 April 2011 in Nairobi, Kenya

UNEP –Sustainable Building and Climate Initiative (SBCI) Annual General Meeting

23-24 May 2011 in Leverkusen, Germany

ICLEI Resilient Cities Congress 2011

3 to 5 June 2011 in Bonn, Germany

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Full Articles

Cities as Leaders Towards a Green Economy



Cities *per se* are neither drivers of climate change nor the source of ecosystem degradation. Instead, this role is played by certain consumption and production patterns as well as certain population groups within cities. The environmental performance of cities is dependent on a combination of effective green strategies and physical structure – urban form, size, density and configuration. In many cases, urbanization can be characterized by urban sprawl and growing peripheralization, leading to social divide and increasing demand for land, energy and resources. Alternatively, cities can be designed, planned and managed to limit resource consumption and carbon emissions. More compact urban forms, reduced travel distances and investment in green transport modes lead to greater energy efficiency. Lower surface-to-volume ratios of denser building typologies can result in lower heating and cooling loads. Greater utilization of energy efficient utilities can contribute to lower embedded

energy demand for urban infrastructure. Thus, unique opportunities and benefits exist for cities to lead the greening of the global economy:

Agglomeration Economies and Lower Infrastructure Costs

Cities bring people and things closer together, help overcome information gaps, and enable idea flows. These 'agglomeration economies' translate into productivity gains for firms, and higher wages and employment rates for workers. Agglomeration economies exist in both developed and developing countries, although urbanization in developing country cities may not provide the same kind of economic gains across cities and firms. The main reason for this is that very rapid – and sometimes chaotic – urbanization can outstrip national and city governments' ability to provide adequate infrastructure and services. For instance, congestion could negate the benefits of higher density as in cities like Buenos Aires, Mexico City, and Dakar where the costs of congestion are 3.4, 2.6 and 3.4 per cent of GDP, respectively.

But densification also reduces the capital and operating costs of infrastructure. Evidence suggests that linear infrastructure including streets, railways, water and sewage systems as well as other utilities come at a considerably lower per-unit cost the higher the density of the urban settlement they are servicing. The most significant cost savings derive from a shift away from car infrastructure towards public transport, walking and cycling. Bus rapid transit (BRT) can offer significant cost savings even compared to traditional metro and regional rail at similar capacity levels (see article on Bus Rapid Transits below). In addition, the operation of public transport creates jobs. In Mumbai approximately 164,000 people are employed in public transport sector operations. In Johannesburg this figure is more than 22,000 persons. To green the local economy, additional employment opportunities will be created through labor-intensive installation and service activities when shifting from conventional to renewable energy. The opportunities from waste and recycling activities are similarly labor-intensive.

Social Equity

Beyond reducing carbon emissions, enhancing public transport use can also reduce inequality in access to public services and other amenities. Retrofitting older buildings in lower-income neighborhoods can improve energy efficiency and resilience, reducing the vulnerability of poorer communities when energy prices rise.

Environmental and Health Benefits

Air pollution in cities remains a major public health burden, particularly in the developing world. In extreme cases such as Dakar, pollution-related health costs are above 5 per cent of GDP while a range between 2 and 3 per cent is observable for several mega cities in Latin America and Asia. In urban areas globally, around 800,000 deaths per year are caused by air pollution. Many cities have already taken decisive action and significantly improved the situation. For some, urban greenery and vegetation are improving air quality. They represent a range of 'ecosystem services' with significant wider welfare effects. A study of Toronto's Green Belt estimated the value of its ecosystem services at CA\$2.6 billion annually, an average of around CA\$3,500 per hectare. Ecosystem services play a further, critical role in risk reduction. By restoring urban ecosystems the impact of extreme weather conditions can be reduced. Coastal regions in particular can benefit both in terms of lives and money. Mangrove replanting in Vietnam, for example, costs only US\$1.1 million while saving US\$7.3 million annually on dyke maintenance.

Successful Green Cities Need a Coalition of Actors and Effective Multi-level Governance

Greening cities has a cost and cannot be realized overnight nor exclusively by classic 'top-down' or 'bottom-up' approaches. There are tradeoffs and switching costs, creating both winners and losers. For one, consumer preferences are not always green. Additionally, cities may face financial, structural and technological constraints. Moreover, fragmented governance may lead to perverse outcomes of policy, if action is not carefully joined up between different spatial levels. The "rebound effect", where energy-saving innovations actually raise total energy consumption, illustrates how many of these issues come together. These factors suggest it is critical to look at both national and urban policy levers, and at the conditions that will enable cities in different parts of the world to make the transition to green economy models.

In practice, green cities will require a coalition of actors from the national, state and local levels, from civil society and its multiple subdivisions, from the private sector and from institutions including universities, not-for-profit foundations and other interest groups which share a commitment to advance the green economy in cities. The coalition members should be committed to advancing the green economy and its urban prerequisites, placing it centrally within the top strategic priorities for the city. Numerous instruments for enabling green cities are available and tested but need to be applied in a tailored, context-specific way. In contexts with strong local governments it is possible to envisage a range of planning, regulatory, information and financing instruments that can advance green infrastructure investments, green economic development and a multi-track approach to greater urban sustainability. City governments need to coordinate policies and decisions with other levels of government. More importantly, they need to be equipped with strategic and integrated planning capacities, including the capacities to choose regulatory tools and economic incentives that achieve locally appropriate green city objectives.

