

Vol.42 | November 2024 - April 2025

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

NEWSLETTER



United Cities and Local Governments
Asia-Pacific



BLUE ECONOMY

Foreword



As local leaders, it is essential to understand the complex challenges we face – from climate induced disasters, economic uncertainties, to rapid urbanisation. How we respond to these challenges today will shape our cities for generations to come. Local and regional governments are best placed to ensure that solutions are people-centered and co-created with our communities. May the experiences we share as UCLG ASPAC become an inspiration for sustainable and inclusive local governance.

GOV. DAX CUA
President, UCLG ASPAC
(President, Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines;
Chairman, League of Provinces of the Philippines;
and Governor, Province of Quirino, Republic of the Philippines)



This edition of the UCLG ASPAC newsletter showcases our exciting work and transformative role for local and regional governments in Asia and the Pacific. We strive to not only initiate dialogue but drive innovations for sustainable and resilient communities. We ensure that local and regional governments are not only present but heard in key regional processes. Let us take this momentum to upscale local solutions, invest in our capacities, and strengthen our collaboration as foundation for sustainable urban development.

Dr. Bernadia Irawati Tjandradewi
Secretary General, UCLG ASPAC

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Welcome to Boracay

Size: Approx.10.3 km2
Population: 37,000 inhabitants

Insights about Boracay

- The most iconic island in the Philippines.
- **Top 10 island status in Asia (Conde Nast Traveler's The Best Islands in the World Readers Choice Awards, 2019-2020).**
- Popular for its beaches and blessed with a long stretch of powdery white sand, crystal clear and azure waters, and a stunning sunset.
- Boracay draws over a million tourists annually, mostly from South Korea, China, the Philippines, and Western countries.



WILLY'S ROCK

- A castle-like volcanic formation that dominates the seascape along White Beach
- There are stairs leading to a chapel at the top, containing a statue of the Virgin Mary
- Willy's Rock is the most photographed landmark on Boracay and offers a commanding view of the island



AKLAN PROVINCE

- Originally known as "Minuro it Akean"
- Situated in the Western Visayas region of the Philippines
- Divided into 327 Barangays grouped into 17 Municipalities
- Kalibo is the Capital Town
- Considered as the oldest province in the country
- Origin of Kalibo Sto. Niño Ati-atihan Festival (The Mother of all Philippine Festivals)



PARAW SAILING

- Well known activity in the area



PUKA BEACH

- Known for its powdery white sand and gorgeous, pristine beaches

sources: My Boracay Guide, Tourism Philippines, tpb.gov.ph

Blue Economy in the Asia-Pacific: The Role of Local Governments

The Blue Economy refers to the sustainable use of ocean and coastal resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and job creation while protecting the health of marine ecosystems. It encompasses activities such as fisheries, aquaculture, tourism, shipping, and renewable marine energy – all with an emphasis on long-term environmental sustainability. In the Asia-Pacific region, where economies are closely tied to the ocean, the Blue Economy holds enormous importance. Local governments – from coastal cities to small island municipalities – play a critical role in translating Blue Economy principles into practical action.



DID YOU KNOW?



Maritime Transport

Over 80 percent of international goods traded are transported by sea, and the volume of seaborne trade is expected to double by 2030 and quadruple by 2050. UCLG ASPAC dan Yiwu have established Logistic Committee.



Waste Management

Plastics are the predominant form of marine litter, accounting for threequarters of the global quantity. (GloLitter Partnerships, 2022)

Around 80 percent of litter in the ocean is from land-based sources. (eee.europa.eu, 2024)



Tourism

Coral reef tourism generates \$36 billion per year. (KAS, 2021)



Fisheries

Asia (excl. China) occupies around 34 percent of the global fishing and aquaculture market. (KAS, 2021)

Importance of the Blue Economy in Asia-Pacific

Ocean-based industries contribute significantly to many national economies in the region. The share of the Blue Economy in the GDP of Asia-Pacific countries ranges from 1% to over 30%, and even around 87% in certain small island nations. This demonstrates the vital role of marine and coastal resources in supporting livelihoods. Asia-Pacific fisheries are a cornerstone of the global food supply, with around 85% of people employed in the fishing sector worldwide working in Asia. Coastal tourism is another growing sector, bolstered by the region’s rich marine biodiversity. When managed sustainably, the Blue Economy can support both economic growth and environmental stewardship.

However, the ocean faces growing pressures – rising temperatures, overfishing, pollution, and biodiversity loss threaten both marine life and coastal communities. Climate change impacts, such as sea-level rise and extreme weather, particularly affect low-lying islands and delta regions. Embracing Blue Economy principles is therefore critical to ensure sustainable development and build resilience.



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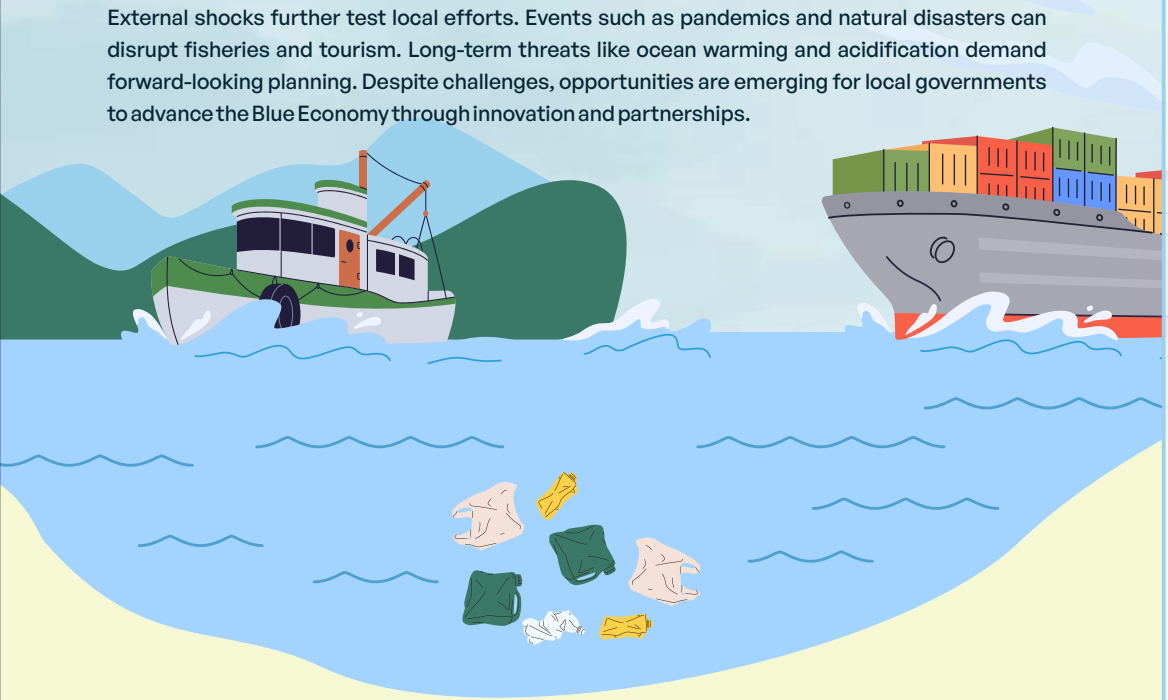
Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI).

