Side Event: Best Practices and Facilitated Discussion Empowering City Leaders on Disaster Risk Reduction and Access to Climate Finance

Wednesday 23 April 2025, 15:45 – 17:00, AP Foyer
81st session of ESCAP Commission, United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok

Cities play a critical role in the global fight against climate change. Cities must build resilient, low-carbon infrastructure systems in response to a rapidly growing urban population and the increasing effects of climate change.

A structured approach that supports cities in assessing risks, developing resilience strategies, and implementing action plans is critical for ensuring long-term urban sustainability. However, despite growing commitments to resilience, local governments often face barriers in accessing technical support, financing opportunities, and multi-stakeholder partnerships needed to turn plans into action.

This session will bring together key actors from across sectors to explore how cities can strengthen their resilience pathways through regional collaboration (i.e. Making cities Resilient 2030 initiative, CDKN Accelerating Inclusive Action, CapaCITIES Project, Green City Action Plans for Malaysian Cities, experience sharing, enhancing capacity of city leaders in planning, designing for enhancing better access to finance for sustainable and climate-resilient urban infrastructure projects through the introduction of the early stages of project preparation with the City Climate Gap Fund.

Objective

1. Foster dialogue between cities, national governments, development partners, and private sector actors to promote multi-level and cross-sectoral partnerships that support urban and disaster resilience.
2. Provide city leaders and local governments with a structured approach to assessing risks, planning, and implementing resilience strategies and projects that align with global frameworks such as the Sendai Framework, SDGs, and the Paris Agreement through MCR2030 resilience roadmap
3. Highlight the importance of collaboration across different levels of governance and sectors to drive a people-centered approach in urban resilience planning.
4. Discuss challenges and opportunities for cities through City Climate Gap Fund to access early project preparation support to build bankable projects for resilience-building.

Targeted Audience

City or local government officials responsible for climate action planning and implementation, local resilience and disaster risk reduction and management, urban development and planning, national associations of municipalities, urban resilience and development practitioners, NGOs, civil society organizations, and other third-party organizations working closely with cities or local governments to develop climate actions.

Proposed speakers

1. ICLEI South Asia – Emani Kumar, Executive Director of ICLEI South Asia (confirmed)
2. Commissioner from India or representative from Padang, Indonesia
3. Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, Thailand (TBC)
4. Climate City Gap Fund (confirmed)

Proposed Agenda

Time	Description
40 minutes	Panel Discussion: Governance and Financing of Climate Action in Cities (Quick sharing and presentation) ● Tools to support cities in disaster risk reduction planning and implementation ● Access climate finance for climate-resilient urban infrastructure and adaptation projects, during early stages of project preparation ● Climate resilience planning and climate induced disaster risk reduction in South and Southeast Asian cities ● Barriers to and opportunities of climate financing for cities
30 minutes	Open Discussion to share best practices and case studies (from cities/partners)
20 minutes	Facilitated discussion and wrap-up ● Identify priority projects and challenges ● Identify project needs and preparation support ● Potential interventions and supports - developing disaster risk reduction plans, planning and preparing for projects, accessing climate finance

Expected Outcomes

The session will focus on DRR-CCA governance at the local level, including investment in risk assessment and the implementation of climate action plans. These efforts will serve as a foundation for advancing CCA-DRR financing at the local level.

1. Enhanced understanding of urban resilience approaches
2. Stronger regional and multi-stakeholder networks
3. Practical guidance on implementing resilience strategies
4. Improved awareness and access to climate finance for urban resilience projects

Session Arrangement

58 seats roundtable at AP Foyer

About Co-organizers

The GCOM-Gap Fund Partnership

The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy (GCoM) is the largest global alliance for city climate leadership, built upon the commitment of over 11,500 cities and local governments. In total, they represent more than 1 billion people. Uniquely positioned at the nexus of cities, city networks, national and supranational governments, and philanthropy, the GCoM alliance elevates city climate leadership and enables strategic and innovative partnerships that are at the crossroads of research, data, finance, and communications.

The City Climate Finance Gap Fund (The Gap Fund) aims to help bridge the urban financing gap, helping rapidly urbanizing cities in developing and emerging countries realize their climate ambitions, turning low-carbon, climate-resilient ideas into strategies and finance-ready projects.

It is a multi-donor initiative, supported by Germany's Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU), the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), as well as Luxembourg's Ministry of the Environment, Climate and Sustainable Development.

GCoM and Gap Fund partnered to promote and support this opportunity. The project aims to increase awareness and understanding of the Gap Fund and to build knowledge about low-carbon, climate-resilient development in cities. The project aims to raise awareness of cities and city networks about the Gap Fund and support to cities through outreach activities.

Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) South Asia - Local Governments for Sustainability is a network of more than 2,500 local and regional governments, which is supported by a team of global experts, and is driving sustainable urban development worldwide. Active in 125+ countries, we impact over 25 percent of the global urban population. ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, South Asia (ICLEI South Asia) – the South Asian arm of ICLEI, is a not-for-profit organization located in Delhi and is operational in India since 2005. ICLEI South Asia aims to build and serve a regional network of local governments to achieve tangible improvements in regional and global sustainability through local initiatives. In South Asia, we have provided technical support and assistance to local governments from countries including India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bhutan on sustainable development, climate mitigation and adaptation and urban transport and design, waste management, and bio-diversity initiatives.

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) supports disaster risk reduction efforts across the Asia-Pacific region. ROAP works with governments, United Nations Country Teams, regional and international organizations, and other stakeholder groups, to protect people from disasters, build resilience and support sustainable development. ROAP covers a total of 39 countries and 13 territories. It is based in Bangkok, Thailand, with a sub-regional office in Suva, Fiji, a liaison office in Kobe, Japan, and an office for North-East Asia in Incheon, Republic of Korea.

United Cities and Local Governments Asia Pacific (UCLG ASPAC) is the united voice and advocate of democratic local self-government, which promotes cooperation between

governments and within the wider international communities in the Asia-Pacific Region. Facilitating various programmes, networks and partnerships to develop the capacity of local governments (LGs) and local governments associations (LGAs), UCLG ASPAC also represents LGs politically within the international community, and with the United Nations and its agencies. UCLG ASPAC also advocates the important role of cities and LGs in achieving sustainable development, including building resilient communities. In cooperation with the UNDRR, UCLG ASPAC has been promoting Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and MCR 2030 in the Asia-Pacific region over the past years. It has been used as a platform for strengthening the commitment and capacity of LGs in DRR and the implementation of the Sendai Framework for DRR 2030. Based in Jakarta, Indonesia, UCLG ASPAC committed to support LGs in their resilience-building journey.

Making Cities Resilient 2030 (MCR2030) is a unique cross-stakeholder initiative for improving local resilience through advocacy, sharing knowledge and experiences, establishing mutually reinforcing city-to-city learning networks, injecting technical expertise, connecting multiple layers of government and building partnerships. Through delivering a clear 3-stage roadmap to urban resilience, providing tools, access to knowledge, monitoring and reporting tools. MCR2030 will support cities on their journey to reduce risk and build resilience. MCR2030 aims to ensure cities become inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable by 2030, contributing directly to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG11) “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”, and other global frameworks including the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda