UNEP

Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs) and the Urban Arena

Localising the Global Environmental Agenda

United Nations Environment Programme
Division of Technology, Industry and Economics

INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNOLOGY CENTER

Urban Environmental Management

The UNEP-International Environment Technology Centre (IETC)
Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs) and the Urban Arena
Localising the Global Environmental Agenda

Copyright © 2003 UNEP-IETC

This publication may be reproduced in whole or in part and in any form for educational or nonprofit purposes without special permission from the copyright holder, provided acknowledgement of the source is made. UNEP-IETC would appreciate receiving a copy of any publication that uses this publication as a source.

No use of this publication may be made for resale or for any other commercial purpose whatsoever without prior permission in writing from UNEP-IETC.

First edition 2003

The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the United Nations Environment Programme, concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Moreover, the views expressed do not necessarily represent the decision or the stated policy of the United Nations Environment Programme, nor does citing of trade names or commercial processes constitute endorsement.

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME
INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNOLOGY CENTRE

Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs) and the Urban Arena

Localising the Global Environmental Agenda

Abstract

One of the key outputs of the 1992 Rio Summit was to highlight and focus attention on the environment, spawning as a result a host of conventions, conferences and other activities related to different environmental issues (collectively called the 'Rio Agreements'). These activities have generated a number of multilateral environment agreements (MEAs), the most recent of them being the Kyoto Protocol promulgated in December 1997.

Each of these MEAs require that countries develop specific implementation mechanisms and fulfill obligations involving reporting, training, public education, and other activities. The MEA themes, in fact, lie at the heart of global environmental issues such as CO_2 reduction, eco-efficiency, land degradation, energy systems, technology innovation, etc. Incentive structures - fiscal systems, trade systems and liability systems - have also been proposed as a means of realising the goals of these MEAs.

This working paper focuses on (a) MEAs that are specifically directed at cities, including Local Agenda 21 and Habitat Agenda, and (b) implications of global MEAs on cities. The paper has two components: firstly, it will attempt to build synergies between urban areas and the MEAs in a two way process - how do cities contribute to the conditions and problems addressed by these MEAs? And on the reverse flow, how do these MEAs affect the natural, built-up and social environments of cities? Secondly, it establishes the overlaps, commonalities, inherent relationships and mutual dependencies between these MEAs, focusing on the role of cities and urban stakeholders. It will be grounded in a comprehensive inventory of MEAs with its corresponding urban implications.

Introduction

Take any of today's environmental problems faced by the inhabitants of this planet, and its causes and pressures can be traced back, directly or indirectly, to cities and its residents' lifestyles and consumption patterns. The forces and processes that constitute 'urban activity' have far-reaching and long-term effects not only on its immediate boundaries, but also on the entire region in which it is positioned. For example, the resources necessary to maintain a city of the size of Greater Tokyo require a land area that is about three and a half time that of Japan as a whole (see Box 1).

Box 1 - Tokyo's Urban Footprint

According to the Earth Council's report, "Ecological Footprints of Nations", lifestyles in Japan generate a demand for 6.25 hectares per capita for resources such as energy, arable land, pasture, forest, built-up area. But the supply has been only 1.88 hectares per capita. This leaves an 'ecological deficit' of 4.37 hectares per person that has to be met from outside the country. The conurban region of Tokyo had a 1995 population of 26.8 million. For Tokyo alone, this ecological deficit is equal to 116,242,000 hectares or 3.07 times the total land area of Japan.

Cities and towns in most countries around the world have been gaining considerable attention due to the large number of households migrating to cities and its consequent effects. It has also been due to the centrality of goods and services that cities offer, emerging over the last few decades as the major form of settlement.

Proximity to decision-makers and financial markets, large pools of skilled and unskilled workers, and other advantages have made such urban areas the engines of growth for the countries and regions where they are situated. For example, despite the environmental and social problems that it is facing, Bangkok's contribution to the national GDP has been estimated to be more than the combined output of all other cities in Thailand.

But population concentration in increasingly smaller land masses has caused a drastic decline in the quality of living both in the residential and work areas. Cities have, in effect, become a barometer of humankind's progress into the 21st century, whether this is an upward or downward trend. Such a scenario has had ripple effects on a variety of sectors such as education, health, labour/job markets, and economic activities.