UNESCO. Towards a Sustainable Blue Economy in Asia-Pacific.

Challenges for Local Governments

A major challenge is the lack of a universal framework for sustainable ocean governance. While broad guidelines exist, local governments often struggle to translate these into practical policies. Many also face limited capacity and resources, needing support to regulate ocean-based industries responsibly. Coordinating across sectors is another difficulty. The Blue Economy spans diverse sectors – fishing, tourism, marine transport – that often fall under different governance structures. Local governments must collaborate with national agencies, neighbouring jurisdictions, and private actors. Without integration, progress in one area may be undermined by setbacks in another.

External shocks further test local efforts. Events such as pandemics and natural disasters can disrupt fisheries and tourism. Long-term threats like ocean warming and acidification demand forward-looking planning. Despite challenges, opportunities are emerging for local governments to advance the Blue Economy through innovation and partnerships.



Today, approximately 3 billion people live within 200 km of a coastline, and over 40 per cent of the world’s population lives within 100 km of the coast (UNDESA, 2007). Coastal inhabitants face higher environmental vulnerabilities than other regions.

Strategies for Advancing a Local Blue Economy

Align Policies and Governance

Local governments should align their plans with national and global sustainability goals. Clear legal and institutional frameworks help enforce rules and enable confident investment in Blue Economy projects.

Blue Finance and Investment

Developing the Blue Economy requires upfront investment. “Blue finance” includes funding from public budgets, international grants, and private sector partnerships. These resources can support projects such as eco-tourism, renewable energy, or sustainable aquaculture.

Resilience and Adaptive Management

Coastal economies are vulnerable to shocks. Local governments can adopt adaptive planning by protecting natural buffers like mangroves and coral reefs. These measures preserve ecosystems and shield shorelines, while also enabling communities to respond to changing environmental conditions.

Community Engagement and Partnerships

Local people must be at the centre of Blue Economy efforts. Governments should involve fishermen, youth, small businesses, and indigenous groups in decision-making. Public awareness campaigns can strengthen stewardship. Partnerships with universities, NGOs, and international agencies also help build local capacity and scale up sustainable initiatives.

Conclusion

The Blue Economy offers a path to prosperity in Asia-Pacific without compromising the marine environment. Local governments are key actors in turning vision into action through regulation, financing, and community involvement. Global initiatives such as the UN’s Ocean Decade provide momentum – but local implementation is what will ultimately ensure that the ocean remains a source of life and livelihood for generations to come.

Contributed by: Agung Zulhatta, Research and Learning Officer, UCLG ASPAC

Thailand: Turning Discarded Nets into Equipment

Thailand, under the Department of Fisheries, Department of Marine and Coastal Resources and the Department of National Parks, Wildlife, and Plant Conservation, has supported the Net Free Seas (NFS) Project launched in 2020 by the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF), to rid Thailand's waters of discarded fishing nets. A non-profit organisation, World Animal Protection, estimated that abandoned nets kill at least 136,000 seals, sea lions and whales every year. They also injure or kill thousands of other animals including birds, turtles, fish, and other species (NFS Progress Report 2020-2021). The project aims to stop this and at the same time empower local communities and make them part of the recycling solution. It also provides participating communities a secondary source of income for the collection and selling of discarded fishing nets.



Stakeholders' Engagement

The project has engaged 105 local fishing communities across the country which includes 19 communities from 17 islands, five private companies – Qualy, Kitamura UMC-Micro Precision, Teamplas, Asia Fiber and Thai Union, civil society organisations (Jan & Oscar Foundation, NatureMind-ED, 9 and the Save Andaman Network, as well as government agencies. (Report 2021)

How does it work?

The project facilitates direct engagement and communication between fishing communities and recyclers, ensuring project efficiency, transparency and sustainability:

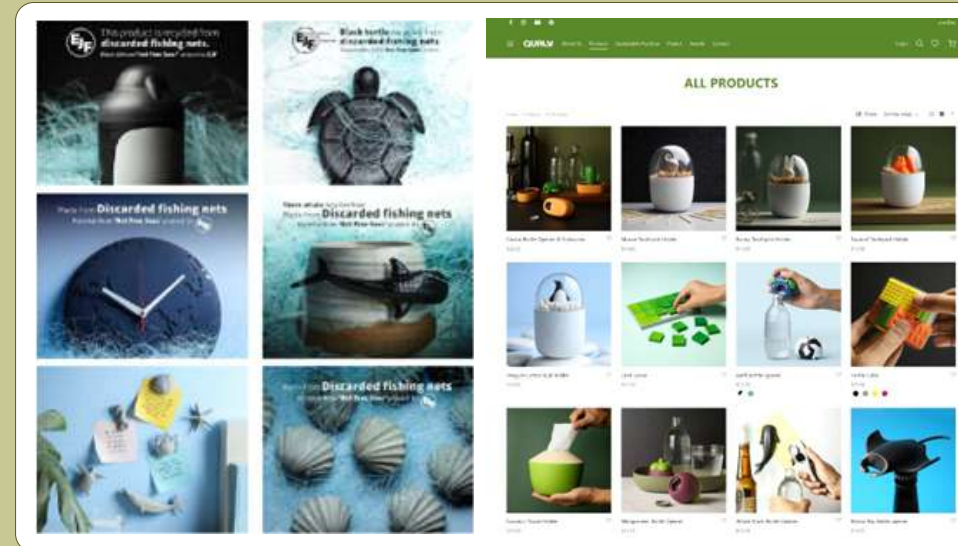
Achievements:



NFS has generated over 170,000 Thai Baht (USD\$5,000) in financial incentives paid to fishers for their nets, offering higher than market price for such materials. Communities can then allocate this extra revenue towards community emergency funds, conservation activities or use it as a supplementary income. (Report 2020-2021)



Change in perception amongst small-scale communities. Net waste collection/management is increasingly being recognised as a tangible source of income that can create jobs for community individuals.



sources: FAO, Net Free Seas, Qualy



Korea Blue Action Plan: Core Commitments for Sustainable Oceans

The Republic of Korea established an integrated maritime and fisheries administration system in 1996. Ever since, the country has applied a balanced approach towards ocean conservation and utilisation through comprehensive maritime policies. When hosting the 10th Our Ocean Conference (April 2025), it announces the “Korea Blue Action Plan” covering 76 ambitious actions across six key areas with a total investment of KRW 3.7593 trillion (approximately USD2.737.212.493).



