

International Forum on Low Carbon Cities

23-24 November 2021

Organized by UNESCAP East and North-East Asia Office and Incheon Metropolitan City
In collaboration with Incheon Climate and Environment Research Center, ICLEI, Innovative Green Development Program and Green Climate Fund

Background

Climate change increasingly intensifies the extreme weather, causing the visible damages to life and infrastructures of the society. To combat climate change, the Paris Agreement calls for holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C, preferably 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. However, the recent IPCC's Sixth Assessment estimates that achieving the goal of 1.5°C or even 2°C will be beyond reach unless there are immediate, rapid and large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions (GHG).

In pursuing of the GHG reduction, cities must be at the forefront of actions considering that cities account for 70% of global CO₂ emissions from energy use and are also the major ground of climate vulnerability with the heavy concentration of population and infrastructure. Hence, cities play a defining role in succeeding the global efforts for combating climate change. While national governments have been scaling up the level of commitments and policies through Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and Low Emission Development Strategies (LEDs), cities must do so and be enabled to accelerate the low-emission resilient transition.

Many cities in North-East Asia have already initiated low carbon city (LCC) development policies and strategies to reduce GHG emissions with or without national targets or legislative obligation. For instance, some large cities in the subregion (e.g., Beijing, Shenzhen, Kitakyushu, Seoul and Incheon, to name a few) have full-fledged departments and resources to formulate and implement LCC plans. More cities will commit local actions to carbon neutrality following to the goals announced by the national governments, including China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the Russian Federation, to achieve carbon neutrality in North-East Asia.

To promote knowledge sharing and peer-learning on LCC activities among cities, academia and research institutes, UNESCAP East and North-East Asia Office, as the Secretariat of NEASPEC¹, launched the North-East Asia Low Carbon City Platform (NEA-LCCP). There are also various international organizations and global/ regional city networks supporting or promoting experience sharing of cities towards LCC development, although with a varying range of stakeholders and approaches, and with various geographic coverage. While each actor has been conducting a series of projects and studies on LCC separately, they all showed the varying degree of progress and extent of commitments towards low carbon development

¹ North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC) was established in 1993 as a comprehensive intergovernmental cooperation framework addressing environmental challenges in North-East Asia. It has six member States: China, DPRK, Japan, Mongolia, Republic of Korean and the Russian Federation.

across cities and countries in both formulating and implementing LCC policies. Although capacity to formulating LCC strategies depends on the administrative capacity and authority of each local government, successful experiences could be served as a driving force to further promote LCC in the subregion.

In this connection, ESCAP and the Incheon Metropolitan City are expanding the partnership for promoting climate action at city level by holding a regular International Forum on Low Carbon Cities to create synergies among existing city initiatives pursuing low carbon or carbon neutral cities in and beyond North-East Asia. The Forum intends to complement the ongoing initiatives and bring together local governments, international organizations, regional city networks, experts and other stakeholders to deliberate key issues on scaling up city-level climate actions.