The concern and problems associated with urban areas and the environment in general have placed such issues high on the agenda of many bilateral and multilateral meetings. The Earth Summit of 1992 in Rio de Janeiro managed to highlight and channel efforts in understanding and acting on environmental problems, making it a key issue to be tackled in trade and commerce, in economic and social development, and in science and technology. Subsequent summits and congresses such as the Social Summit and the Beijing Conference on Women in 1995, the City Summit/Habitat II in 1996, not to mention innumerable regional, national and local meetings, all have had the larger global environment as an important common denominator in its action plans.

Global Agreements

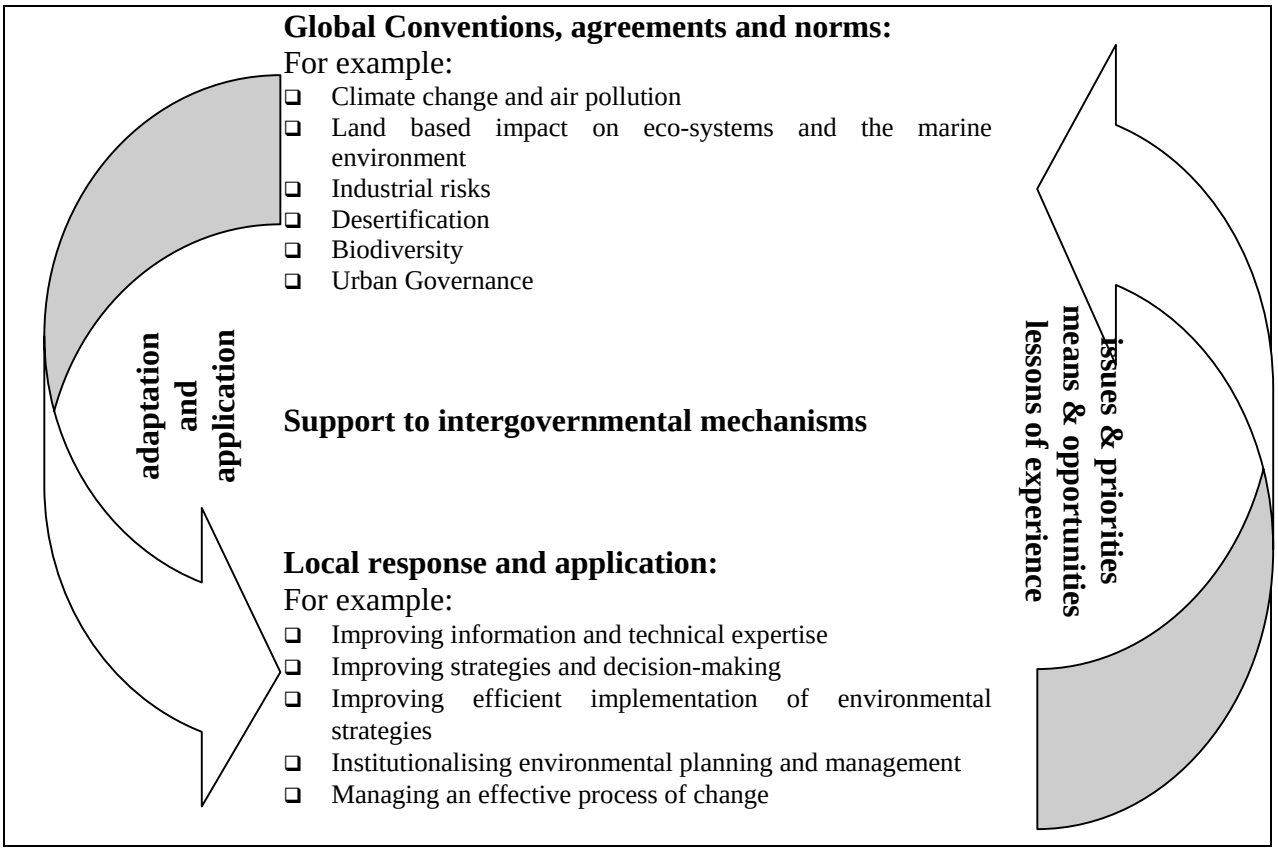
One of the key outputs of the 1992 Rio Summit was the spawning of a host of conventions, agreements and norms related to different environmental issues (collectively called the 'Rio Agreements').[1] These activities have generated a number of multilateral environment agreements

1 UNDP (1997) *Synergies in National Implementation: The Rio Agreements*. New York: Sustainable Energy and Environment Division, United Nations Development Programme.