Korea Blue Action Plan

	 Climate Change	 Sustainable Fisheries	 Blue Economy	 Marine Pollution	 Marine Protected Areas	 Maritime Security
Core Areas						
Investment	KRW 1,01B	KRW 1,321.2B	KRW 1,146.1B	KRW 251.4B	-	KRW 29.6B
Ambitious Actions	29	15	14	13	3	2
Main Goals	1. Promote decarbonisation in the marine and fisheries sectors 2. Strengthen its capacity for climate change adaptation 3.Support the climate adaptation capacity of developing countries 4.Enhance nature-based ocean carbon absorption	1. Strengthen responsible fisheries management 2. Revitalise fishing communities 3.Support economic development in developing countries through sustainable fisheries 4.Recognises the importance of the Global Charter of Fisheries Transparency and will continue its efforts for phased implementation	1. Take lead in adopting science-and data-based marine management tools and in sharing them with the international community 2.Seek sustainable growth opportunities through marine renewable energy and ecotourism 3.Promote a digital-based transformation of the marine economy 4.Expand access to marine education and culture	1. Strengthen the full cycle management of marine waste, including marine plastics 2.Support the reduction of international marine pollution 3. Implement an innovative and comprehensive fishing gear recycling policy	1. Actively work toward the entry into force of the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction agreement 2. Continue expanding domestic marine protected areas 3. Actively participate in discussions on designation of marine protected areas in the high seas	1. Work to establish a global maritime order by preventing piracy and illicit maritime activities 2. Contribute to global maritime security by developing AI-based vessel situation management technologies

Progress/Developments*



Sustainable Fisheries:

- Marine ranching as a new system for fisheries production
- Community-based fisheries resulted in increase of fisheries production, improvement of selling system and making brands of the fishing products, continuous increase of average fishermen's income
- Enactment for offshore aquaculture



Sustainable Ports

- Green port: Busan
- Waterfront programme
- National oil spill response plan
- Enabling environment policies and laws: Framework Act on Low Carbon Green Growth; Harbor Act; Marine Environment Management Act; Sustainable Transportation Logistics Development Act; Clean Air Conservation Act



Sustainable Tourism:

- Ecotourism: Suncheon Bay Eco-Park
- Marine protected area and ecotourism: Cheongsando Island



Marine Renewable Energy

- The 254-megawatt (MW) Sihwa Lake Tidal Power Plant (the largest in the world)
- The Plant is located in Ansan City, within Gyeonggi Province, UCLG ASPAC's active member. It sits on the Sihwa embankment, approximately 60 km southwest of Seoul, near the mouth of the Han River.

*) based on data published in July 2019
sources: Korea Blue Action Plan, noticiasambientales.com, ourocean2025

India's Fisheries Transformation Scheme: Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana

Government of India, under the guidance of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, launched Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), a new flagship scheme for focused and sustainable development of fisheries sector in the country in September 2020 with a substantial investment of Rs. 20,050 Crores (USD 290,000).

Noted as the historically largest investment in the fisheries sector, the initiative aims to drive ecologically health, economically viable, and socially inclusive growth that contributes meaningfully towards the economic prosperity and wellbeing of fishers and fish farmers as well as to the food and nutritional security of the country.

The scheme implementation across India is planned to take five years to achieve additional fish production, double fisheries exports to Rs 1,00,000 Crores and generate employment opportunities for socio-economic development.

Targets

Fish Production and Productivity

- Increasing fish production to 22 million metric tons by 2024-25 from 13.75 million metric tons in 2018-19.
- Enhancing aquaculture productivity to 5 tons per hectare from the current national average of 3 tons.
- Augmenting domestic fish consumption from 5 kg to 12 kg per capita.

Economic Value Addition

- Increasing contribution of fisheries sector to the Agriculture Gross Value Added to about 9 percent by 2024-25 from 7.28 percent in 2018-19.
- Doubling export earnings to Rs.1,00,000 crores by 2024-25 from Rs.46,589 crores in 2018-19.
- Facilitating private investment and growth of entrepreneurship in the fisheries sector.
- Reduction of post-harvest losses from the reported 20-25 percent to about percent.

Enhancing Income and Employment Generation

- Generating 55 lakh 55 lakh (55 million) direct and indirect employment opportunities along the value chain.
- Doubling the incomes of fishers and fish farmers.

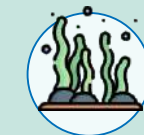
Progress/Development

Estimated beneficiaries: 1,600,000 (approx.)
States/Union Territories (UTs) Covered: 35



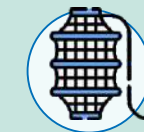
594,538

Fishers' families to get livelihood and nutritional support during fishing ban/lean period



12,725

Rafts and Monoline/Tubenets for seaweed cultivation



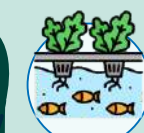
52,058

Number of cages and 560.7 Ha pens in reservoirs and other water bodies



27,189

Fish transportation facilities



23,285.06

Pond area (in Ha) under Inland aquaculture



12,081

Re-circulatory Aquaculture Systems (RAS)

Actions Towards the Goals

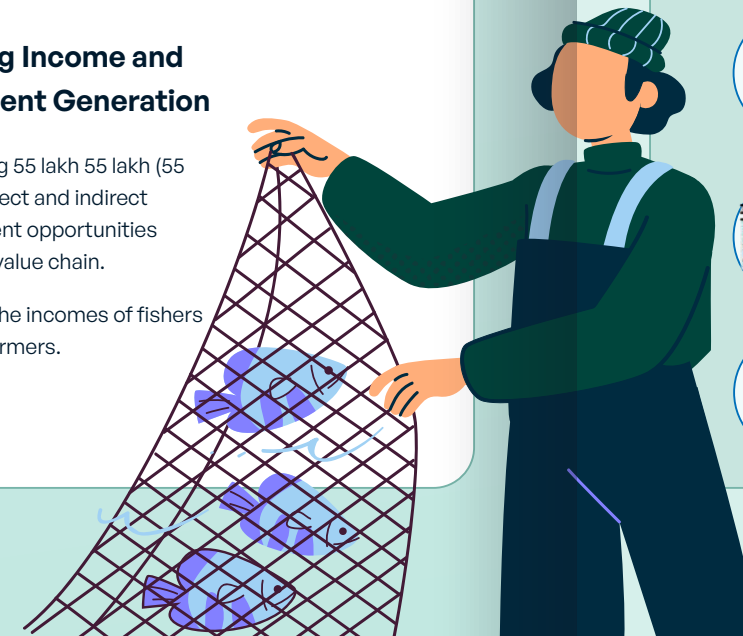
Strategic priorities under Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 1 Marine Fisheries | 5 Aquatic Health Management |
| 2 Inland Fisheries | 6 Ornamental Fisheries |
| 3 Fishermen's Welfare | 7 Coldwater Fisheries |
| 4 Infrastructure and Post-Harvest Management | 8 Seaweed Cultivation |

From Blue Revolution to PMMSY

Blue Revolution, coming before PMMSY, was launched in December 2015 as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme with an outlay of Rs 3000 crores for 5 years (2015-16 to 2019-20) to catalyse the "Integrated, Responsible and Holistic Development and Management of the Fisheries Sector".

sources: Times of India, pib.gov.in, un.org



Reef 2050 Plan: Australia's Strategy for Great Barrier Reef



Great barrier reef is one of Australia's natural gifts. It is home to the abundance of marine life and over 3000 individual reef systems and coral cays. It also contains hundreds of tropical islands with beautiful beaches. The reef is one of seven wonders of the natural world. Larger in size than the Great Wall of China, the reef is the only living thing on earth visible from space. It is recognised as a World Heritage Area for its Outstanding Universal Value.

