OUTPUT DOCUMENT

8th East Asia Summit High-Level Seminar on Sustainable Cities
(formerly the 'High Level Seminar on Environmentally Sustainable Cities')

Theme:
**"The Role of Cities: Localising the Sustainable Development Goals
to Bridge Policy and Implementation"**

The 8th East Asia Summit (EAS) High-Level Seminar (HLS) on Sustainable Cities was organised by the Government of Thailand, Government of Japan, Government of Cambodia, the ASEAN Working Group on Environmentally Sustainable Cities (AWGESC) and the ASEAN Secretariat in Chiang Rai, Thailand, on 8-9 February 2017 under the framework of the EAS Environment Ministers Meeting (EMM) with more than 230 participants comprising representatives of 12[1] national governments, 29[2] local authorities and 27[3] supporting organisations including international/regional organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), research institutions/academia, private companies and others. The key messages here will be reported to the EAS EMM and relevant ASEAN meetings.

The 8th seminar was the first HLS seminar focusing on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 8th HLS also considered SDG-related international/regional agendas such as the New Urban Agenda (NUA), the Paris Agreement on Climate Change[4] and the ASEAN Community Vision 2025.

On this occasion, the 8th HLS seminar renamed its title as the 'High-Level Seminar on Sustainable Cities' – signalling a direction to broaden the seminar's concern to cover not only the environmental, but also the social and economic dimensions of urban sustainability. It continued to build on the momentum of the previous seminar (7th HLS), which had highlighted the following:

- Sustainable city development is a multi-level, multi-sector and cross-disciplinary process. This means that the (often overlapping and sometimes conflicting) national policies and legal

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[1] Brunei Darussalam, China, Cambodia, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Republic of Korea and Viet Nam.

[2] Cambodia – Kep and Pursat; Indonesia – Banjarmasin and Malang; Japan – Higashi Matsushima, Kitakyushu, and Toyama; Lao PDR – Luang Prabang; Malaysia – Malacca; Myanmar – Yangon and Mandalay; Philippines – Calapan, Davao and Dipolog; Thailand – Bangkok Metropolitan Authority, Chieng Kiean Municipality, Chiang Rai Province, Chiang Rai Municipality, Kohkha Municipality, Koh Samui Municipality, Krabi Municipality, Nondindaeng Municipality, Nongteng Municipality, Panusnikhom Municipality, Pangkhon Municipality, Pichit Municipality, Renunakorn Municipality and Rongchang Sub-district; Viet Nam – Can Tho.

[3] The ASEAN Secretariat, Asian Development Bank (ADB), Clean Air Asia, CDP, C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, CityNet, German International Cooperation (GIZ), Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Koh Samui Green Hotel Network, Korea Environment Corporation (KECO), Lampang Rajabhat University (Thailand), Mahidol University (Thailand), Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development (OECD), United Cities & Local Governments – Asia Pacific (UCLG-ASPAC), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UN-Habitat, World Resources Institute (WRI) Ross Centre for Sustainable Cities and World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Thailand. Private sector organisations were JFE Engineering Corporation, Hitachi Zosen Corporation, Nippon Steel & Sumikin Engineering Co. Ltd. and Port Authority of Thailand (PAT).

[4] The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and particularly Goal No. 11 (SDG-11) to 'Make Cities Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable'; The Paris Agreement on Climate Change, including Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) of all ASEAN Member States and other EAS participating countries; and the New Urban Agenda which was adopted at Habitat III, the 3rd United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urbanisation.

frameworks across line ministries, as well as within different levels of governments, have to be better integrated to create an 'enabling environment' for implementation.

- Cities are well-positioned to localise and drive the implementation of the SDGs in an inclusive and participatory manner. They were recommended to establish a Mayoral multi-department, multi-stakeholder sustainable city committee (including an international cooperation focal point) which convenes regularly to spearhead innovative activities to translate the global agenda into local implementation.

- In Asia and ASEAN Member States, there is already a group of 'frontrunner' cities whose 'bottom-up' actions and pioneering policies are already well-aligned with the SDGs. Their transformative power may be further scaled up, and out, through more capacity building, financing and other resources for implementation, particularly through city-to-city cooperation and peer learning mechanisms.