(MEAs), most recent of them being the Kyoto Protocol on climate change promulgated in Kyoto, Japan December 1997.

Global conventions, agreements and norms have to be concretely adapted and implemented at the local level – which is where real environmental action takes place – targeting the man-on-the-street. It is also important for local issues, priorities, opportunities and experiences to be transmitted back to the global level. Both these cyclical flows (see Figure 1), require extensive participation and partnership among all urban stakeholders – local governments, businesses, industry, NGOs, community groups, and ordinary citizens – in cities around the world.

Figure 1 - The Cyclical Linkages between the Global and Local Levels[2]



Each MEA requires that countries develop specific implementation mechanisms and fulfill obligations involving reporting, training, public education, and other activities[3]. The MEA themes, in fact, lie at the heart of global environmental issues of CO_2 reduction, eco-efficiency, land degradation, eutrofication, energy systems, technology innovation, etc. Incentive structures – fiscal systems, trade systems and liability systems – have also been proposed as a means of realising the goals of these MEAs[4.]

MEAs - A View from the Ground

The thrust of this paper is that the keyword 'interlinkages' not only refers to horizontal linkages between MEAs, but also to vertical linkages from global MEAs to its local

2 Source: The Urban Environment Forum (UEF 2000, 26-28 September 2000, Cape Town)

3 Press Kits and Info Sheets from the Convention Secretariats of climate change, biodiversity and desertification.

4 The International Human Dimensions Programme – Science Plan for Industrial Transformation, 1999

Box 2 - Urban Areas and Climate Change

The link between COP3 and Urban Environments is a two-way street. Urban areas effect and are affected by climate change (and its primary villain, CO_2) both directly and indirectly. The mega concentration of people and industry in cities are a major contributor to CO_2 emissions. For example, more than 400 vehicles are added to the already congested streets of Bangkok everyday. Urban activities (vehicles, industrial activities, garbage incineration etc.) generate a considerable amount of CO_2. Higher CO_2 levels undoubtedly affect urban dwellers, in terms of respiratory illness, higher temperatures, and a host of related maladies.

But 'climate change' is more than just CO_2 levels. It is more than global warming or ozone depletion. Climate change is more than the sum of its parts. Rain patterns may change, climate and agricultural zones may shift towards the poles, melting glaciers and thermal expansion of sea water may raise sea levels, threatening low-lying coastal areas and small islands – the cause-and-effect patterns are endless.

Combating the effects of climate change, from an urban perspective, requires a concerted framework within which disparate actions can be positioned and brought together - so that collective effects and efforts can be realised. A cooperative rather than a confrontational approach needs to be adopted, where local actions at the grassroots level add up to a more balanced environmental existence.

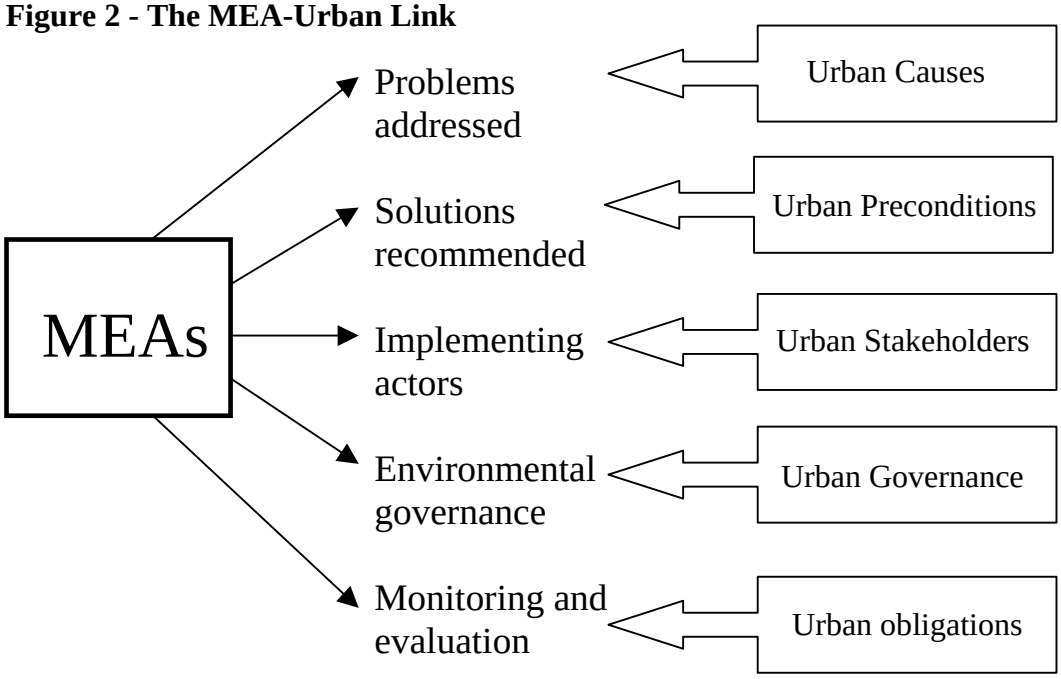
implications. The Urban Environmental Forum 2000, held in Cape Town in September 2000, raised the following issues in delineating a local dimension to global MEAs:

1. **Operational relevance of global agreements, conventions and norms** - how well do they fit the operational priorities, needs and capabilities at the local level?
2. **Relation to other developmental objectives and priorities** - how do the MEAs relate to such issues as poverty alleviation, equity and efficiency?
3. **Participation of all relevant stakeholders** - what emphasis do the MEAs place on partnerships and alliances, effective and meaningful process of participation, legitimacy of participant stakeholders, trust etc.?
4. **The balance of standardisation and local differentiation** - how are local variations (cultural, economic, geographic) reflected in the norms/agreements? How are the particular views of city level implementation reconciled with national or global views?
5. **Economic consequences of implementation** - who gains and who loses as a result of implementing global norms and agreements (the distribution of costs and benefits)?
6. **Mixture of tools and mechanisms** - how do MEAs facilitate the use of complementary mutually-supporting techniques of implementation; the combination of formal and informal methods; the coherence and consistency of techniques used?
7. **Financial and economic incentives** - What incentives exist that utilise 'self-interest' and build on market forces to implement MEAs?
8. **Defining the roles of different levels of government** - how is the authority and responsibility among and between levels of government distributed, relative to city-level implementation?
9. **Awareness and understanding** - how can (a) the significance of issues, (b) implications of implementing (and not implementing) MEAs (c) short-term and long-term consequences for different stakeholders be built at the local level?

10. **Building political and social commitment** - how can commitment be built for MEA implementation at the local level through civil society actors? How can consensus to support implementation be developed and maintained?
11. **Institutionalisation** - How can the MEA consultation processes be formalised at the local level? How institutional structures and/or processes to support local implementation be developed?
12. **Sovereignty** - how can issues such as ceding sovereign national power, national sovereignty versus city-level cross boundary agreements and actions on MEA implementation, be dealt with effectively?

There is a clear need to focus on MEAs that are specifically directed at cities, including Local Agenda 21 and Habitat Agenda, and delineate implications of other MEAs on cities (see Figure 2). Specifically, there is a need to build synergies between urban areas and the MEAs in a two way process - how do cities contribute to the conditions and problems addressed by these MEAs?

Figure 2 - The MEA-Urban Link



And on the reverse flow, how do these MEAs affect the natural, built-up and social environments of cities? Secondly, we need to establish the overlaps, commonalties, inherent relationships and mutual dependencies between these MEAs, focusing on the role of cities and urban stakeholders (see Figure 3).

The genesis of the idea lies in the fact that effective implementation of MEAs lies in strong local and urban governments that can take decisive steps at the local level, particularly in urban areas (see Figure 4), that have positive, cumulative and global impacts. This calls for a framework of supporting institutions (including the MEA secretariats) at all levels, that support and prop-up urban authorities/local governments.

MEA secretariats will have to work in cohort with local governments (or networks or associations of local governments[5]) in generating awareness and disseminating information to link MEA

5 For example, *CityNet*, the Regional Network of Local Authorities for the Management of Human Settlements, that brings together more than 100 cities in the Asia-Pacific region.

obligations and implementation structures to the policies, programmes and projects that are instituted by local governments. A host of regional, national and local organisations also need to assist the two actors in these processes.