Holding on vision that the Great Barrier Reef is sustained as a living natural and cultural wonder of the world, Australian and Queensland governments have established Reef 2050 Plan in 2015, a long-term strategy for protecting and managing the Great Barrier Reef to support its health and resilience. The Plan is reviewed and updated every five years and shows the need of accelerated actions due to climate change as well as coastal development activities.

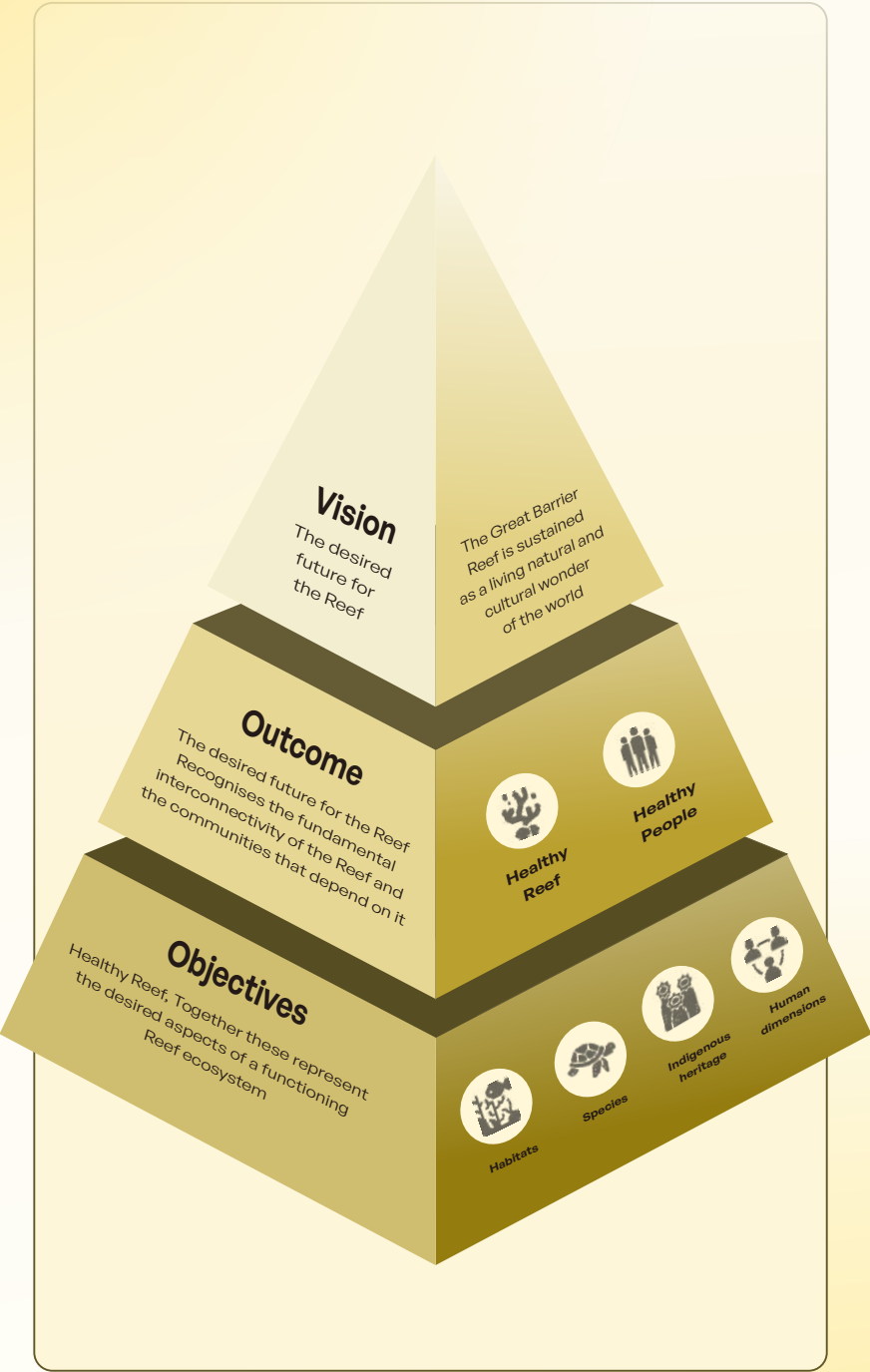
DID YOU KNOW?

The Great Barrier Reef is one of the most complex natural ecosystems in the world

It is the world's largest coral reef ecosystem, a network of approximately 3,000 coral reefs stretching 2,300 kilometres along Queensland's coastline.

It has important connections for many species to non-reef habitats such as seagrasses, mangroves, sandy and muddy areas, coastal wetlands, rivers and islands.

Both reef and non-reef habitats are recognised as part of the 348,000 square kilometre World Heritage Area



sources: qld.gov.au, detsi.qld.gov.au, dcceew.gov.au

Reef 2050 Objectives

Habitat

- Coral reef habitats maintain good condition and resilience.
- Resilient seagrass meadows that maintain condition.
- No loss of the extent of natural wetlands.
- Wetland condition is improved.
- Key values associated with islands are in a desired condition.

Indigenous heritage

- Traditional Owners caring for Country.
- Traditional knowledge about the Great Barrier Reef is owned and managed by Traditional Owners and is protected and retained for future generations.
- Traditional Owners' rights are genuinely recognised and prioritised and inform and drive how benefits are shared.
- Local Traditional Owner land and sea management organisations are equipped to operate at the appropriate scale.
- Country is healthy and culture is strong.

Species

- Populations of seabirds and shorebirds are healthy.
- Populations of protected species are healthy.
- Populations of species of cultural significance to Traditional Owners are healthy.
- Populations of bioculturally important fish and invertebrate species are healthy.
- Populations of fish and invertebrate species that are important for recreational, commercial and culturally based fisheries are healthy.

Human dimensions

- Uses of the Reef are ecologically sustainable as the system changes, in turn sustaining economic and social benefits.
- People maintain or grow their attachment to the Great Barrier Reef.
- People and communities take individual and collective action to maintain Reef resilience.
- Intangible and tangible historic and cultural heritage and contemporary cultural values remain intact.
- Governance systems are inclusive, coherent and adaptive.

Sustainably Financing Climate-Resilient Cities: Insights from Experts

UCLG ASPAC Climate Resilient and Inclusive Cities (CRIC) Project supported by EU invigorated cities in making their climate actions more sustainable through the fourth Panel of Experts and Workshop on Sustainable Financing, held in Kochi, Kerala, India, from February 4 to 6, 2025. Organised in collaboration with the All-India Institute of Local Self-Government (AIILSG), an active member of UCLG ASPAC and a partner of CRIC, this hybrid three-day event brought together more than 151 participants covering local government leaders, CRIC pilot city representatives, Indian cities, CRIC strategic and implementing partners, and financing institutions.



The spotlight of the event was the launch of the Report on Sustainable Climate Finance for Indonesian Cities.

Investment Proposals

Bandar Lampung: highlighted river normalisation projects, embankment reinforcement, and the installation of Early Warning Systems (EWS).