With the expected incorporation of SDGs into national policies, the 8th seminar's biggest concern was the policy-implementation connection. How can governments be supported to apply new knowledge, learn from past experiences and scale up pilot initiatives? How can cities scale up their pilot practices and demonstrate the link between their actions and their contribution to the SDGs and global commitments in a quantitative, credible manner? In addition, how can all stakeholders – especially supporting organisations and emerging stakeholders – add the most value to solve deeply entrenched systemic deficiencies and work in synergy to avoid duplication and maximise impacts?

Over two days, a series of Plenary and Thematic discussions were held to enable active knowledge exchange and frank discussion among key stakeholders. As a result, participants noted and agreed to take actions on the following key messages which were drawn from the Plenary/Thematic sessions:

1) Plenary 1 – 'Localising SDGs: Connecting Policy with Implementation'

a) Through the ASEAN ESC Model Cities Programme and other upcoming regional sustainable city initiatives, ASEAN will continue to support a community of 'frontrunner' cities and 'change making' stakeholders to drive transformation on the ground. To achieve better results, project/programme managers must ensure that policies, capacity building or training activities and pilot projects on the ground are inter-connected. More creative forms of training (combining 'classroom' approaches and site visits) are appreciated and demanded by cities.

b) National governments and some cities have begun to reflect the SDGs and the NUA into their long- and mid-term plans. They need more encouragement and support to coordinate policies, projects and stakeholders – both horizontally and vertically – within the government administration.

2) Plenary 2 – 'Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) beyond Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)'

a) Businesses see value in incorporating the SDGs into their CSR programmes. However, there is a perception that CSR is limited by its voluntary nature. On the other hand, a handful of small-medium businesses and civic organisations are beginning to re-think old models of delivering urban goods and services, including through 'social enterprises' and 'cooperatives' which are equally concerned with the 'triple-bottom line' of 'people', 'profits' and 'planet'.

b) National governments hold definitive power to influence businesses to 'go beyond CSR' by bolstering CSR with regulatory measures (e.g. requiring mandatory reporting of CSR activities by listed companies) and creating an enabling environment for PPPs. They can also encourage the

growth of social entrepreneurship culture by providing guiding frameworks, incentives and monitoring/reporting platforms with measurable indicators.

3) Thematic Sessions Track A – 'Upcoming/New Initiatives, Theories and Frameworks'

a) Thematic A1 – 'Cities for Clean Air' (moderated by Clean Air Asia)

    i. Environmental issues (such as air quality management) are cross-cutting in nature. This calls for integrated city governance approaches to align all stakeholders in decision-making, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

    ii. To secure the commitment and support of diverse stakeholders, leaders must be able to present the opportunities provided by environmental management and co-benefits for socio-economic issues i.e. improved health, job creation, investments and enhanced mobility.

    iii. Formal recognition through awards and certification schemes motivate cities. To gain real traction and widespread support, these schemes should incentivise cities to regularly collect data in a transparent, credible manner which will be helpful for assessing the effectiveness of current policies as well as informing the design of new policies.

b) Thematic A2 –'Knowledge Platforms for Cities and City-to-City Cooperation' (moderated by ESCAP)

    i. Although face-to-face interactions are invaluable for promoting city-to-city cooperation, online knowledge sharing platforms also add great value by being able to quickly and widely disseminate new ideas, highlight replicable good practices, match 'suppliers' of assistance to 'recipients' and provide trusted advice among peers in a cost-effective manner.

    ii. To be more effective, online knowledge platforms need to have a committed secretariat, long-term operational funds, be more demand-driven and provide more substantive support to help cities document their ideas, experiences and good practices. Many cities lack experience and communication skills to share their knowledge, even though they may have outstanding achievements.

    iii. Cohesive online communities must be nurtured. Knowledge platform managers are recommended to carefully design participation incentives, designate community 'champions' and continuously attract participants with timely and pragmatic topics. Jargon and complicated language should be minimised.

c) Thematic A3 – 'Key Considerations for Localising the SDGs' (moderated by OECD)

    i. Each country is encouraged to work with cities and regions to identify goals and targets most essential for them, or key local 'imperatives', and integrate them into the country's SDGs implementation frameworks. Such goals and targets should support the implementation of national and global goals but could also be locally tailored to better reflect diverse local contexts.

    ii. Urgent action is needed to identify gaps in monitoring localised SDGs. Improving the evidence base will require sufficient resources and institutional arrangement.