Figure 3 - MEA Implications for Urban Areas

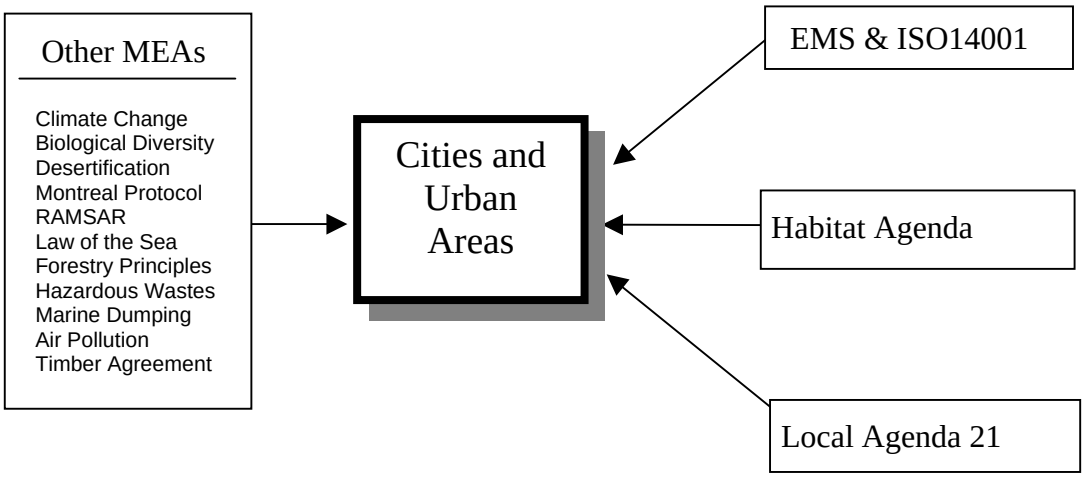
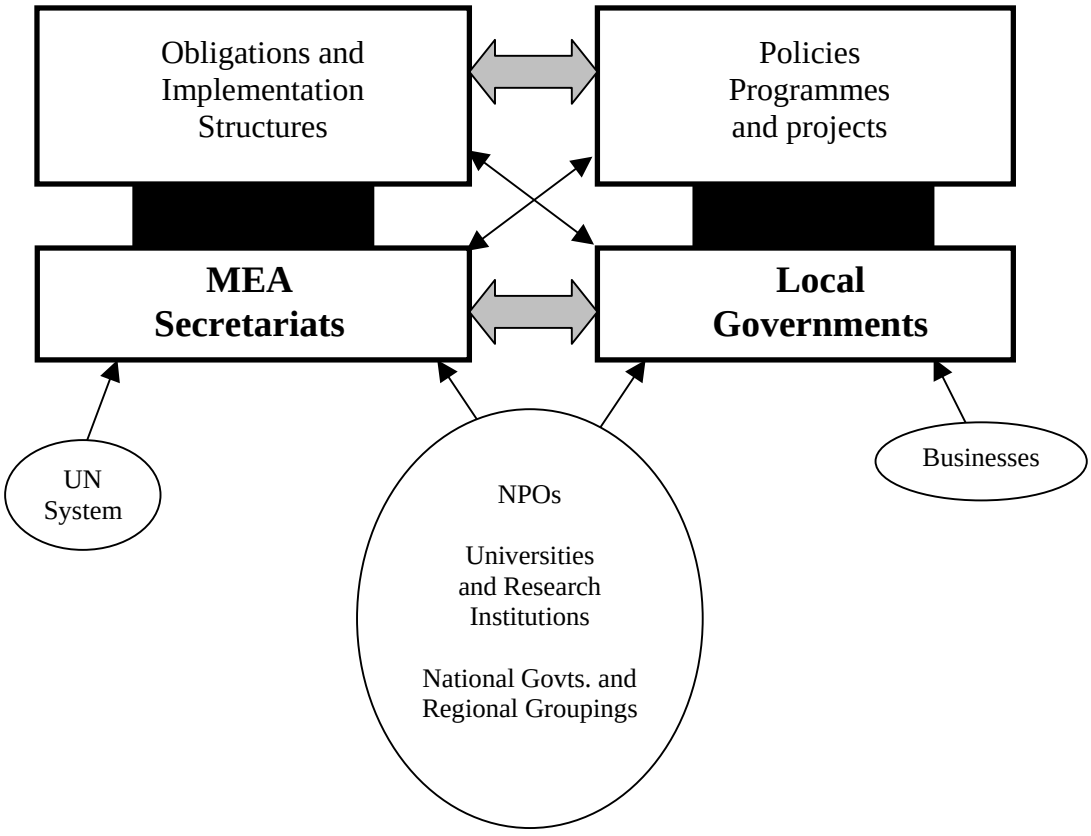


Figure 4 - Institutional Linkages



Key Issues that Affect Local Governments

Quite clearly, there are a number of issues that local governments will need to take into account in catering to global environmental agreements, but also to create a local environment that has positive

global impacts. This calls for a clear understanding of the implications of MEAs at the local level; linking action at the local level and understanding their implications at the global level; a model framework of policy and programme development for local governments and authorities; delineation of roles and responsibilities of urban and local stakeholders for MEA implementation and action; and understanding of local capacities and skills that need to be built for the local implementations of global MEAs.