Kupang: planned an investment of IDR 249 billion in integrated water resource management.

Gorontalo: water and sanitation upgrades, waste management infrastructure, and community capacity-building programmes for a USD 9.4 million investment.

Samarinda: “Samarinda Pintar” IoT-based waste management system requiring USD 16.84 million, leveraging technology for smarter solutions, and a Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) transition.

Pekanbaru: USD 9.65 million was proposed for waste management improvements that include black soldier fly bioconversion in organic waste treatment, waste sorting and recycling, landfill improvements with methane capture

Cirebon: optimise its recycling centre to reduce up to 2,500 tonnes CO₂eq of GHG emissions annually.

Mataram: synergistic approach to waste management involves a key project on biodigester installations at the Majeluk Animal Slaughterhouse

Ternate: enhancing urban resilience through three main clusters of infrastructure, education, and partnerships



Participants also took part in a tree-planting activity, reaffirming UCLG ASPAC and AIILSG’s commitment to sustainability, as well as a visit to Fort Kochi via the Kochi Water Metro, India’s first electric-powered water transport system, showcasing green mobility, finance, and sustainable urban transport in practice.



Advancing Sanitation for All: Insights from South and Southeast Asia

UCLG ASPAC, under the framework of the Municipalities Network Advocacy on Sanitation in South Asia (MuNASS) programme, organised the South and Southeast Asia City-Wide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS) Forum, held on January 13-14, 2025 in Bandung, Indonesia. Spotlighting "Bridging Policy and Technology Towards Safe Sanitation in Asia Pacific," the Forum was attended by over 160 participants from across the region and co-hosted by the Faculty of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB). Participants shared research findings, best practices, and challenges related to CWIS implementation, with contributions from 21 speakers and four moderators, representing Australia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Thailand, regional offices of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy (GCoM). As part of the UCLG ASPAC Secondee Programme, representatives from Daegu (South Korea) and Nansha District (Guangzhou, China) shared their city's innovative sanitation initiatives.

Key Points of the Forum

Session 1

Sharing Policy and Regulations, Good Practices from South and South East Asia towards City-Wide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS)

- Emphasised the critical role of inclusive sanitation for public health and welfare, and the need for all cities to strive for Open Defecation Free (ODF) status.
- Collaboration and knowledge sharing are essential, as demonstrated by Aliansi Kabupaten/Kota Peduli Sanitasi Se-Indonesia or Alliances of Indonesian Districts/Cities on Sanitation (AKKOPSI)'s commitment to sanitation development and horizontal learning.
- Highlighted the importance of meeting national goals for safe drinking water and sanitation and addressing the ongoing challenges with safe sanitation across Indonesia.
- Best practices sharing: wastewater management programmes in Banjarmasin and community-based initiatives in Tangerang.
- Challenges: leadership transitions, the need for ongoing policy advocacy and capacity building, the need for continuous commitment to long-term sanitation goals.



Session 2

Innovating for Inclusive Sanitation: Reinvented Technology and Digital Solutions

- Showcased innovative technological and digital solutions such as Shreekhandapur Waste Water Treatment Plant to improve sanitation and resource recovery.
- Highlighted the importance of local sanitation systems and their adaptability to varying conditions.
- Emphasised the need to consider local factors when implementing sanitation technology.
- The importance of addressing the problem of mixing blackwater with greywater and the minimisation of transportation of waste to conserve water.
- Explored innovative ideas like Sanitation 4.0, focusing on accessibility, affordability, and resource recovery.

Session 3

Gender and Social Inclusion in Sanitation, Role of Women Leaders

- Emphasised access to sanitation is fundamental, particularly for women and vulnerable populations.
- The need to include and empower women in CWIS initiatives, addressing unique challenges they face.
- Highlighting economic limitations as key determinants of access to urban sanitation and suggested strategies to be more impactful.
- Showcased Semarang's environmentally conscious infrastructure and international support for inclusive sanitation and highlighted the necessity for gender-sensitive infrastructure design, and sanitation programmes.
- Emphasised the importance of mainstreaming Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) in sanitation, focusing on collaboration between various stakeholders to ensure sanitation facilities meet the needs.

Session 4

Regional Cooperation for Sanitation - A Way Forward to Accelerate Kathmandu Declaration 2023

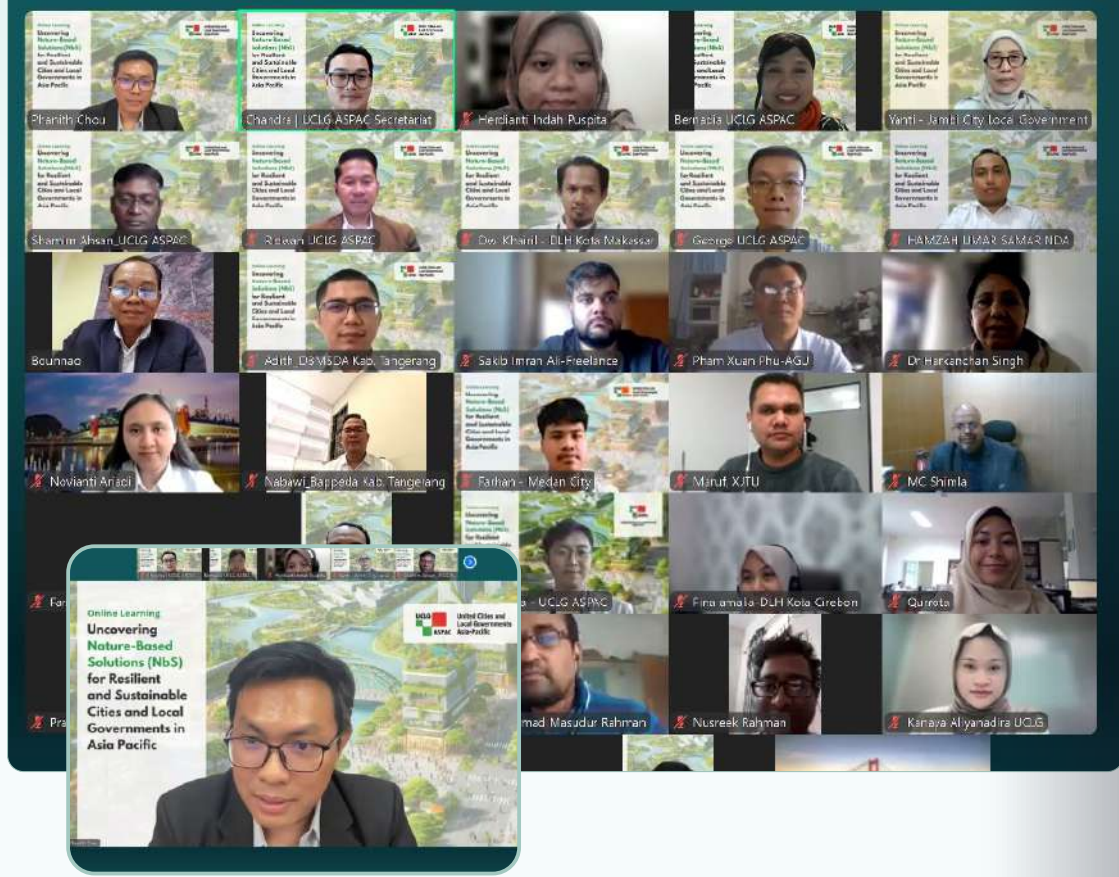
- Spotlighted the importance of regional collaboration in achieving sanitation goals, the need for governments to prioritise sanitation access for marginalised communities.
- Emphasised flexible technology suitable for different city conditions, the importance of soft skills, highlighted the crucial role of capacity building in ensuring sustainable water and sanitation.
- Explored financial solutions to creating climate-resilient and sustainable sanitation infrastructure, showcased examples of how these funds are utilised in various countries.
- Inclusive sanitation needs re-evaluation to prevent negative impacts and ensure positive results, importance to have clear planning and equal access in all communities.
- Continuous learning and technology sharing between cities is a key point, the necessity for strong leadership and collaboration across sectors to tackle sanitation challenges.

