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# KYOTO ENGAGES PEOPLE, BUSINESSES, AND THE PUBLIC SECTOR IN CLIMATE ACTION

Kyoto (Japan) is committed to climate change mitigation and adaptation. The city works with diverse groups within the municipality, region, and as a part of the larger international community – including as a signatory to the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCoM) – to meet its climate action targets. Kyoto looks at climate action holistically: it must address a wide variety of sectors, engage diverse local voices, and utilise interventions that are environmentally, socially and economically sustainable.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kyoto has a long history of being part of climate action at the global level, as demonstrated by its role as the birthplace of the landmark Kyoto Protocol. This history has informed the city's firm belief that climate action must be implemented in cooperation with a community of international peers. In order to support its active and ongoing contribution to this community, Kyoto joined the Global Covenant of Mayors in January 2019. Kyoto approaches climate action inclusively, believing that

it is necessary to empower civil society, businesses, residents and the public sector all to take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate climate change. The city has set itself ambitious emissions reduction targets, and is leveraging cooperation with all of these levels groups to, for example, make its energy systems more sustainable, to educate children on environmentally sustainable behaviour, and to improve "circularity" in production and consumption.



## CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Kyoto sees climate change as a challenge to be addressed through empowering civil society, as well as the private and public sectors all to do their parts. This, in itself, presents certain challenges. In particular, it can be difficult to ensure that broad systems – such as the legal system and financial mechanisms – promote and support initiatives taken on by civil society groups, individuals, and the private sector; this is a crucial step to empower all to take action.

At the civil society level, residents are, in particular, engaged in sustainable energy campaigns. Approximately 90 percent of Kyoto's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are attributable to energy. The city has thus focused much of its work on policies that support energy conservation and the uptake of renewable energy sources. Kyoto has an energy conservation campaign that asks locals, "Are you doing something good for the environment?" This is complemented by the promotion of energy generation by local resident groups in energy cooperatives. What's more, an "eco-life challenge" is used as a tool to conduct environmental education for children.

The public and private sectors are working to make the city more "circular" by reducing food

and plastic waste, and using infrastructural policy tools to give pedestrians and public transportation priority on city streets.

Climate change is a complex challenge that impacts all parts of a city. Addressing it thereby requires coordination across a vast number of sections of any city. Coordinating and matching solutions across fields has been a challenge for Kyoto, as well as for an extensive number of cities across the world. Kyoto is also wrestling with the challenge to realise a decarbonised city, which has never before been seen. This can be challenging, as it requires investing in and trusting still unknown innovations.

To overcome these barriers, Kyoto is engaging all stakeholders in society in continuous dialogue. This includes speaking with residents, local businesses, institutes and all others, and using these dialogues to inform, test, and bolster their climate work.

Many of the challenges Kyoto faces are common to all cities fighting climate change. The opportunity to exchange knowledge with international peers through the GCoM is thus also an important step to gather new solutions.



Image: City of Kyoto



## RESULTS AND IMPACT

The "Kyoto City Global Warming Countermeasure Ordinance" – developed in 2011 – was Japan's first code dedicated to implementing measures to combat climate change. The ordinance strives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels by at least 80% overall, beginning with a 25% reduction by 2020, and 40% reduction by 2030. The 49th session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was held in Kyoto in May 2019, and inspired the city to increase their ambition further; they now aim to be carbon neutral by 2050.

Kyoto has put in place a number of interventions – many of which are outlined above – to mitigate climate change and build a more sustainable city. The city is also applying an inclusive approach – of engaging residents, businesses, and the government – to climate change adaptation.

Kyoto is at risk of "guerrilla downpours" and typhoons, which are only expected to increase in frequency and intensity as climate change progresses. The city has thus created a hazards map to identify high-risk areas, and has undertaken large-scale river restoration and sewer maintenance, which has improved local resilience to such events.

Kyoto is continually working on ever more urban greening to reduce the intensity of "heat islands." As part of measures against heat stroke, Kyoto is also working on a campaign which guides residents to large, private facilities, which are well temperature controlled. This campaign is also effective in saving energy at home.

Climate change will increase the intensity and frequency of many, varied natural disasters. To prepare for whatever may come, Kyoto is preserving and maintaining forests to minimise the damage of disasters. Kyoto is supporting the installation of solar power generation equipment in houses; this equipment is also useful in disaster prevention, such as being able to use electricity at home even during a power outage caused by natural disasters.

The city's hope for the GCoM is clear. As more and more cities join the GCoM, the collective force of those cities that commit to decarbonisation will increase, thereby strengthening everyone's ability to successfully address climate change.



Image: City of Kyoto



## LESSONS LEARNED



Working to lower municipal emissions has taught the city how to set up and leverage a wide array of tools – such as financial mechanisms and collaborations with varied groups – to help make the city truly sustainable.



Kyoto has learned the power of community-led and participatory frameworks to ensure the success of climate action.



Sustainability must be holistic, applying integrated solutions that address environmental, social and economic issues.



Cities are not isolated, but rather exist in a larger region. By creating networks within the region, Kyoto has been able to advance on their GHG reduction goals.



Image: City of Kyoto



## THE IUC PROGRAMME

The International Urban Cooperation (IUC) programme enables cities in different global regions to link up and share solutions to common problems. It is part of a long-term strategy by the European Union to foster sustainable urban development in cooperation with the public and private sectors, as well as representatives of research and innovation, community groups and citizens. Through engaging in the IUC, cities will have the chance to share and exchange knowledge with their international counterparts, building a greener, more prosperous future. The IUC programme is an opportunity for local governments to learn from each other, set ambitious targets, forge lasting partnerships, test new solutions, and boost their city's international profile. Its activities will support the achievement of policy objectives as well as major international agreements on urban development and climate change, such as the EU Urban Agenda, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the Paris Agreement.

## THE GLOBAL COVENANT OF MAYORS FOR CLIMATE & ENERGY

The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy (GCoM) is an international alliance of local governments with a shared vision of a world where urban leaders and their partners accelerate ambitious, measurable climate and energy initiatives that lead to a just, low-emission and climate resilient future. The GCoM enables cities, local governments, and the networks that support them to move from ambition to action. It elevates climate leadership and facilitates partnerships at the crossroads of research, data, finance, and communications. The GCoM emphasises climate change mitigation, adaptation, and access to clean and affordable energy.

The GCoM supports locally-relevant solutions in sectors where cities can have the greatest impact. GCoM cities register, implement, and monitor their strategic action plans and make information on their efforts publicly available.



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