- **An understanding of the implications of MEAs at the local level**
  As mentioned in the introduction, it is quite clear that the obligations and implication of global and multilateral environmental agreements have definite (but in many cases, not clearly delineated) local dimensions - where both the problems and the solutions start.

- **Linking of action at the local level and their implications at the global level**
  The widely accepted mantra of 'Think Global, Act Local' will need to go beyond rhetoric – justifications and clarifications will have to be sought for local environmental action in terms of their direct and indirect global impacts. This linking is critical not only for its impact on the global environment, but also for facilitating participation among local communities, and inspiring action.

- **A model policy framework for local governments in environmental management**
  Current environmental management policies at the local level are piecemeal, and scattered, with responsibilities and task allocations made to appropriate departments and agencies among local government entities. An overall framework of policies and programmes, along with their goals/objectives needs to be developed that will allow the placing of actions to be taken, without ignoring goals and objectives of the city as a whole.

- **Delineation of roles and responsibilities of urban and local stakeholders for MEA implementation and action**
  In order to operationalise the framework mentioned above, it is very critical to delineate roles and responsibilities of urban and local stakeholders. These will not only help in avoiding overlap and repetition, but will also enable making best use of the strengths and skills of each stakeholder. It will enable the right actors to take the right actions for local environmental management
  .
- **Understanding of local capacities and skills that need to be built for local implementations of global MEAs**
  Each global MEA has a set of unique obligations and actions that need to be taken. But other steps are cross-cutting (for example, a comprehensive 'State of the Urban Environment' report for cities, or a sustainability indicators report), and are necessary for all MEAs. Obligations under each MEA needs to be translated into capacities and skills that needs to be built at the local level.

With more than half the global population now opting to stay in cities and urbanised areas, it is becoming increasingly obvious that cities will play an increasingly important role in shaping the global environment – in terms of both contributing to the problem, but also in actively generating solutions.

Appendix: Some Cases

Cities for Climate Protection

The Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) Campaign was established by ICLEI in 1993 at an international summit of municipal leaders held at the UN headquarters in New York. Over the past seven years the CCP has engaged over 400 municipal governments - 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions - in a worldwide effort to slow the Earth's warming.

The Campaign grew out of ICLEI's Urban CO2 Reduction Project (1991-1993), which brought together a select group of American, Canadian, and European cities at six working meetings to develop a municipal planning framework for greenhouse gas reduction and strategic energy management. The experience of the Urban CO2 Reduction Project led to the development of the CCP's five-milestone framework and a software product designed for municipal use. The CCP's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Software streamlines the process of conducting the emissions analysis, of evaluating emissions reduction measures that also best meet the strategies of the community, and of tracking measures to determine if emissions reductions are being achieved.

In order to become a participant in the CCP, the elected council or an appropriate bureaucratic authority must adopt a Local Government Resolution. In most local governments, the draft resolution is prepared by staff and eventually approved by the full governing body of the local authority. Once it has become a CCP participant, the local government proceeds to undertake and complete the five performance milestones. They are: (a) conduct an energy and emissions inventory and forecast; (b) establish an emissions target; (c) develop and obtain approval for the Local Action Plan; (d) implement policies and measures; and (e) monitor and verify results.

Cities Against Desertification

Desertification is one of the most serious problems of our time, declared Ms. Uschi Eid, Parliamentary Secretary of State of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, at the World Forum of Mayors on Cities and Desertification, held June 11-12, 1999, in Bonn, Germany. The forum was organised by the City of Bonn, in cooperation with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the City of Rome and the Secretariat of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, and with the support of ICLEI’s European Secretariat. About 300 mayors and technical experts from 69 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe attended the event.

