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**REVIEW OF PROGRAMME PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION**

(Item 5 (d) of the provisional agenda)

**Low Carbon Cities**

*Note by the Secretariat*

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Annex. North-East Asia Low Carbon City Platform

## I. BACKGROUND OVERVIEW

1. Cities are engines of economic growth and social change, expected to produce about 85% of global GDP in 2015. Cities are also associated with 67–76% of global energy use and 71–76% of global energy-related greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions<sup>1</sup>.
2. A New Climate Economy Report<sup>1</sup> estimated that implementing low carbon recommendations by city and national governments, with support from international community as well as the private sector, could deliver at least 3.7 Gt CO<sub>2</sub>e in emission reductions, or 15–20% of what is needed in 2030 to bridge the gap to a 2°C pathway. There is also strong economic case for low-carbon investment as the Report also estimated that low-carbon urban actions available today could generate a stream of savings in the period to 2050 with a current value of US\$16.6 trillion, and with supporting policies the savings could be as high as US\$21.8 trillion.
3. Improving sustainability of cities through a low carbon approach will generate wider economic, social and environmental benefits, and can significantly reduce the cost of providing services and infrastructure with better connectivity and efficiency. Cities' critical role in sustainability is therefore recognized and emphasized with a dedicated Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on sustainable cities and communities (Goal 11). As urban areas are also centers of people, activities and services, more sustainable cities will also promote other SDGs, in particular climate (Goal 13), energy efficiency (Goal 7) and consumption (Goal 12).
4. In view of the current and projected rate of urbanization, actions taken within the next decade or two will be critical to capture these benefits within this time window to avoid a costly lock-in of urban infrastructure. In order to do so, local governments have to utilize support and knowledge from each other, and scale up international cooperation to accelerate actions.
5. Voluntary initiatives by subnational authorities have reached significant scale and have enormous importance to achieving global sustainability, for instance, the Lima-Paris Action Agenda (LPAA) and Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action (NAZCA) that showcased commitments to actions by the private sector, cities and subnational regions to address climate change. They have captured climate actions and pledges by over 2,000 cities from more than 100 countries with a combined population of over 1.25 billion people. This includes 97 cities from North-East Asia, of which 4 from China, 75 from Japan and 18 from the ROK. In view of the vast number of cities and efforts in LCC within North-East Asia, there is much potential for further participation in international

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<sup>1</sup> Gouldson, et al., 2015. *Accelerating Low-Carbon Development in the World's Cities*. New Climate Economy, London and Washington, DC.

initiatives as such, especially for China. 80 cities around the globe have also joined the Compact of Mayors, an initiative led by C40, ICLEI and UCLG, supported by UN-HABITAT and others, as a common platform to capture cities' collective actions through standardized measurements and public reporting.

6. North-East Asia (NEA) has a key role to play in ensuring global sustainability through transforming its urban development. NEA has a rapidly growing urban population alongside economic development with the share of urban population expected to be over 70 percent by the next decade. Among the 30 world largest urban agglomerations ranked by population size in 2010, eight cities came from this subregion.<sup>2</sup>

7. North-East Asian countries contribute about 31.4% of the global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in 2012, including four of the world's top ten emitters: China (1<sup>st</sup>), Russia (4<sup>th</sup>), Japan (5<sup>th</sup>) and ROK (7<sup>th</sup> for CO<sub>2</sub> and 12<sup>th</sup> for all GHGs). Their commitments in reducing emissions are indicated in their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs), as shown below.

NEA Countries	INDCs Highlights
<b>China</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Peak CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2030</b> at the latest</li> <li>• Increase the <b>share of non-fossil energy</b> sources in the total primary energy supply to around <b>20%</b> by 2030</li> <li>• Lower the <b>carbon intensity of GDP by 60% to 65% below 2005 levels</b> by 2030</li> <li>• Increase its <b>forest stock volume by 4.5 billion m<sup>3</sup></b>, compared to 2005 levels</li> </ul>
<b>DPRK</b>	Limiting GHG emissions to <b>37.4% of the 1990 levels</b> and planting 6.3 billion trees within the next 10 years (information from the speech of the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the COP21)
<b>Japan</b>	Reduction target of <b>26% below 2013 emission levels</b> by 2030 (excluding LULUCF)
<b>Mongolia</b>	<b>14% reduction below BAU</b> in total national GHG emissions excluding LULUCF by 2030
<b>ROK</b>	Reduce GHG by <b>37% below business-as-usual (BAU)</b> emissions by 2030 (excl. LULUCF)
<b>Russia</b>	Reduce its emissions of <b>net greenhouse gases (GHG) by 25% to 30% below the 1990 level by 2030</b> (incl. LULUCF), subject to absorbing capacity of forests

<sup>2</sup> *World Urbanization Prospects (2011)*.