    iii. In addition to vertical dialogues across levels of government, enhancing horizontal coordination with neighbouring cities and engaging a wide range of stakeholders (the private sector, citizens and civil society) are crucial to effectively design and implement localised SDGs.

iv.   A National Urban Policy (NUP) is a key instrument for implementing the SDGs and other global urban agendas. Successful NUP processes can provide a platform for all levels of government and relevant stakeholders to network and engage amongst themselves.

d)   Thematic A4 – 'The New Urban Agenda (NUA): Key Outcomes and Takeaways' (moderated by Malaysia)

i.   The NUA helps to guide local actions by setting a new global standard for sustainable urban development for the next 20 years. However, the NUA is not legally binding, unlike the Paris Agreement. It only provides guidance to national governments, city authorities, NGOs, and others in thinking about urbanisation.

ii.   The SDGs is a good way of organising many global goals under one framework. However, the fact remains that not many local agendas are being developed. National-level policy is, therefore, also a key instrument to implementing the SDGS; for example, by encouraging local governments to formulate local action plans for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction through information provision and financial support via subsidies.

iii.   In implementing the NUA, there needs to be a continued shift away from 'top-down' approaches towards increased meaningful participation of all people. The high-level concepts of the NUA also need to be 'demystified', translated and disseminated to all stakeholders, especially local people who have different but equally valid perspectives and interests. In addition, cities should expand their focus – from a narrow concern with promoting profits and an enabling business environment –to also valuing the less tangible and non-monetary issues affecting local peopls's daily life and long-term well-being.

3) Thematic Track B – 'Good Practices, Experiences and Successes in Frontrunner Cities'

a)   Thematic B1 – 'Institutionalising Resilience in a Changing and Warming Climate' (moderated by IGES)

i.   Urban areas are already hotter than surrounding rural areas due to the urban heat island effect. Hence, a major contribution to increased resilience can be achieved through urban greening, e.g. roadside tree planting, shaded pedestrian walks, and rooftop gardens. Such greening can also assist with greater water absorption as well as increase the potential for recovery and reuse.

ii.   Health systems need to be at the forefront of institutionalising resilience in a changing and warming climate. Vulnerable people like the elderly, infirm, and children are most at risk from heat stress. Remedial measures include cooling stations in shopping centres, community support systems during heat waves and trained paraprofessionals to handle non-emergency cases.

iii.   Urban planning, including sectoral master plans, plays a significant role in increasing resilience in a changing and warming climate. There should be emphasis on zoning land uses away from vulnerable areas such as flood plains, issuing climate resilient building codes, reducing motorised transport in congested areas, integrating disaster prevention and management as well as providing increased public transport and pedestrian-only zones.

b)   Thematic B2 – 'Climate Action at the City Level: Local Mitigation and Resilience Efforts' (moderated by C40)

i. Vertical integration between national and local governments is critical in addressing city resilience, but actual governance mechanisms to achieve this will vary from country to country. Relevant institutional arrangements will need to be created and enabling policies introduced and strengthened to enhance cities' capacities to move forward with transformative climate actions.

ii. Climate risk is becoming part of risk for all stakeholders. Banks, investment companies and the private sector must become part of an overall risk management approach at the city level, incorporating (where appropriate) disaster risk management as well. Bringing relevant stakeholders, including the citizens, at the onset would be crucial to better define effective climate change interventions.

iii. The financial requirements to address climate change at the city level are overwhelming for normal city financing. Hence, 'out of the box', innovative approaches to financing climate resilience are needed, such as green bonds, insurance schemes, new taxes, elimination of fossil fuel subsidies, congestion charges etc.

iv. In general, cities are already undertaking various actions to reduce emissions and manage climate risks. While these vary in level and scale, these programs usually relate to various goals towards creating more sustainable and liveable cities, i.e. covering not just SDG-13 but across various SDGs as well. However, in most cases, there is still a need for collecting relevant data and building internal capacity to make informed decisions for effective climate change programs and solutions to address broader urban sustainability challenges.

