

2nd International Forum on Low Carbon Cities

6-7 December 2022
(Field visit: 8 December)

Sheraton Grand, Incheon, Republic of Korea

Concept note

Background

Cities are key contributors to climate change, accounting for three-quarters of global CO₂ emissions but in the frontline of combatting its adverse impacts. Accounting for less than 2% of the Earth's surface, more than half of the world's population lives in urban areas, a proportion that is expected to increase to 68% by 2050, with many of this increase taking place in cities in Asia.¹ Thus, it is imperative to have rapid and far-reaching transitions in energy use from urban transport, water use and sanitation, buildings and industrial systems to achieve the global goal of limiting warming to 1.5°C.

Since the adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015, more than 130 countries have now set or are considering net-zero/carbon neutrality targets by around mid-century,² and local governments as well have been announcing ambitious initiatives to prepare for the transition to low/zero carbon societies. For instance, all local governments in the Republic of Korea, including Incheon Metropolitan City, became the first in the world to participate in the 2050 Declaration of Carbon Neutrality at the P4G Summit in 2021. As such, cities are preparing their tailored plans and policies for low carbon cities, considering their unique circumstances and characteristics. At the same time, cities should work closely with the national governments and learn from others to effectively address the pressing issues of climate change with a coordinated approach and action plan.

Against this background, ESCAP East and North-East Asia Office and Incheon Metropolitan City (IMC) jointly organized the 1st International Forum on Low Carbon Cities in November 2021, in collaboration with Incheon Climate and Environment Research Center, ICLEI, Innovative Green Development Program and Green Climate Fund, to expand the partnership for promoting climate action at city-level and create synergies among existing city initiatives pursuing low carbon/carbon neutral cities in and beyond North-East Asia. Bringing together local governments, international and regional organizations, national and regional city networks, experts and other stakeholders, the first Forum deliberated key issues on scaling up city-level climate actions and highlighted best practices of the city's climate action planning to low carbon solutions in energy, transport and building sectors, green financing and stakeholder engagement.

As a unique occasion to build a partnership with existing networks on low-carbon, sustainable, resilient cities and scale-up capacity building efforts and initiatives, the 2nd International Forum on Low Carbon Cities will be organized from 6 to 8 December 2022 to discuss solutions and stakeholder engagement toward a low-carbon society, facilitating information sharing and strengthening partnership and peer-learning among cities and city networks.

¹ 2018 Revision of World Urbanization Prospects, UNDESA

² <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/net-zero-coalition>

Tentative programme

Tuesday, 6 December	
09:00-09:30	Registration
09:30-10:30	<p>Opening Session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remarks by Incheon Metropolitan City, UN-ESCAP, Green Climate Fund • Keynote speech • Incheon's pledge to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 • Group photo
10:30-10:50	Break
10:50-12:30	<p>Session 1. Climate Governance and Roles/Policies of Cities</p> <p><i>The session will have presentations from governments and cities on the policies and programmes in support of national commitments to the Paris Agreement and local government's voluntary commitments; and discuss the roles of cities in climate governance.</i></p>
12:30-14:00	Lunch, hosted by Green Climate Fund
14:00-15:30	<p>Session 2. Nature-based and Innovative Solutions</p> <p><i>Nature-based solutions (NbS) have already been widely applied globally, for enhancing urban resilience and developing cities with better ecosystem services. Nowadays, more and more benefits are identified, while contributing to upscaling the positive impacts of climate actions, and low-carbon strategies. This session gathers insights from city practitioners on various types of NbS activities taken at regional, city, and community levels.</i></p>
15:30-15:50	Break
15:50-17:20	<p>Session 3. Circular Economy and Cities</p> <p><i>The circular economy is a system solution framework that keeps resources in the economic system at the highest value possible. The session will listen to the local governments on their contributions to sustainable and circular societies at a city level.</i></p>
17:30-	Dinner (invitees only), hosted by IC&E
Wednesday, 7 December	
09:00-09:30	Registration
09:30-11:00	<p>Session 4. Green Financing</p> <p><i>The session will offer a unique occasion to continue build and strength the partnership between financial institutions in the region with focus on: (i) establishing a common understanding of the gaps and available resources toward a low-carbon society among cities and city networks; and (b) sharing information and successful cases from cities/projects to strengthening partnership and peer-learning.</i></p>

11:00-11:15	Break
11:15-12:30	<p>Networking Session</p> <p><i>The session will introduce the ongoing and planned initiatives/activities of international and regional institutes in support of low-carbon cities.</i></p>
12:30-14:00	Lunch, hosted by ESCAP
14:00-15:30	<p>Session 5. Citizen and Stakeholder Engagement for Sustainable Cities</p> <p><i>This session will discuss the process of stakeholder engagement, with a focus on the private sector, youth, and inclusive initiatives. Speakers will present on their best practices and share success factors for citizen engagement. The path towards zero-carbon is one that must be inclusive and this session seeks to highlight the importance of inclusivity and leaving no one behind on the journey to zero-carbon cities.</i></p>
15:30-15:50	Break
15:50-17:20	<p>Session 6. Roles of Regional Cooperation</p> <p><i>The session will discuss the roles of regional cooperation in achieving low-carbon societies and seek ways to synergize the work of city networks.</i></p>
17:20-17:40	Closing
Thursday, 8 December	
08:00-16:00	<p>Field Visit (invitees only)</p> <p>National Institute of Environmental Research (Carbon zero building), and the Sudokwon Landfill Site</p>