Exploring Nature-based Solutions for Resilient and Sustainable Cities in Asia-Pacific

UCLG ASPAC, organised an Online Learning Session: Exploring Nature-based Solutions (NbS) for Resilient and Sustainable Cities and Regions in Asia-Pacific, one of key initiatives of the Organisation to provide a knowledge transfer platform among city and local government leaders and officials, to explore solutions based on nature for resilient and sustainable cities and communities. The on-line event, held on February 19, 2025, brought together more than 80 participants enthusiastically engaging with experts and policymakers exploring how incorporating natural ecosystems into urban planning might help reduce climate risks, improve water management, and increase biodiversity.

Sustainable Urban Growth Through NbS

Dr. Phanith Chou, Associate Professor at the Royal University of Phnom Penh shared essential principles of NbS, highlighting that sustainable urban expansion should not be based primarily on traditional infrastructure, but rather on hybrid solutions that combine nature, technology, and human development. "The future of our cities depends on how well we integrate green and blue infrastructure into existing urban landscapes. NbS provides a cost-effective way to improve ecosystem services while addressing challenges such as flooding, heatwaves, and pollution," Dr. Chou explained.



Innovative Applications of Nature-based Solutions

The online learning showcased various innovative applications of Nature-based Solutions

- **Green roofs:** vegetated roofs that lower temperatures and improve air quality.
- **Rainwater harvesting:** clever water collection systems that enhance consumption while reducing water scarcity.
- **Permeable pavements:** coverings which absorb rainfall while preventing surface drainage.
- **Bioengineered riverbanks:** use natural vegetation to control erosion rather than concrete barriers.

Case Studies: Cambodia, Thailand, and Beyond

The online learning showed a comparison of urban landscapes in Thailand and Cambodia demonstrating the need of implementing NbS. In Poipet, Cambodia, increased development has reduced green space to less than 5 percent, raising temperatures and aggravating flooding. Collaborative initiatives with the Mekong River Commission (MRC) seek to restore 103 hectares of forest, rehabilitate river systems, and replace concrete flood barriers with bioengineered alternatives. A rural water management project in Angkor Pant showed how wetland restoration and enhanced water catchment tactics increased stored water capacity from two million to three million cubic meters, assuring year-round supply during droughts. Meanwhile, a pilot project in Battambang aimed to turn congested urban streets into nature-based corridors by adding rain gardens and stormwater management technologies to reduce excessive heat and flooding.

Economic Justification for NbS

Speakers highlighted the economic advantages of NbS:

- Bioengineered riverbanks cost \$6/m² against \$33/m² for concrete constructions.
- Flood mitigation activities in Cambodia could result in \$4.4 million in damage prevention savings.
- A nature-based school redesign with solar energy and green roofs had a benefit-cost ratio (BCR) of 1.6, indicating long-term financial feasibility.

Challenges and Future Directions

Despite its benefits, NbS adoption has challenges, such as a lack of finance, legislative opposition, and public uncertainty. Governments occasionally support conventional infrastructure due to maintenance concerns. However, the Nangang River Restoration in China and the Cheonggyecheon Stream Revitalisation in Seoul are instances of how public support and government funding may enable large-scale NbS initiatives to succeed.

- Experts advise using other funding sources like green investments and scholarships for climate adaption to get around obstacles.
- Pilot initiatives should be shown to be effective before being scaled up.
- Greater policy integration, including a requirement for NbS in urban planning laws.
- Public awareness initiatives that emphasise the long-term financial and ecological advantages.

Looking Ahead

Cities must move quickly to adopt resilient and sustainable urban planning techniques as climate change increases. Throughout Asia-Pacific, governments, urban planners, and local communities are encouraged to adopt NbS as a fundamental element of development in the future.





The Second Local and Regional Government Assembly by APLG at the 12th APFSD

UCLG ASPAC, coordinator of the Asia-Pacific Local Government Coordinating Body, gathered leaders and representatives of local and regional governments for the Second Local and Regional Government Assembly (LRGA) at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok, Thailand on February 24, 2025. An associated event of the 12th Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD), the Assembly was held jointly with the Regional Workshop on the Voluntary National Review organised by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).



In his video message, Mr. Dakila Carlo Cua, UCLG ASPAC President, emphasised the critical role of local and regional governments in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He stated, “It is in our cities, municipalities, and provinces where policies take shape, where innovation thrives, and where real change happens.”

Mr. Omar Siddique, Economic Affairs Officer of ESCAP, presented that overall progress on the 17 SDGs is off track, with 16 of 177 targets on track and 18 targets deteriorating.

Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Executive Secretary of ESCAP, encouraged paying attention to the next generation of VNRs – how they align with priorities, and show impact and innovation.

In the session on “Local Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, several local and regional governments shared their actions and needs to implement the SDGs. These included initiatives of the State of Selangor on implementing a women leadership programme, and Guangzhou on strengthening international partnerships through the UCLG ASPAC Standing Committee of Women in Local Governments. The Joint Statement of Local and Regional Governments to the 12th APFSD was adopted as an outcome document of the LRGA and submitted to the APFSD. In collaboration with ESCAP, a dedicated session on dialogue between national and local governments explored the synergies between the Voluntary National Review and Voluntary Local Review featuring experiences from the Federated States of Micronesia, India, Japan, Malaysia, Maldives, and the Philippines.



Mr. Ashok Kumar Byanju Shrestha, Co-President of UCLG ASPAC and Mayor of Dhulikhel Municipality read the statement on behalf of local governments,

Results of the discussion from the LRGA were delivered in the relevant plenary sessions of the APFSD. Mr. Ashok Kumar Byanju Shrestha, Co-President of UCLG ASPAC and Mayor of Dhulikhel Municipality, underscored the importance of the localisation of the SDGs and enhancing partnerships. Mr. Baikuntha Neupane, Mayor of Vyas Municipality, reported on the priority actions to accelerate progress on the SDGs under review and called for enhancing the capacity, facilitating access to finance, and increasing investment at the local level.