c) Thematic B3 – 'Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) & Land Value Capture (LVC)' (moderated by WRI Ross Centre for Sustainable Cities)

i. TOD and LVC are important strategies to help rapidly urbanising cities achieve a radical shift away from over-dependence on private motorised vehicles (e.g. cars) and move towards a compact, inclusive society. TOD and LVC help to realise high-quality and highly-accessible public transit systems that result in improved citizen mobility, better air quality and significantly reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

ii. In developing countries, cars are widely regarded as status symbols, with car ownership being considered indicators of personal success. Meanwhile, public transit is seen as an option for the 'lower classes' due to its poor quality and low convenience. Governments and city leaders should consider employing appropriate financial instruments (e.g. appropriate taxes on car users and congestion charges) with effective enforcement. This will help transform the prevailing societal values and norms which run counter against a culture of compact city living.

iii. TOD and LVC will not be sustainable unless it is accompanied by adequately inclusive and consultative processes involving the affected local people. Special measures are required to offset the negative impacts on disadvantaged groups and lower-income citizens, such as street vendors and squatters who may be required to relocate their businesses and homes.

d) Thematic B4 – 'Tourism, Public Engagement and Green Education' (moderated by Lao PDR)

i. Cities which are blessed with attractive and unique natural sites (forests, beaches, lakes, mountains etc.) are able to promote sustainable tourism as a key pillar of local economic growth due to the spread of globalisation, a growing middle-class and continuing expansion of affordable air travel.

ii.   However, the economic value of the city's natural and cultural assets will not be sustained if the local environment is irreversibly degraded by uncontrolled tourist volumes and irresponsible tourist behaviours. Tourism-centric cities tend to face challenges of higher per-capita waste and wastewater volumes and energy consumption. Other problems include traffic congestion, vandalism of heritage buildings, destruction of sensitive natural sites and loss/dilution of authentic local cultures and practices due to over-commercialisation.

iii.   Cities are recommended to establish long-term programmes and multi-stakeholder governance mechanisms to educate both tourists and the local people on sustainable tourism. Local communities should be involved in local conservation and cultural promotion activities, and should also receive a fair share in return for enabling the economic benefits from tourism expansion.

4) Thematic Track C – Thailand Feature Sessions

a)   Thematic C1 – '3Rs and Waste Management in Thailand: Policy and Implementation' (moderated by TGO)

i.   Policy and implementation are two pillars of solid waste management. It is imperative that countries establish strategies at the national level. Nevertheless, empowering local authorities to take action is the key to addressing problems on the ground.

ii.   International platforms should showcase, replicate, and scale up good practices in a way that meets the development needs of local communities and encourages the engagement of local people. International development agencies should take the lead in piloting innovative approaches and integrate these approaches into local conditions and contexts.

iii.   High upfront investment cost is one of the major barriers to promoting waste-to-energy (WTE) technologies in developing countries. Furthermore, once WTE facilities are established, it is crucial to secure adequate funds for paying the WTE operators (for example, proper tipping fees and feed-in-tariffs for renewable energy) in order to ensure sustainable operations and maintenance. In this respect, public finance should play a catalytic role in attracting private finance in PPPs to improve both the accessibility and sustainability of mature and proven WTE technologies among the lower- to middle-income cities.

b)   Thematic C2 – '3Rs and Waste Management in Thailand: Best Practices' (moderated by Mr. Somchai Jariyajaroen, independent expert and former Mayor of Muangklaeng Municipality, Thailand)

i.   Environment-related indicators should be included as an essential element when measuring the performance of local authorities. Visionary leadership is vital to promote the 3R's principles at the local level and encourage public participation.

ii.   The viability of low-cost, low-tech waste management (e.g. composting and community-managed recyclables collection schemes) is crucial for enabling local communities to manage the increasing waste challenges. Educating students about low-tech waste management methods and enabling hands-on experience will inspire them to teach others and thus generate a 'snowball' effect.

iii.   Cost recovery and profit maximisation are the incentives for engaging the general public on waste management. Waste should be used as a valuable resource to produce goods,

recover energy, and generate income. The zero-waste concept should be promoted among local people and drive local communities towards a pathway to a circular economy.

c) Thematic C3 – 'The Power of Public Participation in Green City Development: Policy & Implementation' (moderated by UNEP)

    i. Strong leadership and commitment with long-term vision is fundamental to green city development.

    ii. Public participation is a continuous and long-term process, not a one-off activity. In many cases, it is successful because all stakeholders are strongly united by a deep sense of shared destiny. They are motivated by local benefits that cannot be framed and measured strictly in monetary terms ('beyond money').

