

Climate Summit For Local Leaders

Paris City Hall

December 4, 2015

Remarks by

Naoko Ishii

CEO and Chairperson, Global Environment Facility

Check against delivery

Good morning everyone.

Let me begin by congratulating ICLEI and UCCRN on the release of their 2nd report.

Let me also say that it is a real pleasure for me to address you today, because you, as Mayors of cities around the world, are critically important for the future of our planet.

Earlier this year, in September, the world's nations agreed on a set of sustainable development goal.

As I am sure you know, one of them is a specific goal for cities. I think this is a clear reflection of the importance of cities.

I believe that the SDGs hold the promise of a fresh start for our planet.

This is because the SDG's so strongly recognize that the health of the planet's finite environmental resources—from land and forests to oceans and the climate—is essential for a prosperous and thriving world.

We now need urgent action to quickly and sharply cut greenhouse gas emissions, invest in adaptation and build resilience to the growing impacts of our rapidly warming world.

In many ways, cities hold the key to the success of these actions.

If managed well, compact, resilient, and resource-efficient cities has the potential to become drivers of sustainable development, contributing to both local livability and global public goods.

In the past several days I have participated in a large number of events and panel discussions as part of the so-called Lima-Paris Action Agenda.

I have spoken about energy efficient buildings, about transport, about energy systems, about finance, and many other issues.

It has been very interesting for me to observe that one issue seems to pop up in all discussions: the importance of cities.

The New Climate Economy Report led by former Mexican President Calderon estimated that improved energy efficiency in buildings and in transport from more compact and connected cities has the potential to reduce global GHG emissions by 8 giga tonnes by 2050. At the same time, it could also reduce costs by US\$17 trillion. So there is both a strong economic rationale and a strong climate rationale.

Proper city planning and policies can help significantly change transport needs. It helps reduce urban passenger travel demand, it can promote shifts in travel mode to improve overall efficiency. There are also large potential gains from improvements in freight logistics. It is estimated that more compact and connected cities can reduce GHG emissions from transport by 2.8 giga tonnes annually by 2050.

Cities have huge influence on building codes, which is an important driver of energy efficiency in buildings. By 2050 global building energy demand can be reduced by at least one-third if already existing best practices for energy efficiency are implemented on a large scale. In addition, district-heating systems can help substantially reduce energy consumption. In total, such improvements can reduce global GHG emissions by 4.5 giga tonnes by 2050.

Perhaps the most important reason why cities again and again are seen as a possible solution to global issues is that the cities is an important meeting point among many stakeholders. And indeed we can only be successful if we bring together a broad coalition of city leaders, businesses and financing institutions.

It is 100% clear to me that in order to be effective, an institution like mine—the Global Environment Facility—simply MUST find ways to work with cities.

So let me spend a bit of time sharing with you some thoughts about how I think in institution like the G-E-F can be helpful to cities around the world, recognizing that there are many, many strong players in this arena. There are city networks, like ICLEI, C40 or UCLG, other multilateral institutions and bilateral donors.

The G-E-F has recently launched a sustainable cities flagship program. The Program focuses on four main activities:

The first activity is to facilitate knowledge sharing among city leaders on policy reform and innovation to inform and inspire climate action. One thing I have seen very clearly from my interactions with mayors is the very great interest in learning from each other. Unlike industry, there is not much competition among cities, and the north-south divide that is so difficult to overcome in the climate negotiations does not exist among mayors. I believe that this give cities a unique advantage. New ideas and innovations can rapidly be spread and taken up. And

repetitions of failures can be avoided. For this reason, our program puts a lot of emphasis on strengthening and complementing already existing knowledge sharing platforms.

The second activity is to help cities develop and deploy common standards and tools that will help enhance credibility, transparency and usability of cities' GHG commitments. One such standard is ISO 37-1-20, which allows any city, municipality or local government to measure its performance in a comparable and verifiable manner. We are working closely with the World Council on City Data to promote adoption of such standards. Johannesburg is one of our early focus cities that has already been ISO certified. We hope many cities will follow.

The third activity focuses on enhancing the capacity of local leaders to develop and execute integrated city-wide low-carbon plans. I think it is fair to say that in the past we—and many cities in fact—have made a mistake of focusing on individual “free-standing” activities or investments that have not been part of an integrated long-term planning framework. This is not only costly, it also results in much higher GHG emissions than would otherwise be the case. Having such a common “song sheet” is particularly important during a time when the world's cities are growing rapidly.

The fourth and final activity focuses on helping cities by providing finance for selected urban low-carbon infrastructure that is consistent with their long-term sustainability plans.

We have so far 23 cities in 11 countries as part of the program, which has a budget of US\$1.5 billion.

In closing, let me repeat that cities hold the key to our future. I am looking very much forward to continuing engaging with you on this critical issue.

Thank you