In poorer cities the building up of such capacities is important, as is their access to financial resources for investing in the various sectors of the green city. Here it may be prudent to adopt a more pragmatic and minimalist approach which primarily commits municipal sectors such as water, waste, energy and transport to a limited number of overarching strategic goals. These are the major areas where support from national governments and international organizations is needed.

The *Green Economy Report* makes the case that cities are an important vehicle for transitioning towards a green economy. Many successful examples are outlined in the report. It is now up to cities to share their experiences and best practices on realizing green growth. National governments and international organizations can facilitate this by developing approaches and providing guidance to support cities in this endeavor.

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Bus Rapid Transit – a Contribution to Green Economic Growth

Lessons from Latin American cities



Rapid urbanization and economic activities in Latin American cities since the 1970s have led to an increase in mobility and growing demand for transportation. The lack of efficient, reliable and safe public transport systems in this region has promoted the transition from buses and trains towards private cars: From 1970 to 1990, the Latin American car fleet increased by approximately 250 percent, reaching 37 million vehicles. Many of these were imported, used cars that emit more pollutants than new cars, hence causing a heavy strain on the local and global environment. As a result, the transport sector is one of the most rapidly increasing sources of greenhouse gases (GHG), and in some Latin American countries it accounts for nearly one third of all

such emissions.

Recognising the negative implications of a steadily increasing car fleet, policy makers reformulated transport policies with the aim of providing safe, cost-effective and environmental-friendly public transport systems. Bus rapid transit (BRT) became the answer in a number of Latin American cities. Curitiba in Brazil was the first city in the world to introduce a BRT system in 1973. Bogota in Colombia followed in 2000. Besides being cost-effective, a well planned BRT system has multiple co-benefits ranging from reduced traffic congestion, fuel consumption and operational costs to improved air quality, fewer health impacts and more jobs. These two examples have served as a source of inspiration for other cities in Latin America, Asia, Europe and the USA.

Planning and mobilizing investments for sustainable transport development should focus on delivering structural changes to transport networks that yield significant long-term benefits and positive impacts. UNEP's Transport Programme and the Green Economy Initiative aim to advise policy makers on enhancing their capacities and integrating environmental, economic and social considerations into transport planning processes. UNEP has worked in Guatemala City, Concepcion and Cartagena on promoting public transport systems.

The experiences from these cities are available in [Guidelines on Bus Rapid Transit, Bus Regulation and Planning and Non-motorized Transport Systems](#)

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Greenhouse Gas Emissions Monitoring in Negombo, Sri Lanka



Negombo in Sri Lanka, a city of less than 100,000 inhabitants, joined the UN-Habitat Cities and Climate Change Initiative early 2010. In partnership with a local university, the city developed a baseline study of its emissions.

The Negombo work has broader implications for the work of UNEP and UN-Habitat. Via a Joint Work Programme with the World Bank, the three agencies developed an *International Framework for Reporting Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Cities*, released in March 2010. It offers guidelines for measuring cities' GHG. This Reporting Framework will help cities to better understand the sources of their emissions, and policy-makers to better target their strategies. Furthermore, consistent use of the Reporting Framework will support benchmarking by cities – a useful tool for strategic management.

The Sri Lanka study shows that even small cities can produce useful and detailed emissions

inventories based on this simplified reporting template. In addition, it raised the issue how - if at all - the Reporting Framework should reflect emissions related to air travel to and from an airport heavily used by city residents but located outside of the urban boundary. For a mega-city, such differences in measurement resulting from definitions of what to include in and exclude from the study may be negligible. But these definitional differences can affect results by orders of magnitude when it comes to a small city such as Negombo with an international airport located only several kilometers away.

Another interesting, yet typical, aspect of the assessment in Negombo is the role of fisheries and agriculture in GHG emissions, given the relatively high number of people employed in these two sectors. Again, where to draw the boundaries needs further exploration. UN-Habitat has therefore embarked to broaden the study to more comprehensively measure "out-of-boundary" GHG emissions in order to get a sense of their importance. By drawing lessons such as these from on-the-ground experiences, UN-Habitat is helping to strengthen the normative products that and UNEP and UN-Habitat are jointly developing.

More information:

[>> International Framework for Reporting Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Cities](#)

[>> UN-Habitat Cities and Climate Change Initiative](#)

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Transitioning to the Green Economy in South African Cities



The sustainability challenge in developing countries demands new approaches to city growth that advance both social and ecological interests. South Africa is burdened with one of the highest levels of inequality in the world, and the challenges of uplifting those disadvantaged by apartheid are complicated by environmental issues which no longer allow for 'clean up later' approaches.

