

Cities from across the world make historic commitment to climate adaptation action

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DURBAN/South Africa – History was made today as 114 mayors and other elected local leaders representing over 950 local governments from around the world, came together in the signing of the Durban Adaptation Charter, a political commitment to strengthen local resilience to climate change.

The event, entitled the Durban Local Government Convention: adapting to a changing climate – towards COP17/ CMP7 and beyond, ran in parallel to the UNFCCC COP17/CMP7 and drew over 700 delegates to the eThekweni City Hall, from 2-4 December. The Durban Local Government Convention was organised by ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, the South African Department of Environmental Affairs, South African Local Government Association (SALGA), South African Cities Network (SACN) and eThekweni Municipality.

After intense deliberations in Durban's Council Chambers, governors from around the world moved, as proposed by the mayor of Kisumu, Kenya, and seconded by Lagos State, to unanimously adopt the Durban Adaptation Charter. Mayors, Governors and Chairs of local government associations from as far afield as Bangkok, Thailand, to Vancouver, Canada, from Johannesburg, South Africa, to Quito, Ecuador, joined with those from 24 other countries in making this ground-breaking local government commitment towards urgent, decisive measurable, reportable and verifiable (MRV) climate commitments. Through national associations, large numbers of local governments from Tanzania, Norway, Namibia, Mauritius, Nigeria and South Africa are also joined in supporting this Charter.

By signing the Charter, local governments have committed to unprecedented levels of local climate action to:

- mainstream adaptation as a key informant of all local government development planning
- ensure that adaptation strategies are aligned with mitigation strategies
- promote the use of adaptation that recognizes the needs of vulnerable communities and ensure sustainable local economic development
- prioritize the role of functioning ecosystems as core municipal green infrastructure
- seek innovative funding mechanisms, etc.

Durban's Mayor, James Nxumalo, who led the signing of the Charter, stated: "Local governments from around the world made history today by committing themselves to enhanced adaptation action through their signing of the Durban Adaptation Charter. The Charter is a clear indication that the impacts of climate change can only be addressed through development that promotes human welfare, ensures ecosystem integrity and promotes a new greener economy. It is appropriate that this challenge was taken up on African soil, given the vulnerability of our continent to climate change impacts; and in Durban, a city that has become a leader in the field of climate

change adaptation." Mayor Nxumalo has been designated by the signatories to present the Durban Adaptation Charter to the high level segment of the UNFCCC COP17/CMP7.

A growing international recognition of local governments as critical actors in the global climate agenda was testified by the participation of many distinguished panelists including, inter alia: Dr. Rajendra Pachauri, Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; six South African Government Ministers; and the South African President, HE Jacob Zuma, who declared: "Municipalities in the developing world must not wait for surprise flooding, extreme drought or fires – we need to start investigating today for a safer tomorrow by prioritizing the establishment of disaster management structures across all spheres of government." President Zuma wished local government delegates fruitful deliberations and stressed the global significance and strategic timing of the event.

By committing to the Durban Adaptation Charter, cities have further demonstrated their political will to address climate change, pledging to enhance their local adaptive capacity and engender greater resilience in the face of escalating climate change. This was emphasized by the ICLEI President, David Cadman, Deputy Mayor of Vancouver in Canada, who stated that "this commitment from local and sub-national governments compliments the 'Global Cities Covenant on Climate – the Mexico City Pact', led by Mayor Marcelo Ebrard from Mexico City, through which they measure, report and verify greenhouse gas emissions reductions, climate mitigation and adaptation commitment and actions. This Pact, together with the momentous Durban Adaptation Charter, spearheads collective and decisive local action at a point in history where, sadly, there is no credible indication that our nations are able to reach a global deal at COP17. Our cities cannot wait for the COP Parties. We are at the tipping point of winning or losing the battle against climate change and we, the governments closest to the people, know we need to take collective action now."

- end of press release –

Questions? Looking to arrange an interview?

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Downloads!

- Durban Local Government Convention Declaration: www.iclei.org/africa (available from 4 December 2011)
Local Government Climate Roadmap: www.iclei.org/climate-roadmap

More information needed?

Durban Local Government Convention, 2-4 December 2011, Durban, South Africa

On 2-4 December 2011, Durban hosted the Durban Local Government Convention 'Adapting to a changing climate – towards COP17/CMP7 and beyond' to mobilize the participation of local governments in the UN climate talks in Durban. The Convention was strategically timed to take place during the UNFCCC climate talks (COP17/CMP7) taking place in Durban, South Africa. Building on the recognition of local governments as the governmental stakeholders in the Cancun Agreements, local governments and their associations will come together to build on the outcomes of the Resilient Cities 2011 congress, focusing on understanding and

improving the profile of adaptation as a critical tool in achieving local developmental and sustainability objectives. The South African Government, through the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), South African Cities Network (SACN), eThekweni Municipality and the Department of Environmental Affairs have partnered with ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability in hosting the Durban Local Government Convention.

The Mexico City Pact

The Global Covenant of Cities on Climate ('Mexico City Pact') was launched at the World Mayors Summit on Climate in Mexico City in November 2010. To date it has been signed by over 200 Mayors and representatives of local governments. The Pact sets out why cities are strategic actors in combating global warming, and establishes a set of voluntary commitments to promote strategies and actions aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting cities to the impacts of climate change.

By signing the Pact, cities and local government have also committed to register their emission inventories, commitments, and actions to the carbonn Cities Climate Registry.

www.mexicocitypact.org

The carbonn Cities Climate Registry (cCCR)

The carbonn Cities Climate Registry (cCCR) is a global mechanism that encourages local governments to regularly and publicly report on their greenhouse gas reduction commitments, GHG emissions inventories and climate mitigation/adaptation actions. The cCCR was developed by local governments for local governments. The cCCR enables cities and local governments to publicly register their greenhouse gas reduction commitments, report performance and showcase actions. The cCCR ensures that local climate action is measurable, reportable and verifiable, and that data are consistent with the standards of the global climate regime.

The cCCR supports the global credibility of local climate action and ensures transparency, accountability and comparability.

www.citiesclimateregistry.org

ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability

ICLEI has been acting as the focal point of the Local Governments and Municipal Authorities (LGMA) constituency to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) since 1995, and has been leading the Local Government Climate Roadmap process since 2007.

More than 1200 local governments and their associations, representing over 440 million people in 70 countries, constitute ICLEI's membership. ICLEI is a global association of local governments and municipal organizations that have made a commitment to sustainable development. As a movement, ICLEI runs the world's largest climate program of cities, that links local action to national goals and internationally agreed targets.

www.iclei.org

World Mayors Council on Climate Change (WMCCC)

The World Mayors Council on Climate Change is an alliance of committed local government leaders advocating an enhanced recognition and involvement of Mayors in global efforts to address climate change. The Council plays an instrumental role in building political leadership around the Mexico City Pact and carbonn Cities Climate Registry (cCCR). The World Mayors Council has been supported by ICLEI since its inception in 2005.

www.worldmayorscouncil.org