

Resilient Cities 2011

Congress results in brief

Resilient Cities 2011, the second world congress on cities and adaptation to climate change in June 2011, Bonn, Germany, brought again a broad diversity of actors together. Cities, local governments, public institutions, researchers, NGOs, business and many others took stock and continued their dialogues on sustainable and resilient urban development. The debate on the meaning of and interaction between climate adaptation, risk reduction, and broader resilience has intensified. This briefing sheet provides a quick overview on the congress proceedings.

Setting the scene: The Resilient Cities congress series

Greater threats. In 2010 natural catastrophes and man-made disasters claimed nearly 300,000 victims and USD 218 billion in economic losses. Most of these losses were caused by earthquakes, but more and more are related to climate. International climate negotiations barely move forward. At the current rate global warming will exceed the 2 degrees Celsius threshold – the level to avoid catastrophic climate change. As cities grow they concentrate more and more people and assets, and are exposed to greater loss and damage.

Resilient Cities congress. Since the launch of the Resilient Cities congress series in May 2010, the debate on the meaning of and interaction between climate adaptation, risk reduction, and broader resilience has intensified. More and more attention is being paid to the local level. Questions of financing have become a more pressing priority, and the actions of cities are progressing. Their initial experiences are also receiving greater attention and being shared more widely. The Mexico City Pact, reporting tools like the carbonn Cities Climate Registry, or the UNISDR Making Cities Resilient Campaign are testimonials.

Adaptation survey. The MIT-ICLEI climate adaptation survey shows that a great number of cities and local governments can report progress. Cities are acting to protect their residents and property from disasters, extreme events, meeting local development goals, as well as boosting their reputation and showing global leadership.

Congress make up of Resilient Cities 2011

Participation. While winds and rain lashed at windows and doors with increasing fury, many local actions were brought to the attention of the over 540 participants from 66 countries at Resilient Cities 2011, the second world congress on cities and adaptation to climate change in Bonn, Germany.

Patronage. Under the patronage of Joan Clos, Under Secretary General and Executive Director of UN-HABITAT, and Helen Clark, Administrator of UNDP, over 300 panelists and speakers including 55 local government representatives, exchanged on cities' experiences, achievements, and good practices.

Exchange. Cities, local governments, public institutions, researchers, NGOs, business and many others took stock and continued their dialogues on sustainable and resilient urban development. Through plenaries, strategic dialogues,

Resilience

"Resilience is the capacity and ability of a community to withstand stress, survive, adapt, bounce back from a crisis or disaster and rapidly move on. Resilience needs to be understood as the societal benefit of collective efforts to build collective capacity and the ability to withstand stress."

Source: ICLEI, 2011.

Resilient Cities events

Resilient Cities annual global forum on cities and adaptation to climate change in Bonn, Germany, is held back-to-back with the UNFCCC Bonn talks.

Past and future

Resilient Cities congresses:

- 28-30 May, 2010
- 3-5 June, 2011
- 12-15 May, 2012
- 31 May-2 June, 2013





'Cities in Focus' at Resilient Cities 2011: an opportunity to present and know more about local cases

workshops and theme sessions, the adaptation and disaster risk reduction communities could showcase their progress and exchange their experiences.

Themes. The congress builds on key thematic challenges identified at Resilient Cities 2010. The focus of the conference was widened to include more issues related to resilience. Water, energy and food security, the role of renewables and ecosystem services, as well as vulnerable communities and urban poor were considered crucial elements to be featured as part of resilience.

A specific and expanded finance theme and focus on multi-level governance were featured in Resilient Cities 2011 next to the other key themes of assessment, planning, and implementation.

Key message: Resilience is more than adaptation

Cities are taking action worldwide. **6 key themes** were discussed at Resilient Cities 2011:

1. **Resilience.** Resilience building is more than successful climate adaptation. Resilience building needs to integrate into urban development: technical definitions of goals and targets, assessments, infrastructure and investment planning etc. An integrated urban framework takes into account water, energy, and food security, greenhouse gas reductions and ecosystem protection, among others.
2. **Assessments.** To withstand stress, a community and its citizens need to understand where, why and how they are vulnerable to what. Ongoing risk assessments, including the knowledge of citizens and cost-benefit analyses of action options, need to inform local decision making. New data and knowledge need to be integrated as they become available.
3. **Planning.** Planning must take place and account for future urban development and the changing climate. Resilience makes use of smarter infrastructure, investment and land-use planning. Specific adaptation plans need to be mainstreamed into ongoing planning, infrastructure development and budgeting processes and not be stand-alone processes.
4. **Implementation.** While more and focused action on adaptation and resilience building is needed, many ongoing city activities do already contribute to resilience. However, these also need to be reviewed to ensure they are not counterproductive. Resilience requires greater and smarter interweavement of projects and programs into urban development.
5. **Finance.** Financial decisions and investments need to take resilience into account. Funding and investment from all actors and levels need to be mobilized to build effective resilience. Local governments have a key role in setting priorities and their governance. The international adaptation finance effort should focus on building the local capacity to formulate, implement and fund local resilience strategies. They need to be catalytic,

Resilience as place-based performance

"Resilience needs to be based upon place-based performance. Urban areas are built to provide economic utility and advantages and quality services and community life. They are built to perform. As part of a place-based system a more optimized functioning together of the components is possible. By benefiting the performance of the area, efficiency opportunities as well as increased value arise for the whole area or systems and not just of single buildings or infrastructure."

