



# Buildings Day Bulletin

**A Briefing Note of Buildings Day at COP 21:  
Mobilizing the Building and Construction Sector for Climate Action**  
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## **BRIEFING NOTE ON BUILDINGS DAY AT COP 21: MOBILIZING THE BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION SECTOR FOR CLIMATE ACTION: 3 DECEMBER 2015**

Buildings Day at COP 21: Mobilizing the Building and Construction Sector for Climate Action was held on 3 December 2015 in Paris, France, during the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 21) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Organized by the UN Environment Programme’s Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (UNEP DTIE), the event considered the role of buildings in reducing carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions and promoting energy efficiency. It was part of ‘Buildings Day,’ the first to be held at a UNFCCC COP, organized to provide an opportunity to launch an alliance of organizations collectively committed to, among other things, helping to put the buildings and construction sector on the ‘below 2°C path.’ Events and actions under ‘Buildings Day’ were held throughout the day.

Participants at the *Mobilizing the Building and Construction Sector for Climate Action* event heard from government officials, experts in the building and construction sector, private sector actors, and non-governmental organizations, who discussed their work in promoting low-carbon, energy efficient development in their cities. At the event, chaired by Arab Hoballah, Head of Sustainable Cities, Lifestyles and Industry, UNEP, participants heard from three expert panels on: the building sector’s below 2°C (<2°C) pathway; government leadership in policy and strategies; and subnational leadership and action.

### **SESSION I: THE BUILDING SECTOR’S <2°C PATHWAY**

In a keynote address, Ed Mazria, Architects 2030, noted that, in the US, although energy consumption in buildings was predicted to increase, the sector had actually reduced consumption considerably. He noted that the sector is on track to reach the 0% goal on energy consumption by 2040. He highlighted the 2050 Imperative agreed by the International Union of Architects in 2014, in which architects committed to eliminate emissions in the built environment by 2050. He stressed the need for the Paris agreement to include this goal, arguing that it would spur more architects to meet it.

In a panel discussion moderated by Sandrine Dixon-Declève, Director, Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership (CISL), Marcene Broadwater, International Finance Corporation



**Sandrine Dixon-Declève, Director, CISL**

(IFC), underlined that big construction projects in emerging markets should be low-carbon and energy efficient, but pointed to the challenges that may hamper a transition to this pathway, including the misconceptions related to the cost of building ‘green.’ She highlighted the need to raise awareness of the financial benefits of green construction through, *inter alia*: a clear definition of green building standards; easy to use technology; the creation of an enabling environment for green construction; and collection of data to support the claim that building green is financially viable.



**Marcene Broadwater, IFC**

Dominique Campana, French National Environment and Energy Management Agency (ADEME), highlighted ADEME’s work in green buildings in tropical belts in Africa and Asia. Drawing attention to the launch of the Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction, she highlighted ADEME’s commitment to have more countries participating in their work in the tropics.



**Dominique Campana, ADEME**

Matt Golden, Investor Confidence Project, noted that the key barrier to investment in green renovations is confidence building, and explained that his organization’s role is to act as a convener in bringing various stakeholders to the table. He underscored that although it is accepted that energy efficiency in buildings is worthwhile in the long-run, there are still challenges in financing these projects.

Calling for a multi-stakeholder approach to addressing climate change, Chen Zhen, Secretary-General, China Exploration and Design Association, underscored the need for architects and developers to work on getting investment returns to investors, and not the other way round. He drew attention to the China Accord, a collaborative effort to lower emissions in the built environment, noting that from 2016, architects and developers in China will be working with the government to reach the emission reductions targets specified by the government.

Ibrahim Al Zubi, Majid Al Futtaim, Dubai, called for developers to consider end users’ need to save costs, as well as investors’ need for long term profitability and protection of brand reputation. He drew attention to the importance





Participants listening to panelists

of valuing the end user, noting that in the Middle East and Africa, most of the clients are young, active and socially conscious.

### **SESSION II: GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP IN POLICIES AND STRATEGIES**

This panel discussion was moderated by Jukka Uosukainen, Director, Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN). David Turk, Department of Energy, US, highlighted tools created to further energy efficiency in buildings in his country, including the Better Buildings Challenge, the setting of minimum energy conservation standards, and working with industry to improve building codes.

Stephen Hibbert, ING Bank, noted that energy efficiency in the building and construction sector can be strengthened by both demand-side and supply-side drivers, and that these require action from both the government and the private sector in order to be successful. He called on governments to implement existing policies, and noted the need for harmonization of policies and action from the local to the national level, and beyond.

Maryke Van Staden, ICLEI, underlined the importance of involving local governments in discussions about the built environment. She highlighted local government commitments to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, as well as increasing renewable energy use and promoting energy efficiency. She lamented that in many cities in the global South, the finance to implement their commitments to building green is still a challenge.