As a follow up to the first Mayor’s Forum on Cities and Desertification in Rome (1997), the Bonn meeting focused on identifying a common understanding of the causes and effects of desertification and the roles and responsibilities of cities in the future. There was a general approval of Local Agenda 21 processes being used for sustainable development in affected cities. The forum also succeeded in outlining follow-up projects between cities and engaging new partnerships to find sustainable solutions to this complex issue, specifically in setting up the 'Cities Against Desertification' programme.

Cities and ISO 14001

Many local governments and city halls around the world have sought certification for the new ISO 14001 standard. The institution and development of an environmental management system lies at the core of ISO 14001. The most obvious benefit of a single international standard was the worldwide focus it brought to environmental management. It harmonizes national rules, labels, and

methods, thus minimising trade barriers and complications, and promoting predictability and consistency. It also enhances environmental performance and maintains regulatory compliance, provides a framework to move beyond compliance, and demonstrates commitment to environmental management.

Recognising this, cities and local governments have been quick to embrace the ISO 14001 by seeking certification for the city hall or council, or individual urban utilities. Some of the goals that have driven this trend include - (a) to improve their own internal environmental performance, and (b) to demonstrate commitment to other urban stakeholders.

Currently more than 100 cities have ISO 14001 certification in Japan, and many more worldwide.

The UNEP - DTIE International Environmental Technology Centre

Established in April 1994, the International Environmental Technology Centre (IETC) is an integral part of the Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE) of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). It has offices at two locations in Japan - Osaka and Shiga.

The Centre's main function is to promote the application of Environmentally Sound Technologies (ESTs) in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. IETC pays specific attention to urban problems, such as sewage, air pollution, solid waste, noise, and to the management of fresh water basins.

IETC is supported in its operations by two Japanese foundations: The Global Environment Centre Foundation (GEC), which is based in Osaka and handles urban environmental problems; and the International Lake Environment Committee Foundation (ILEC), which is located in Shiga Prefecture and contributes accumulated knowledge on sustainable management of fresh water resources.

IETC's mandate is based on Agenda 21, which came out of the UNCED process. Consequently IETC pursues a result-oriented work plan revolving around three issues, namely: (1) Improving access to information on ESTs; (2) Fostering technology cooperation, partnerships, adoption and use of ESTs; and (3) Building endogenous capacity.

IETC has secured specific results that have established it as a Centre of Excellence in its areas of specialty. Its products include: an overview on existing information sources for ESTs; a database of information on ESTs; a regular newsletter, a technical publication series and other media materials creating public awareness and disseminating information on ESTs; Local Agenda 21 documents developed for selected cities in collaboration with the UNCHS (Habitat)/UNEP Sustainable Cities Programme (SCP); training needs assessment surveys in the field of decision-making on technology transfer and management of ESTs; design and implementation of pilot training programmes for adoption, application and operation of ESTs; training materials for technology management of large cities and fresh water basins; and others.

The Centre coordinates its activities with substantive organisations within the UN system. IETC also seeks partnerships with international and bilateral finance institutions, technical assistance organisations, the private, academic and non-governmental sectors, foundations and corporations.

For further information, please contact:

Osaka Office:	Shiga Office:
2-110 Ryokuchi Koen, Tsurumi-ku, Osaka 538-0036, Japan Tel: 81-6-6915-4581 Fax: 81-6-6915-0304	1091 Oroshimo-cho, Kusatsu City, Shiga 525-0001, Japan Tel: 81-77-568-4580 Fax: 81-77-568-4587
Email: ietc@unep.or.jp Web: http://www.unep.or.jp/	

www.unep.org
United Nations Environment Programme
P.O. Box 30552 Nairobi, Kenya
Tel: (254-2) 621234
Fax: (254-2) 623927
E-mail: cpinfo@unep.org
Web: http://www.unep.org

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME – DIVISION OF TECHNOLOGY, INDUSTRY AND ECONOMICS
INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNOLOGY CENTRE (UNEP – DTIE – IETC)

Osaka Office

2-110 Ryokuchi koen, Tsurumi-ku, Osaka 538-0036, Japan
Telephone: +(81-6) 6915-4581
Telefax: +(81-6) 6915-0304

Shiga Office

1091 Oroshimo-cho, Kusatsu City, Shiga 525-0001 Japan
Telephone: +(81-77) 568-4581
Telefax: +(81-77) 568-4587

URL: http://www.unep.or.jp/
Email: ietc@unep.or.jp