

NEW YORK C40 CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE 14th-17th May 2007

Mayors and delegates from 40 of the world's largest cities, representing around 400 million people, met this week in New York to discuss cooperation on addressing global warming. The City of Sydney unanimously agreed to join the C40 Large Cities Climate Leadership Group this year and to participate in the Summit as part of our commitment to environmental leadership.

Leaders from cities across the world, including Sydney, New York, London, Copenhagen, Mexico City, Addis Ababa, Delhi, Tokyo, Johannesburg, Toronto and Seoul, met to share information, identify effective practical solutions and agree on action. Our cities committed to take a lead on tackling global warming and pursue major projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

A consistent theme at the Summit was that state and national governments can't or won't take the lead, so city leaders must. The crisis is not the result of a failure of technology, but a failure of political will for action.

Sydney's membership in the C40 group provides us with support, information and resources that better equip us to move rapidly on solutions to the most serious threat facing our planet.

While C40 cities are at different stages of development, a recent member questionnaire showed significant common challenges. Traffic congestion, renewable energy, waste management, water resources, building emissions, and street and traffic lighting were identified as major concerns.

Success stories from the Summit include public transport expansion in New York, San Francisco and Sao Paulo; comprehensive replacement of water infrastructure over 40 years in Tokyo, reducing leakage to 3.6 per cent; action on congestion in London, Stockholm and Singapore; Berlin's green roof program; and the early action of Toronto, which has reduced emissions by 40 per cent since the 1990s.

At the Summit, I joined a panel on Tuesday with the Mayors of Tokyo and Johannesburg presenting on the City of Sydney's initiatives to save and recycle water; and led discussion on our recent successful Earth Hour initiative with WWF-Australia, urging other Mayors to turn this into a global project in 2008.

A major new program announced at the Summit will provide \$5 billion in funding to make existing public buildings more efficient and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This work could include energy-efficient heating, cooling and lighting, with intelligent sensors to keep them on only when needed.

This Energy Efficiency Building Retrofit Program complements Sydney's Green CBD initiative (in partnership with North Sydney and Parramatta), which enables commercial office owners and tenants in Sydney to introduce energy efficient measures during office refits to reduce their impact on the environment and save money.

Retrofitting existing buildings is vital, as they make up the majority of buildings that will still be standing in 2030. Urban areas are responsible for around 75 per cent of all energy use, while buildings account for up to 70 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Improving energy efficiency is an important starting point for addressing global warming as there is a quick financial payoff, with long-term environmental benefits. Building refits reduce energy use by 20 to 50 per cent in existing buildings, paying back the initial outlay in as little as three years.

The Retrofit Program is the result of the C40's partnership with the "Clinton Climate Initiative", established by former US President Bill Clinton. The program has been achieved through the support of five global banks and four multinational energy companies that will provide vital resources-not just because it is the right thing, but because it is good for business.

The energy companies will do energy audits and guarantee the energy savings. The banks have committed to arrange financing, helping owners get over the initial financial hurdle, with loans paid back through savings. The projects will train new workers, expanding the skills for environmental technologies, while doubling the global market for these products and driving down costs.

C40 and the Clinton Climate Initiative also announced a partnership with Microsoft to develop tools that enable cities to accurately monitor, compare and reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. Other major projects being developed will increase access or lower the price of environmentally-friendly technologies related to waste, transport, fuel and water.

Where possible, the combined purchasing power of the C40 cities will be used to expand the global market and reduce the costs of technologies and equipment that can make a real difference for the future of our planet. The C40 cities will be a testing ground for promising new technologies.

These initiatives will help us more quickly produce concrete change on the ground, demonstrating that a planet-saving move away from fossil fuels and a reduction of green house gases need not be an economic risk.

Information:

* C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group: www.c40cities.org

* Clinton Climate Initiative: www.clintonfoundation.org