National Institute of Urban Affairs

United Cities and Local Governments Asia-Pacific

The eighty-first session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

21 to 25 April 2025 at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok.

Concept Note

Side Event on City Enabling Environment on Environmental and Climate Governance

Tuesday, 22 April 2025 (17:15 – 18:30 GMT+7)

Background

Urbanisation in the Asia-Pacific region has been growing at an unprecedented pace, making cities the epicentres of economic development, innovation, and social transformation. However, with rapid urbanisation comes a range of environmental and climate challenges that threaten the sustainability and resilience of cities. Climate-related risks such as rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and increasing carbon emissions are exacerbating vulnerabilities, particularly for low-income and marginalised communities. The governance structures that oversee environmental policies and climate action at the city level play a crucial role in ensuring sustainable urban growth. Strengthening these governance frameworks through collaborative regional efforts is essential to achieving the long-term sustainability goals of cities in the region.

The eighty-first session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), to be held from 21 to 25 April 2025 at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok, will focus on the theme "Regional cooperation for resilient and sustainable urban development in Asia and the Pacific." Ministers, policymakers, and urban development experts will gather to discuss the pressing urban challenges faced by cities and share strategies for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Paris Agreement, and the New Urban Agenda. The conference will underscore the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement, innovative governance models, and regional cooperation in ensuring inclusive and climate-resilient urban development.

As part of this regional dialogue, **the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIA) partnering with United Cities and Local Governments Asia Pacific (UCLG ASPAC)** will co-host a side event to present the findings of the City Enabling Environment on Environmental and Climate Governance (CEE-ECG) assessment. This assessment, conducted under the Urban-Act Project

Supported by: Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action; IKI International Climate Initiative; on the basis of a decision by the German Bundestag

Project partners: giz Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH; ESCAP; UCLG ASPAC United Cities and Local Governments Asia-Pacific; tu dortmund university; University of Stuttgart Germany

across five countries—China, India, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines—evaluates the effectiveness of environmental and climate governance in these urban contexts. The study aims to identify governance gaps, best practices, and opportunities for enhancing local-level climate action. Given the increasing frequency of climate-related disasters, this initiative is crucial for ensuring that urban areas are equipped to tackle climate risks and build resilient communities.

Despite numerous commitments and international frameworks supporting sustainable urbanisation, many cities in the Asia-Pacific region still face significant barriers to effective environmental governance. Weak institutional coordination, lack of financial resources, and insufficient technical capacities hinder the ability of local governments to implement climate policies. Additionally, rapid urban expansion without adequate planning has exacerbated environmental degradation, leading to water scarcity, air pollution, and inefficient waste management. Addressing these issues require a comprehensive approach that integrates environmental governance into urban planning, strengthens policy coherence across different levels of government, and leverages innovative financing mechanisms to support climate adaptation and mitigation efforts.

The side event will serve as a platform to discuss the findings of the CEE-ECG assessment and highlight key challenges and opportunities in urban climate governance. It will bring together representatives from national and local governments, policymakers, researchers, and urban practitioners to explore strategies for improving governance frameworks and fostering sustainable urban development. The event will also mark the transition from the assessment phase to the monitoring and evaluation phase, ensuring that progress is tracked, and necessary adjustments are made to strengthen urban climate governance in the region.

Objectives

- Present the findings of the CEE-ECG assessment conducted in five Urban-Act Project countries.
- Facilitate discussions between national and local governments on climate change.
- Identify key challenges and opportunities to improve urban climate governance.
- Formulate key recommendations for CED8 on improving city-level environmental and climate governance.

Expected Outcomes

- Increased awareness of the CEE-ECG assessment findings

- Enhanced dialogue between **national and local governments** on environmental and climate governance
- Identification of key **challenges and opportunities** for strengthening governance frameworks
- Recommendations for CED8 on **improving city-level environmental and climate governance**

Organiser

Organiser: The National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) India

Co-organiser: United Cities and Local Governments Asia Pacific (UCLG ASPAC), GIZ India

Targeted Participants

- Representatives from national and local governments of Urban-Act Project pilot countries
- Policymakers and officials from ESCAP member states
- Experts and researchers in environmental and climate governance
- Representatives from regional and international organizations
- Civil society organizations and private sector stakeholders

Date & Platform

The event will be conducted **offline/in person** with the following details:

- **Date**: Tuesday, 22 April 2025
- **Time**: 17:15 – 18:30 hours
- **Venue**: United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok
- **Mode**: Offline/In-person
- **Language**: English

Session Guidelines

First Round

- *Moderator invites all speakers to take their seats at the table.*

- **Moderator** presents an overview of the CEE-ECG assessment results and informs participants about the upcoming monitoring and evaluation phase. *(5 minutes) then*
- **Speakers** from the five Urban-Act Project countries share their insights on the findings, discuss national-level challenges, and propose strategies to enhance climate governance. *(20 minutes discussion format)*

Second Round

- *Moderator invites three speakers from local governments of Urban-Act pilot cities to take their seats.*
- **Speakers** from local government representatives of Urban-Act pilot cities share their perspectives on the assessment results and provide local insights on implementing governance improvements. *(20 minutes discussion format)*
- **Q&A session and closing** to facilitate engagement with participants. *(10 minutes)*

Logistics

- Venue arrangements and technical support will be coordinated by UCLG ASPAC.
- Documentation of key discussion points for follow-up actions will be prepared by xxx.

Tentative Agenda

Duration	Session Description
10 mins	**Welcoming Remarks** by NIUA and UCLG ASPAC • Overview of session objectives • Presentation of CEE-ECG Framework
	Overview of CEE-ECG Findings: Moderator presents key results from the assessment and introduces the monitoring phase.
20 mins	**First Round – Country Perspectives:** Three speakers from Urban-Act countries discuss findings, governance challenges, and improvement strategies 1. Dr. Debolina Kundu, NIUA India Director/representative 2. TBC, DILG Philippines Representative 3. TBC, MONRE Thailand Representative Moderator: ESCAP or GIZ India Key discussion:

	• What are the main challenges faced by your country in implementing effective environmental and climate governance? • How has the CEE-ECG assessment helped identify gaps in your national governance framework? • What key policy or legislative changes are necessary to strengthen climate governance at the national level? • How can cross-border regional cooperation enhance environmental sustainability in your country? • What role can international organisations play in supporting governance improvements in your country?
20 mins	**Second Round – Local Government Perspectives:** Three representatives from Urban-Act pilot cities share their insights on governance improvements. Action intervention in cities: 1. Mr. Bhupender Kumar Attri, Commissioner of Shimla Municipality, India 2. Mr. Thiru. Sivaguru Prabakaran, Commissioner of Coimbatore, India 3. Mr. Shri Clen Madeira, Commissioner of Panaji, India 4. Mr. Boonyalit Phanichrungruong, Deputy Mayor of Khon Kaen Municipality, Thailand 5. Tbc, City Government of Antipolo, Philippine Key Discussion: • What are the key environmental and climate governance challenges at the city level? • How do local governments collaborate with national authorities to ensure effective climate policy implementation? • Can you share any successful local initiatives that have strengthened climate resilience in your city? • How can cities improve their access to funding for climate adaptation and mitigation projects? • What specific support do local governments need to enhance governance and accelerate climate action?
10 mins	**Q&A Session & Closing**