8. Considering the relatively high carbon and energy intensity of cities, with a number of world's top GHGs emitters, the rate, scale and mode of LCC development will have a significant impact in global emissions. For example, China's 42 low carbon pilot cities and provinces account for 37% of the population, 54% of GDP and carbon emissions in 2013<sup>3</sup>. As China emitted over 22.5% of the world's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in 2012<sup>4</sup>, China's low carbon pilot programme that covers over half of its carbon emissions implicates major impact in emissions even at global level.

## II. PROGRESS IN NEASPEC WOK ON LOW CARBON CITIES

9. Building on the consultation outcomes from the international symposium held in Beijing in December 2013 and the endorsement of SOM-19 on the establishment of the North-East Asia Low Carbon City Platform (NEA-LCCP), the Secretariat has carried out a study and a series of informal consultations with experts in order to further elaborate the approaches and activities of the Platform. The study also included a comprehensive review of international networks and programmes of cities, as shown by the Annex.

10. In this connection, the Secretariat proposes the NEA-LCCP to be a platform for organizations working on LCC approaches, policies and programmes with the objectives of (i) Bring together existing and new information and knowledge on LCC approaches and policies, (ii) Synergize the works of research institutions, civil society organizations and international organizations working on LCC; and (iii) Collectively support municipal authorities in moving towards and continuing to advance in LCC.

11. The Secretariat has also elaborated activity areas of the Platform as follow:

- i. Information sharing and communications - with events such as symposiums, conferences, expert group meetings; and a web-based platform for information sharing.
- ii. Technical assistance - providing practical and direct assistance to cities through the platform. Cities are invited to submit their LCC development plan/ approach for peers or experts to review and provide recommendations.
- iii. Analytical studies - identify gaps and generate practical knowledge required by cities to formulate, implement or improve low carbon development. Conduct analytical studies with institutions, researchers and other practitioners to address specific low carbon urban issues in North-East Asian context.

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<sup>3</sup> Hu and Yang, 2015. *Low Carbon Cities in China: National Policies and City Action Factsheets*. Innovative Green Development Program, Energy Foundation.

<sup>4</sup> CAIT Climate Data Explorer, World Resources Institute.

- iv. Capacity building - with both the demand and the supply of knowledge and experiences available within the subregion, capacity building activities can directly enhance local capacity and enable first-hand experiences to be shared. Capacity building can target specific audience or technical aspects, and be tailored to specific requests.

12. In order to seek views and partnership with relevant stakeholders on the Platform, the Secretariat joined the International Conference for National Urban Policy, which was jointly organized by UNHABITAT, the Korea Research Institute for Human Settlements (KRIHS) and others on 14- 15 December 2015 in Incheon, and held a session on NEA-LCCP.

13. The session gathered international organizations including ICLEI, OECD and the Climate Group, alongside academia, city representatives such as those from Yokohama city, as well as experts from China, Japan and Republic of Korea. The session reviewed the current works of low carbon cities in North-East Asia and discussed potential activities of NEA-LCCP.

14. Specific highlights and suggestions included: the need for further collaboration among existing networks and agencies; strengthening support for more coordinated efforts; provision of resources such as experts to support national and sub-national stakeholders; provision of a platform to gather multidisciplinary experts and policy-makers for dialogue and facilitate collaboration; and promotion of knowledge sharing as well as capacity building.

15. At the session, the Secretariat also discussed the possibility of jointly holding a NEA-LCCP conference with ICLEI and Yokohama City, to be combined with site visits to key LCC facilities and developments in Yokohama as well as capacity building programme. Yokohama City will inform the Secretariat on its decision in due course.

### III. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

16. The Meeting may wish to request member States to guide and express their interests in the areas of the North-East Asia Low Carbon City Platform and potential projects under the Platform.

17. The Meeting may wish to invite member States to support participation of national institutions, municipal research institutions and non-profit organizations in the Platform.

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