    iii. Sharing experiences and knowledge among cities, as well as between cities (bilateral city-to-city cooperation), is a learning process that strengthens capacities for developing new initiatives to achieve green city development.

d) Thematic C4 – 'The Power of Public Participation in Green City Development: Scaling Up of Good Models' (moderated by Mahidol University, Thailand)

    i. To make cities committed to green development, it is imperative to incentivise them with praises and awards, enforce policy and regulation implementation with sufficient funding support, as well as generate grassroots and peer pressure towards achieving SDGs.

    ii. Green city development is a people's process. People should be placed at the centre of decision-making and be empowered to develop ownership of various green initiatives and projects undertaken on the ground.

    iii. It is important to convince stakeholders that green development is a win-win solution in order to secure public participation. Global and national SDGs and policies should be localised and adapted to local conditions.

5) Plenary 4 – 'New Initiatives to Promote the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development'

a) The underlying principles of the SDGs to achieve multi-dimensional benefits – such as environmental, social and economic benefits – are key to promoting low carbon, resilient, inclusive, competitive and green cities.

b) Cities must continue to improve at comprehensive urban planning approaches, with the support of international organisations. Successful model/pilot projects should be more systematically scaled up to realise such multiple benefits and to further implement the SDGs.

c) Existing projects, as well as new projects in the pipeline, should be re-assessed and re-designed to more effectively reflect the principles and framework of the SDGs.

5) Based on the above, the seminar agreed to recommend to the EAS Environment Ministers the following practical actions:

a) Continue to support the implementation of the ASEAN ESC Model Cities Programme and the HLS as an annual platform for networking, knowledge exchange and highlighting outstanding frontrunner cities.

    i. Support the ASEAN Secretariat and IGES to synthesise the achievements, lessons learnt and insights gained from implementing Model Cities Year 1 – 3 to contribute to the proposed activities of ASEAN ESC Model Cities Year 4.

ii. Provide full support and active inputs to help organise the 9th HLS seminar, which is planned to be hosted by the Government of Cambodia in early 2018.

b) Task the national focal points of the ASEAN ESC Model Cities Programme and AWGESC to jointly prepare a proposal for enhancing the ASEAN ESC Model Cities programme and the 9th HLS seminar in 2018, with the following considerations:

i. ASEAN ESC Model Cities Programme

- Scale up the next phase of the ASEAN ESC Model Cities Programme to facilitate the implementation of SDGs by frontrunner cities, given that the concept of SDGs is more comprehensive than that of the past phase, which has a focus on environmental issues.

- Specifically, organise a series of seminars and/or workshops to develop the capacity of the 'next generation' cities and to catalyse new, innovative model projects. In addition, appropriate mutual learning/capacity development opportunities should be continued, including mentorship by, as well as for 'frontrunner' cities.

ii. HLS

- Clearly integrate the HLS seminar and ASEAN ESC Model Cities Programme, with HLS being a sharing platform for: (i) 'frontrunner' cities to report their continued progress of implementation of SDGs on the ground; and (ii) other upcoming ASEAN sustainable cities programmes.

- The 9th HLS programme may adopt focus themes such as: cross-sectoral collaboration, systematic scaling up of good practices with strong evidence base in the city, mapping local actions to the SDGs and priority sectors for promoting public-private partnerships (PPP).

6) The seminar also requested the ASEAN Secretariat and IGES to report the main outputs and outcomes of the 8th HLS to the upcoming relevant meetings, including:

a) 15th Meeting of the AWGESC, 26 – 27 April 2017, Siem Reap, Cambodia;

b) 28th Meeting of the ASEAN Senior Officials on the Environment (ASOEN), 26 – 27 July 2017, Philippines;

c) 2nd EAS Senior Officials Meeting (EAS-OM), 28 July 2017, Philippines;

d) 14th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Environment (AMME), 26 September 2017, Brunei Darussalam; and

e) 5th EAS Environment Ministers Meeting (5th EAS EMM), 27 September 2017, Brunei Darussalam.

Annexes:

1. Concept Note & Programme
2. Participants List
3. Summary of Plenary 1, 2, 3 and 4
4. Summary of Thematic Session A1, A2, A3 and A4
5. Summary of Thematic Session B1, B2, B3 and B4
6. Summary of Thematic C1, C2, C3 and C4