Mr. Baikuntha Neupane, Mayor of Vyas Municipality, reported on the priority actions to accelerate progress on the SDGs under review

Organised by ESCAP from February 25 to 28, 2025 at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok, Thailand, the 12th APFSD had the theme “Advancing Sustainable, Inclusive, Science- and Evidence-based Solutions for the 2030 Agenda and Its SDGs for Leaving No One Behind in Asia and the Pacific”. Over 1,000 participants attended the Forum. The Asia-Pacific SDG Partnership Report 2025 was launched during the APFSD. Prior to this, ESCAP launched the Asia and the Pacific SDGs Progress Report 2025. The Report of the 12th APFSD will serve as the region’s input to the HLPF to be held in July 2025.

Champions Resilient and Sustainable Urban Development at the ESCAP 81st Commission Session



UCLG ASPAC strongly advocated at the 81st Commission Session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in Bangkok, Thailand, on April 21-25, 2025. The theme, “Regional cooperation for resilient and sustainable urban development in Asia and the Pacific,” spotlighted the crucial role of local authorities.



The theme was tackled under Agenda Item 3 of the Commission Session. Under this agenda, it was announced that the 9th Asia-Pacific Urban Forum (APUF), the largest multi-stakeholder on urban development organised by ESCAP, will be hosted by the City of Yokohama in late August/early September 2027. The theme study, which UCLG ASPAC provided expert review, recommended the following actions: (1) enhance regional cooperation for resilient and sustainable urban development; (2) adopt integrated national urban policies to bolster multilevel governance; (3) strengthen subnational and local data collection and reporting to promote evidence-based urban policies; (4) plan for urban demographic changes with strengthened spatial planning and inclusive social policies; and (5) pursue a diversified and innovative approach to urban financing.

Dr. Bernadia Irawati Tjandradewi, Secretary General of UCLG ASPAC, moderated the roundtable discussion on the theme. Mr. Tevita Boseiwaqa, Chairman of Suva City Council, shared how their Voluntary Local Review (VLR) used a community-centred approach, captured an action-oriented roadmap, and considered the cultural context. Ms. Shinta Widjaja Kamdani, Chair of the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network (ESBN), indicated the need to be inclusive as 90 percent of businesses in the Asia-Pacific region are small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Ms. Lajana Manandhar, Coordinator of the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR), explained the role of civil society organisations in bringing communities and governments closer and finding innovative solutions.

The Asia-Pacific Local Government Coordinating Body (APLG), through UCLG ASPAC, organised the Local and Regional Government Assembly which adopted the Joint Statement of Local and Regional Governments (LRGs) to the Commission Session.



The statement on behalf of APLG highlighted the need to involve LRGs in localising the recommendations of the theme study, encouraged the establishment of regional peer-learning on the VLR and Voluntary Subnational Review (VSR), advocated the replication of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 roadmaps, urged the development of national

multilevel governance frameworks on the nationally determined contributions (NDCs) ensuring roles, funding and representation for LRGs, and called for direct access windows to LRGs in climate and development financing systems. The Joint Statement of LRGs was delivered by Mr. Powes Parkop, Governor of Port Moresby, in the plenary session.

Empowering Youth Through Local Governance: UCLG ASPAC's Internship Programme

UCLG ASPAC reaffirms its commitment to youth empowerment and international cooperation through the UCLG ASPAC Internship Programme (UAIP)—a flagship initiative designed to nurture future leaders in local governance across the Asia-Pacific region.

Since its establishment, UAIP has served as a platform for young professionals to gain hands-on experience in areas such as policy research, multilevel governance, sustainable development, and stakeholder engagement. The programme is rooted in the belief that meaningful youth participation is essential to achieving inclusive and future-oriented urban development.

In 2024, one of the programme's highlights included the participation of a UAIP intern in the Jeonju Future City Forum (JFCF)—a prestigious international event focusing on sustainability and innovation. This opportunity reflects how UCLG ASPAC collaborates with member cities to provide real-world learning experiences for interns, enabling them to contribute to global discourse.



Muhammad Fathan Aldian, a 20-year-old student of International Relations at Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Jakarta, was among the selected participants of UAIP Batch 2 in 2024. Reflecting on his experience, Fathan noted, “During the forum, I gained a deep understanding of how international forums operate. I learned to capture critical discussion points, which is a valuable skill for future diplomats and policy makers.”

During his internship at UCLG ASPAC, Fathan was also involved in research reporting, data analysis, and policy brief development. These activities, combined with mentorship from the UCLG ASPAC team, allowed him to develop both technical and soft skills required for professional growth.

UCLG ASPAC's approach is not only to provide work experience but to foster a new generation of leaders who can drive local actions with global awareness. The success of UAIP lies in its collaborative nature—leveraging support from member cities, such as Jeonju, to ensure young talents are empowered to actively contribute to the sustainable development agenda.

Governor Sharee Ann Tan of Samar Province: For Better Living of Every Samarnon



Ospital Sa Barangay (OSB) is a healthcare programme of the Samar Province that brings health services closer to local people. Through OSB, the provincial government visits local people, even in remote areas, and brings health services (laboratory tests, ultrasound, x-ray) for free. Consultation is also provided for free in addition to the necessary medicines and supplements. The provincial government also cooperated with the private sector (One Life) to create a digital healthcare system and make diagnostics and health data available. The goal is to enable local government to have a glimpse

of the general health condition of local people so that they can come up with relevant initiatives. The referral system is also developed so that local people who need additional medical attention can be referred to the Samar Provincial Hospital for further action.

Samar Centre for Developmental Paediatrics (CDP) is a facility provided by the local government to meet the increasing demand for specialised developmental care. Located in the Spark Samar Development Hub,

provides expert medical care for children with special needs, including occupational therapy, speech therapy, and physical therapy. It also plays the role as an educational hub for parents and teachers, providing them with knowledge and skills to support children effectively. CDP has also started receiving online registrations.

Spark Samar is a tourism campaign developed in 2014 under the administration of Governor Sharee Tan,

Governor Sharee Ann Tee Tan-delos is not a new figure in leading the Samar Province. Having the trust and confidence of local people, Governor Sharee Ann won the elections from time to time, consecutively oftentimes. Grabbing the opportunity at hand, Governor Sharee Ann’s spirit remains the same: giving better living conditions to every Samarnon. With this spirit, she has successfully developed initiatives that provide solutions to challenges faced by local people, such as in health, tourism, and sanitation areas.

promoting Samar as a place of boundless travel and investment opportunities. This initiative is developed as the primary backbone following the province’s recovery from Typhoon Yolanda. Media recorded that the initiative helped increase tourist arrivals from 96,000 (2017) to 200,608 (2018) and revenue from P1.9 billion (2017) to P2.8 billion (2018). This initiative also won the Bronze Stevie Award at the 2019 International Business Awards in Vienna, Austria (2019).

Mayor Tamah Alley: First Female Mayor of Central Otago



Mayor Tamah Alley was elected to be the leader of Central Otago District, position left vacant by former mayor Tim Cadogan, on October 30, 2024. Becoming the first female mayor, her appointment was made with no debate and the decision was unanimous. We saw several factors making all distinguished figures agree to her leadership in Central Otago District.