The vulnerability of cities to fluctuating natural resource supplies has become increasingly apparent through water shortages, power cuts and rising costs of fuel, electricity and food. Whilst focusing on extending beneficial services to the poor, South Africa's cities are starting to re-look the way in which these services are provided so that they might improve their resilience in the face of future uncertainties. Recent years have seen the roll-out of public transport systems and domestic solar water heaters to poor households to improve energy efficiency. A number of wind and solar energy projects are planned to reduce reliance on the coal- and nuclear-powered grid. Durban and Cape Town have implemented recycling collection services in certain suburbs to reduce landfill waste, and are re-selling partially treated effluent to neighboring industries to save on potable water.

These and other cases demonstrate that local governments in developing countries can achieve their mandates in an environmentally responsible manner. Instead of limiting conceptions of environmental custodianship to the preservation of green spaces, green buildings and pollution management, innovative approaches to infrastructural services can fundamentally change the relationships between city dwellers and the environment upon which they depend. By incorporating sustainability principles into the way cities function, environmental concerns need no longer be seen as an additional burden, but rather an opportunity for innovation that achieves ecological, social and economic goals.

More information:

[>> The Sustainability Institute](#)

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City Development Strategies Can Play a Key Role in Supporting Green Urban Development



City Development Strategies (CDS) help cities integrate strategic development approaches and long-term perspectives into their urban planning. The Cities Alliance promotes this kind of action-oriented process as a way to

promote inclusive urban growth and improve the quality of life of all urban dwellers. In the context of green growth, a CDS can also fully support the transition to a green urban economy through its various project phases. Because it is inherently participatory, CDS can also serve as a platform for identifying the environmental problems that citizens and communities have experienced over time. It also serves as a channel to identify local solutions that are embedded in communities' understanding of their own environmental challenges. More importantly, the CDS process is a mechanism for discussing these challenges and prioritizing them according to long-term objectives; objectives that can be aligned with communities' needs and aspirations. Because it encourages inter-institutional dialogue and joint decision-making, a CDS can help actors leverage their knowledge and experience to better prioritize environmental concerns.

Today, environmental concerns are high on the urban agenda. The challenge that lies ahead for urban actors is to better link the 'sustainability dimensions' (ecological, economic and social) and integrate them consistently into their decisions. Equally important remains the need for the general public to recognize that the creation of more livable and socially inclusive cities does not hamper the generation of economic opportunities. As the Cities Alliance experience shows, a CDS process can lead to a better understanding of the linkages between these dimensions while becoming a city-owned instrument for promoting green strategies.

More information:

[>> Cities Alliance](#)

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COP10 in Nagoya and the City Biodiversity Summit



During the International Year of Biodiversity, the Tenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) took place in Nagoya, Japan, from 17-30 October 2010. Noting the lack of global progress made toward meeting the CBD target of reducing the loss of biodiversity, the Nagoya Protocol was adopted and – particularly important to cities – the *Plan of Action on Subnational Governments, Cities and Other Local Authorities for Biodiversity (2011-2020)*. This Plan provides the opportunity for cities and local authorities to support national

governments in implementing CBD objectives.

In parallel to COP10, the City Biodiversity Summit discussed key issues such as biodiversity's benefit to cities, governance that supports urban biodiversity and tools to improve urban biodiversity, such as the City Biodiversity Index and 'green corridor' model. It was concluded that for cities to help reverse the loss of biodiversity, poverty alleviation must be addressed, local authorities need more open sources of revenue and inter-city cooperation networks must be strengthened. The Summit ended with the announcement of the Nagoya Declaration on Local Authorities and Biodiversity which outlines the benefit of biodiversity to cities, the willingness of cities to help reduce its loss and a commitment to and support for the implementation of the COP10 Plan of Action.

More information:

[>> Plan of Action on Subnational Governments, Cities and Other Local Authorities for Biodiversity](#)

[>> Advancing the Biodiversity Agenda](#)

[>> City Biodiversity Summit 2010](#)

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COP16 in Cancún Recognizes Need to Engage Local Authorities



The UN Climate Change Conference COP16 concluded in December 2010 in Cancún, Mexico, with the adoption of a "balanced" package of decisions that set all governments more firmly on the path towards a low-emissions future and support enhanced action on climate change in the developing world.

From the city perspective, the agreements are an important step forward as they recognize the need to engage sub-national and local authorities for effective action on all aspects of climate change. The local/subnational level is specifically mentioned with regard to adaptation planning, disaster risk reduction, financing of plans as well as knowledge sharing. Meanwhile, the proposed new CDM procedures include "city-wide programme of action" as a possible new methodology, allowing cities to combine various sectors when applying for CDM funding.

Amongst several side events focusing on urban environment issues, the United Nations System side event on "Cities and Climate Change: Enhancing Mitigation and Adaptation Action" was coordinated by UN-HABITAT, with inputs from ten UN System agencies, including UNEP, UNDP, ISDR, and World Bank. The event highlighted the variety of approaches and tools the United Nations system is using to support cities to act on mitigation and adaptation.

More information:

[>> UNFCCC COP16](#)

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