



Summary of UNOSSC Webinar South-South Cooperation Between Cities for Climate Action

Tuesday, 30 June 2020

Background

On 30 June 2020, the webinar [South-South Cooperation Between Cities for Climate Action](#), organized by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) brought together experts, decision-makers, scientists and researchers from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, China and India to share their experiences in responding to climate change. The discussion centered around how Southern cities are using innovative and collaborative approaches in order to tackle the challenges posed by climate change, as well as the role of South-South and triangular cooperation as a catalyst for climate action.

The aim of the webinar was to spotlight how South-South cooperation can function as a bridge between scientists and decision makers, now that more than ever decisions must be guided by the best available science. The emergency of the COVID-19 pandemic and the emergency of climate change need to be addressed hand in hand at global and local levels in order to build new resilient and sustainable cities for people's well-being.

The event started with the opening remarks from:

- Jorge Chediek, UNOSSC Director and Envoy of the Secretary General on South-South Cooperation;
- Marcos Regis Da Silva, Executive Director of the Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research (IAI); and
- Debbie Menezes, Senior Research Advisor, UNOSSC

Panel presentations

Mr. Haroldo Machado-Filho, UNDP Brazil, set the stage for the panel presentations by mentioning that the webinar was the continuation of the dialogue between local managers and scientists reflected in the report "[City-to-City Partnerships and South-South and Triangular Cooperation on Sustainable Urban Development](#)" developed by UNOSSC and IAI, focused on how cities of the Global South are using innovative, collaborative and evidence-based processes to tackle challenges posed by climate change. The report offers concrete examples of city-to-city partnerships and South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives on urban planning and management, seeking to inspire further action.

The panel was composed of eight co-authors of the report presenting five cases from Buenos Aires (Argentina), Sao Paulo (Brazil), Santiago (Chile), Pune-Surat-Chennai (India) and Shenzhen (China) with the aim to exchange experiences and ideas on: (1) how cities from the South are using innovative, collaborative and evidence-based processes to tackle challenges from climate change; and (2) the role of South-South and triangular cooperation in supporting cities to adapt to climate change in the new reality of life after COVID-19.

Mr. Umamaheshwaran Rajasekar, Chair of the Urban Resilience Unit, National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA), India shared a “tale of three cities.” Indian cities are prone to several shocks and stress that are usually aggravated by varying climatic conditions. The most widespread amongst these include water scarcity, pluvial and fluvial flooding. While the challenges are many, three Indian Cities namely Chennai, Pune and Surat as a part of the 100 Indian Smart Cities and 100 Resilience Cities globally, have managed to gain exposure and share knowledge about urban water management with few other cities in global south namely Accra, Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Cape Town, Da Nang, Jakarta, Medellin, Semarang, Singapore and Vietnam. The city-to-city learning was facilitated through knowledge forums, shared learning workshops and city visits to foster cross- pollination of ideas and learn from initiatives implemented by other cities in the Global South. In some cases, these networks have also enabled the cities to secure necessary support, both in terms of technology and additional funding, to mainstream their water resilience strategies.

Ms. Jussara Carvalho, Head of International Affairs, Secretariat for Infrastructure and Environment, State Government of Sao Paulo, Brazil, and Mr. Pedro Roberto Jacobi, Professor of the Institute of Energy and Environment, University of Sao Paulo, Brazil and President of Board of ICLEI South America mentioned that the city of São Paulo is adopting bold new concepts adapted to, and supporting, its urban transformation. The most significant achievements can be seen in the transport and waste management sector, thus offering lessons to other cities facing similar challenges. The city has several international agreements with cities in the Global South.

