

Durban Adaptation Charter for Local Governments as adopted on the 4th December 2011 of the occasion of the “Durban Local Government Convention: adapting to a changing climate” - towards COP17/CMP7 and beyond -

Preamble

As the local governments of the world gather in Durban, South Africa for COP17-CMP7 at a critical moment in the international climate change negotiations, we recognize the significance of the event by:

Recalling the 1955 Freedom Charter which was the product of South Africans developing their own vision of an alternative society and reaffirming that government is only valid if it follows the will of the people;

Recalling that Agenda 21 identifies local government as the “level of government closest to the people” with a “key role to play in making sustainable development happen”;

Noting the 2010 Cochabamba Final Declaration of the World People’s Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth that acknowledges that the future of humanity is in danger as a result of pursuing a model of limitless growth and that the significant adaptation debt borne by the Global South must be addressed through financial compensation, improved social and environmental justice and an acknowledgement of the importance of ecological integrity.

Noting that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has highlighted the need for more extensive and rapid adaptation than is currently occurring to reduce vulnerability to climate change;

Welcoming the outcome of the Cancun Agreements where local and subnational governments are recognized as “governmental stakeholders” in the global climate regime, as a concrete achievement of two decades of global climate advocacy of local governments;

Recognising that the challenges of climate change, poverty, and ecosystem degradation are rapidly widening the gap between the resource demands of growing populations and associated economies, on the one hand, and a declining natural resource base and carrying capacity on the other;

Recognising that current sustainable development gains, particularly the food-water-energy nexus, are being undermined by the impacts of climate change;

Recognising the disproportionate impact that climate change has on women and the urban and rural poor;

Recognising the intergenerational inequity of indecisive mitigation and adaptation action;

Acknowledging that the world’s urban population is growing rapidly; that cities are centres of economic, political and cultural innovation; significant drivers of national economies; and manage vast public resources, infrastructure, and investments;

Acknowledging that globally, local governments play a strategic role in addressing climate change, because of their direct activities in delivering local government functions; their responsibility for laws and regulations that can influence adaptation and mitigation; and their ability to demonstrate leadership and innovative solutions in this area;

Recognising that we need to place adaptation at the core of our future local climate change response plans and urban development strategies and that we need to grasp the economic and social opportunities afforded by sustainable development;

Underlining the value of the efforts that have been built since the Earth Summit, the increased momentum of the Local Government Climate Roadmap since 2007 and the most recent commitments of local government to advance the adaptation agenda at the local level including **Global Cities Covenant on Climate – the Mexico City Pact, African Mayors’ Climate Change Declaration 2011** and 2011 *Bonn Declaration of Mayors*;

Supporting the Earth Charter’s call for a global partnership to address the multiple ecological, social and economic challenges that face the world.

Clauses

We the signatories to the Durban Adaptation Charter, call upon local and sub-national governments to commit and upscale action to accelerate their adaptation efforts by committing to the following:

1. Mainstreaming adaptation as a key informant of all local government development planning

We commit to climate change adaptation as a key consideration in all key local government development strategies and spatial development frameworks. Institutionally climate change should be located in a high level integrating office such as the Executive Mayor or City Manager's office of the local authority.

2. Understand climate risks through conducting impact and vulnerability assessments

We will undertake local level impact and vulnerability assessments to determine the exposure, sensitivity and adaptive capacity of human and natural systems as guided by best available science and traditional knowledge.

3. Prepare and implement integrated, inclusive and long-term local adaptation strategies designed to reduce vulnerability

We will prepare evidence-based, locally relevant adaptation strategies and will develop and adopt measures to ensure that the objectives of these strategies are implemented, monitored evaluated and mainstreamed into statutory government planning processes. This planning will guide the development of infrastructure and investments that are climate-smart and environmentally sustainable, and that ensure that urban and rural development provide opportunities for adaptive, sustainable development.

4. Ensure that adaptation strategies are aligned with mitigation strategies

We will ensure that adaptation actions taken are in synergy with mitigation actions in order to promote cost-effective and sustainable solutions, and limit increases in the production and release of greenhouse gases. Similarly, we will ensure that mitigation activities do not increase vulnerability or result in mal-adaptation.

5. Promote the use of adaptation that recognises the needs of vulnerable communities and ensures sustainable local economic development

We will ensure that the use of Community Based Adaptation (CBA) is prioritised in order to improve the quality of life in our communities, including the urban and rural poor, who are vulnerable to the harmful impacts of climate change, especially vulnerable groups such as women, children, youth, the elderly, physically and mentally challenged, disadvantaged minority and indigenous populations. We will engage our citizens in our actions to address climate change, and will support proposals from civil society that efficiently and cost-effectively encourage changes in lifestyles that contribute to our local climate actions. We will assess climate adaptation strategies for compatibility with local economic development strategies.

6. Prioritise the role of functioning ecosystems as core municipal green infrastructure

We will ensure that sustainable management, conservation and restoration of ecosystems and the related ecosystem services are used to enable citizens to adapt to the impacts of climate change, which is known as Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EBA). We will strive to maintain and, enhance resilience and reduce the vulnerability of ecosystems and people to the adverse impacts of climate change.

7. Seek the creation of direct access to funding opportunities

We will build our climate financing through generating funds internally and through seeking the development of innovative financing mechanisms that enable direct access to national and international funding for our registered adaptation actions. We support the creation of a local adaptation thematic window in the Green Climate Fund, and in so doing we will seek the support of national governments and multilateral funding institutions.

8. To develop an acceptable, robust, transparent, measureable, reportable and verifiable (MRV) register

MRV systems should reflect the local context in which adaptation takes place.

9. Promote multi-level and integrated governance and advocate for partnerships with sub-national and national governments on local climate action

We will ensure cooperation with all levels of government to implement plans and measures at the local level that harness and strengthen approaches to multi-level governance and improve interdepartmental co-operation in order to more effectively address factors reaching beyond local government boundaries, including climate change hazards, trends like urbanisation and migration, and institutional and legal frameworks. In this regard we would support the appropriate representation of local governmental stakeholders, with relevant experience, on the Adaptation Committee of the Cancun Adaptation Framework.

10. Promote partnerships at all levels and city-to-city cooperation and knowledge exchange

We agree to seek active partnerships and promote city-to-city cooperation, at regional and global levels including information and knowledge sharing, capacity development and technology transfer in all areas relevant to adaptation and encourage and invite other leaders of local and sub-national governments to join our climate actions.

Presentation

We the signatories of the Durban Adaptation Charter designate the Mayor of Durban to present this Charter to the high level segment of COP17/CMP7 meeting here in Durban to urge Parties to urbanize the global climate agenda and subsequently to present this Charter to the World mayors Council on Climate Change to consider appropriate implementation mechanisms.

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