



**INTERVENTION ON BEHALF OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES MAJOR GROUP
AT THE CLOSING PLENARY OF 2ND UN ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY (UNEA-2)**

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Delivered by Andrea Reimer, Councilor, Vancouver, Canada

Mr. President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

It is my first visit to UNEP ministerial meeting and I want to say that I have been reassured and encouraged to personally witness your shared care for the world.

At the same time I am very much struck by how much of your discussion has been about how to translate aspirations into action.

As the "street level" of government, local authorities have had no choice but to act. Environmental degradation is not a theoretical future but a very real now for the world's cities and urban dwellers.

In the course of this action, we have learned a lot. There are thousands of examples I could provide but I don't have thousands of minutes so I will give you just one example: my own city, Vancouver.

In 2009 we set an aspiration to be the greenest city on earth by 2020. In the six years since the Copenhagen failure, Vancouver has gone from not being in the ranked cities to now being the 4th greenest city in the world.

And Vancouver is in *Canada*. Imagine what cities without the previous national government we had to deal with could do.

A case in point: the world's largest environmental killer is air pollution which cities are both the major source of and the best solution-provider for. Around the world, we have built up local capacity and systems to improve air quality including public and non-motorized transport, commitments to 100% renewable energy, sustainable waste and water management, energy efficient buildings, and protecting and restoring biodiversity.

Of course, air pollution crosses borders so our efforts must too. Just last week East Asia Clean Air Cities Programme was launched by ICLEI to unite cities from four nations -including Seoul, Tokyo, Beijing and Ulaan Baatar - behind a clean air action agenda.

This in turn builds on the first dialogue of cities, Mayors and other subnational leaders with Ministers of Environment at the G7 in Toyama, Japan earlier this month.

I will close by underlining the most important lesson we've learned: you cannot have 20+ ministries doing everything exactly the same as they have in the past and then expect that one environment ministry can somehow create a different future.

If you want to see effective outcomes it must be by **replacing** old, unsustainable activities with new sustainable actions that are *instead of not in addition to* business as usual. As but one illustration, clearly the urgently needed transition to 100% renewables cannot happen if we continue to waste resources on new fossil fuel infrastructure.

One of those new actions I would invite you to commit to is effective ongoing collaboration with local authorities and other major groups. In the year of only the third HABITAT conference in 40 years, there is no better time to establish a 21st century standard for effective multilevel, multistakeholder engagement.

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