Mr. Dong Wang and Mr. Yuan Zeng, Shenzhen Research Center on Climate Change School of Economics and Management, Harbin Institute of Technology, Shenzhen (China) presented the case of the city of Shenzhen that has successfully pursued a green approach to development of its urban space and economy through resource saving and environmental protection, the optimisation and upgrading of industrial structures, and strong advocacy for green and low-carbon production and urban lifestyles. The SSC approach to tackling climate change is aligned with the priorities of China’s national climate strategy and national targets. Simultaneously, Shenzhen is also using its experience to participate in low carbon development international cooperation through engaging with other countries on capacity building, knowledge and technology sharing, and facilitating policy discussions. Shenzhen also sees the potential value of the SSC platform in promoting its participation in the construction of China’s “Belt and Road” Initiative (Zengkun, 2019). As Shenzhen continues on its urban development journey, it is seeking to broaden the scope of its cooperation and mode of partnerships with other developing countries to promote the sharing of advanced low-carbon technologies and urban development models

Ms. Cristina Huidobro, Deputy Chief Resilience Officer, Metropolitan Regional Government of Santiago (GORE), Chile said that Santiago is taking important steps to innovate and articulate initiatives that address climate change. It aims to have a region that promotes people-centered, more inclusive and resilient development aligned with the SDGs. To achieve those goals, Santiago is committed to promoting electro-mobility at both public and private transportation systems. In addition, Santiago is updating its resilience strategy to enhance and recognize climate change across all pillars and initiatives, acknowledging the cross-cutting nature of it and its ensuing consequences. Finally, the city thinks that it is necessary to reinforce South-South cooperation, and to generate coherence between the different

levels of governance, with a bottom-up approach that enables generating solutions that contribute to adaptation and mitigation.

Ms. Patricia Himschoot, Climate Change Manager, Environmental Protection Agency and Ms. Valeria Massy, Climate Change and Environmental Information Advisor, City Government of Buenos Aires, Argentina indicated that the City of Buenos Aires has committed to be a carbon neutral, resilient and inclusive city by 2050. For this purpose, its governance system is a key point. Buenos Aires is working actively on projects and actions to tackle the impact of heatwaves and urban heat islands, and nature-based solutions are increasingly seen as key strategies. Now and in the future, it is necessary to strengthen cooperation with the academic world and between cities to solve common challenges.

Mr. Machado-Filho moderated a robust Q&A discussion after presentations.

Ms. Xiaojun Grace Wang, UNOSSC Deputy Director provided an insightful summary with the following key points:

- SDGs are at the centre, with the principle of leaving no one behind; effective solutions for Climate Change issues require a multi-sector and multi-disciplinary approach.
- Good policies and programmes should be ambitious and have clear goals and targets; they need to be based on good data and scientific evidence, supported by infrastructure and technologies; therefore, it is very important to engage academics to dialogue with governments.
- People-centered approach is the essence, not only at macro-planning level, but also at the level of programme design, combining large and small/flexible programmes to bring access and affordability directly to people in need. It was highlighted by several panelists that empowering and engaging people to change behaviours requires leveraging informality beyond formal regulations.
- Through knowledge sharing, technical exchanges, financial support -- no matter how far physically apart, the similarity of issues and the relevance of solutions closes the gap among cities.
- Convening platforms are important to make the implementation process of SDGs more horizontal. These include examples of sub-regional, regional mechanisms, as well as global networking of cities. Individual cities can also actively engage with other cities through self-initiated forums. Such connectedness is the gift of the era and we should realize the full potential of it.
- The UN facilitates partnership and programmes often bring public and private partnership together and can also enhance the effectiveness of solutions and help achieve impact at scale.

Ms. Wang also stated that UNOSSC is proud to champion the issue of city-to-city cooperation together with cities and offer their service and facilitation through the following means:

1. UNOSSC website holds the discussion panel for the subject to continue the dialogue <https://www.unsouthsouth.org/climate/city2city/>.
2. UNOSSC and UNDP jointly support the Global South research community through the South-South Global Thinkers initiative. All participants are welcome to identify follow-up research proposals and seek collaboration with over 250 institutions across Global South to do joint research <https://www.ssc-globalthinkers.org/about-us>.
3. The global knowledge sharing and partnership brokering platform – South-South Galaxy – can help to translate cities needs, ideas, and solutions, to concrete partnerships <https://www.southsouth-galaxy.org/home-page/>.

4. The UNOSSC Maritime-Continental Silk Road SSC and TrC among cities project would like to work with cities to bring partnerships to actions <http://www.southsouthcities.org/>.

Ms. Wang wrapped up the event with a huge vote of thanks to the speakers.