Source: ICLEI, 2011, **Financing the Resilient City: A demand driven approach to development, disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation**, ICLEI Global Report.

but simple. Further details in ICLEI (2011) Financing the Resilient City report.

- 6. Governance.** Greater horizontal and vertical coordination of efforts is needed to provide an enabling framework for local action. All, sub-national, national and international, levels can support better urban development by aligning administrative and financial resources with the local level. International cooperation and exchange of cities are extremely important as many local governments need to take up new and unknown challenges.

The Reality Check Workshops

The format. The Reality Check Workshop format allows an in-depth analysis of a city by examining the challenges and measures taken by a city attempting to adapt to climate change. Through presentations, questions and answers, and group discussions select cities could exchange, and receive comment, feedback and suggestions from the community.

The case London. London showcased its adaptation strategy, which has been developing over the last decade. It has undergone a wide consultation process with mayoral support. London's main climate impacts include flooding, overheating, and water resource shortages. River and water surface flooding is more likely, as nearly 15 per cent of London lies on the former flood plains of London's rivers, but are more difficult to predict and manage. For example a one-in-a-200 year rain event could put 680,000 properties at risk from surface flooding.

The Thames tidal defenses have been constructed to protect against tidal surges. It is made up by an integrated system of Thames Barrier, 185 miles of floodwalls, 35 major gates and over 400 minor gates. Although there is a very low probability of a catastrophic tidal flood in London, the loss, costs and damages would be colossal.

It underlines that as a first step a deep understanding of the risks is needed for a long term development period that includes sound climate projections. A flood baseline that identifies particularly sensitive/vulnerable infrastructures is key to priorities critical structures. Doing so London has identified that 29 per cent of low-lying underground stations in the British capital are vulnerable to floods.

The case Semarang. Semarang in Indonesia has in recent years shown great leadership in assessing impacts and vulnerabilities. Climate data has been downscaled with various scenarios to inform vulnerability assessments of activities and infrastructures. These then further informed important planning initiatives such as water retentions, dams, sea embankments. Semarang has drawn upon the Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network (ACCCRN) methodology and developed a number of plans. These have informed a city resilience strategy and a mid-term plan.

Key issues. But the urban fabric and pace of change greatly vary among cities. Rapid and unchecked urban expansion are in many developing countries a key challenge. The prevalence of informal or haphazard planned

Leadership for adaptation: Mayors Adaptation Forum

Convened by the World Mayors Council on Climate Change, the Mayors Adaptation Forum 2011 formed the Mayors' segment of the Resilient Cities 2011 congress.

Over 30 city leaders shared experiences, knowledge, and challenges with, among others, Andrew Steer, World Bank, Christiana Figueres, UNFCCC, Joan Clos, UN-HABITAT, Michel Liès, Swiss Re and Helena Molin Valdes, UNISDR.

Mayors have agreed on the 2011 Bonn Declaration of Mayors – a blueprint for climate adaptation in cities worldwide.

Among other commitments, Mayors renewed their political commitment to the Global Cities Covenant on Climate, also known as the Mexico City Pact. New signatories were added. The Covenant was praised by the global leaders present.

www.iclei.org/wmccc



A "community atmosphere" at Resilient Cities 2011



The Mayor of Bonn calling on world local leaders to act on climate change.

settlements another. They can make the proper functioning of key infrastructures and activities difficult. Where household and other wastes end up in drains, water is not only contaminated but cannot run-off. These challenges **Lagos** and **Ho Chi Minh City** illustrated and showcased some ways of responding.

Common challenges, unique circumstances

Cities face similar challenges – floods, droughts, coastal erosion, landslides – but each urban area has its own unique set of local circumstances: pace and scale of growth, geo-environmental conditions, maturity of urban structures, etc.. A global strategy aimed at scaling up bottom up approaches needs to respond to this context and provide a clear mechanism which addresses specific local conditions.

Resilient Cities 2011 full congress report now available at www.iclei.org/bonn2011

Urban resilience for sustainable urban development. On the path towards urban sustainability, current and future risks have to be accounted for in the trajectory of local development. Building urban resilience also necessitate alleviating urban poverty, as it is the urban poor who are typically living in the most vulnerable conditions. Spanning over economic, social, and environmental dimensions, urban resilience contributes to sustainable urban development.

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Sources and further reading

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- ICLEI, 2011, Briefing Sheet: Towards urban resilience
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- UNISDR Making Cities Resilient Campaign, www.unisdr.org/campaign
- World Mayors Council on Climate Change, www.iclei.org/wmccc
- Mexico City Pact, www.mexicocitypact.org
- Cities Climate Registry, www.citiesclimateregistry.org/

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- ICLEI Briefing Sheets provide background information to current themes related to local and urban sustainability www.iclei.org/briefingsheets.
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ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability is an international association of local governments implementing sustainable development. ICLEI's mission is to build and serve a worldwide movement of local governments to achieve tangible improvements in global sustainability with special focus on environmental conditions through cumulative local actions.



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