Kian Seng Ang, Director, Building and Construction Authority, Singapore, noted the importance of pitching building green as a long-term investment, and stressed the use of a life-cycle approach in the development of a business case for greening the construction industry. He noted the benefits of green buildings in densely populated cities, and called for capacity development of key industry players in order to build a critical mass of experts.



**Kian Seng Ang**, Director,  
Building and Construction  
Authority, Singapore



**Maryke Van Staden**, ICLEI

Pekka Huovila, Coordinator, 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP), announced 10YFP's call for applications for the Sustainable Buildings and Construction (SBC) trust fund, noting that the award was up to US\$500,000 to support up to three project proposals submitted by non-profit organizations.

Underscoring the notion that green buildings make good business sense, S. Raghupathy, India Green Building Council, described India's Energy Conservation and Building Code, as well as the country's green building standard, which he noted creates an incentive for developers to go green. He announced plans to facilitate the expansion of green construction in the country to 10 billion square feet by 2022, and called for a market transformation towards green construction material in the near future.



**S. Raghupathy**, India  
Green Building Council

### **SESSION III: SUBNATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND ACTION**

This panel discussion was moderated by Raf Tuts, UN HABITAT. In her address, Clover Moore, Mayor, Sydney, noted the city's target of reducing carbon emissions by 70% by 2020, and highlighted a smart green business programme that has assisted business owners around the city to reduce their operating costs while reducing their emissions. She announced that Sydney's Better Building Partnership has surpassed the halfway mark toward a 70% emission reduction target, highlighting that most of this is due to improved energy efficiency measures.



**Clover Moore**, Mayor, Sydney

Moore also highlighted her city's sustainability plan for residential apartments, as well as Sydney's energy efficiency master plan. She called for the Paris agreement to include the role of cities in reducing emissions and energy consumption. She noted that for almost a decade, the city did not have a supportive government, and worked on climate change issues independently, partnering with the business and research community to devise solutions to pressing issues facing the city. Moore shared that the city was inspired by other cities' green initiatives like Los Angeles' switch to LED street lighting, and Tokyo's energy efficiency practices.

Johannes Van der Merwe, Councillor of Cape Town, South Africa, highlighted the launch of the city's 'State of Energy Report,' which outlines the city's plans to, *inter alia*, have energy efficient water heaters, efficient lighting mechanisms, more energy efficient buildings and refrigeration by 2020. He also noted plans to revamp the transport sector by increasing bus rapid transport routes and the number of passengers on public transportation.

Van der Merwe drew attention to the city's draft guidelines on energy efficiency, which are geared to assist developers to meet minimum requirements; and highlighted the work of the



Participants during the session on subnational leadership and action

energy efficiency forum which supports information sharing, and the increase of transparency between the government and business. He also spoke about a climate coalition of multiple stakeholders across South Africa who meet to discuss CO2 emission reductions and energy use.

Marcio Araujo de Lacerda, Mayor, Belo Horizonte, noted that the national government had involved Mayors and local level officials in discussions on climate change. He highlighted Belo Horizonte's plan to incentivize builders and construction companies to adopt green measures on energy efficiency and the incorporation of green areas in their development plans.

Kassim Reed, Mayor, Atlanta, noted that the significant challenge facing his city is carbon in commercial and residential buildings, and highlighted the rolling out of the national better buildings challenge to incentivize designers and developers to build greener buildings. He said the city aims to reduce energy consumption by 20% by 2020, and highlighted initiatives to this end, including the purchase of electric cars, the encouragement of solar lighting, and the promotion of green renovations.

Highlighting the need to change consumption pattern in general, Reed spoke about Atlanta's plan to revamp the old water system in order to curb water leakages.

Bima Arya, Mayor of Bogor, noted that his city's biggest challenge is transportation and highlighted plans to move to bus rapid transit. He outlined the city's policy regarding the

use of personal vehicles, announcing that for instance, the city's public officials only use public or green transport on Mondays. He also spoke about Bogor's endorsement of the concept of green buildings, and highlighted plans to retrofit some existing buildings to make them more energy efficient.



Kassim Reed, Mayor, Atlanta

Arya further noted a mayoral decree that calls for all buildings to be compatible with the green cities programme. He said the city cooperates closely with multiple ministries at the



Jennifer Layke,  
World Resources Institute

national government level to ensure that all city projects are compatible with the relevant national legal frameworks.

Jennifer Layke, World Resources Institute, noted that non-governmental organizations can assist stakeholders interested in promoting green buildings by researching ways to bring commercially viable green technologies to cities. She also noted the convening role of non-governmental actors, and highlighted that these actors could also assist in fundraising for stakeholders interested in sustainable building and construction.

In closing, Hoballah noted that although the challenges in the building and construction sector are significant, they are surmountable. He underlined commitment shown by governments, business and civil society to work together to drive the transition towards low-carbon economies. He pointed to the Global Alliance for Building and Construction as a tool to enable stakeholders to reap the low hanging fruit in the sector.



A press conference at the Solutions Gallery