First was the inaugural Porirua City Council Leadership Award that she received when graduating from Police College in 2009, reflecting her contributions and capacity. Following the award, her Police career sky-rocketed to Detective Superintendent position. Her entrance into local

governance role commenced as a Councillor of Central Otago, becoming one of the youngest figures for the position in the area. Leaving her 12 years of police experience, she saw an opportunity to extend her contributions beyond her work with youth and communities, besides also cheering up for the intergenerational aspect of local government.

“Many people want the government to be involved in their lives as little as possible - I think this happens best when local government is doing such a great job in our communities that people don’t have to think about the fact they are ‘engaging’ with us — it just happens,” she said (LGNZ.co.nz).

Media reported that her appointment marks a significant milestone for the local government in Central Otago. With the given opportunity, Mayor Tamah Alley now has what it takes to improve and make the area better for local people.



Sub-Region Updates

Southeast Asia

APEKSI Held 2025 National Conference

Association of Indonesian Municipalities (Asosiasi Pemerintah Kota Seluruh Indonesia/APEKSI) held its national conference in Surabaya on May 6-10, 2025. The event included election of Chairman of the Board of Directors of APEKSI for period 2025-2030. In the event, Mr. Eri Cahyadi, Mayor of Surabaya, has been re-elected to lead the organisation and Medan City has also been selected to host the 2026 national conference. The 2025 national conference was held in conjunction with Indonesia City Expo 2025, where micro, small, medium enterprises, cities, and relevant stakeholders could promote themselves through exhibition.



East Asia

Daegu Opens Chengdu Office to Strengthen International Trade and Support Expanding Businesses

On February 10, 2025, Daegu City opened the “Daegu Chengdu Office” in Chengdu, China, which will serve as a key hub for enhancing international trade and cultural exchanges, as well as supporting businesses looking to expand. With the opening of the “Daegu Chengdu Office,” Daegu becomes the first city in South Korea to have a local office in Sichuan Province. Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan Province, is an economic and industrial centre, home to about 315 of the world’s top 500 companies, and is also a city rich in cultural heritage. Since the signing of the sister city agreement between Daegu and Chengdu in November 2015, the two cities have continued their exchange and cooperation in various fields, including college students exchange through Daegu International Youth Camp, participation in art theatres, and medical tourism promotion seminars, as well as cooperation in economy, culture, and arts.



South Asia

Regional Capacity Building for Disaster Management

Regional Centre for Urban and Environmental Studies (RCUES) of All India Institute of Local Self Government (AIILSG), Mumbai, supported by Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India, held a training on Disaster Management and Fire Safety on November 30, 2024. Attended by around 40 enthusiastic participants, the training programme included thought provoking sessions led by Director, RCUES of AIILSG, Mumbai and renowned resource persons, highlighting on ensuring community well-being through proactive public health and safety measures, encouraging swift and effective responses to emergencies with robust rescue management, promoting fire prevention and strengthening preparedness for unexpected challenges and importance of First Aid and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), followed by a hands-on demonstration by fire officers on the use of fire extinguishers.



Pacific

MTFJ Smashes National Youth Employment Targets

A community employment programme is helping to buck New Zealand’s high youth unemployment rate, by delivering almost a thousand positive employment outcomes over the past eight months. Run by Mayors Taskforce For Jobs (MTFJ) in partnership with the Ministry of Social Development, the Community Employment Programme works with 36 of the country’s smallest and most remote councils to get more young people into sustainable employment. With 987 young people being placed into employment opportunities since July 2024, the programme has already smashed its 12-month target of 888 outcomes. MTFJ Chair and Mayor of Central Hawkes Bay, Alex Walker says MTFJ is now well on track to achieve 150 percent of their target by the end of the contract.

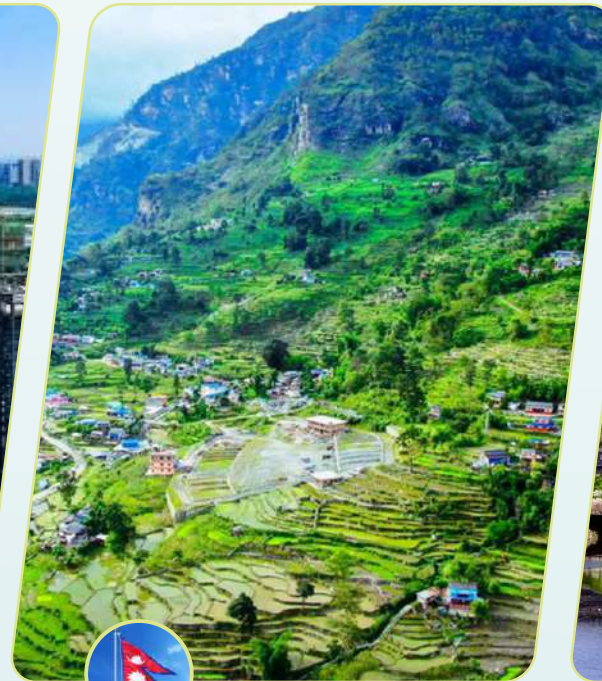


New Members

UCLG ASPAC Secretariat welcomes new members to be approved at the First Session of the 2025 UCLG ASPAC Executive Bureau in Boracay.



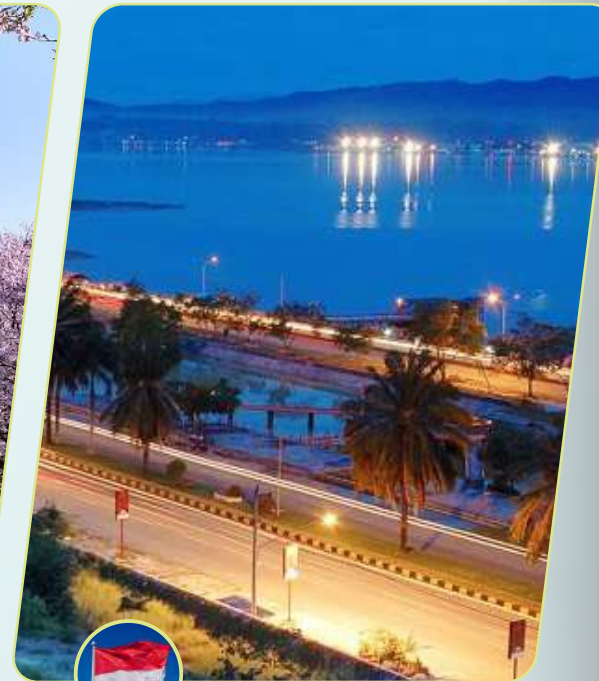
**Hefei Municipal People's Government
China**
Mayor:
Mr. Yunfeng Luo
Website:
www.hefei.gov.cn



**Raghuganga Rural Municipality
Nepal**
Chairman:
Mr. Bhab Bahadur Bhandari
Website:
raghugangamun.gov.np



**Shizuoka Prefectural Government
Japan**
Governor:
Mr. Yasutomo Suzuki
Website:
www.pref.shizuoka.jp



**Southeast Sulawesi Province
Indonesia**
Governor:
Mr. Andi Sumangerukka
Website:
www.sultraprov.go.id

Andong: Are We Truly Happy?



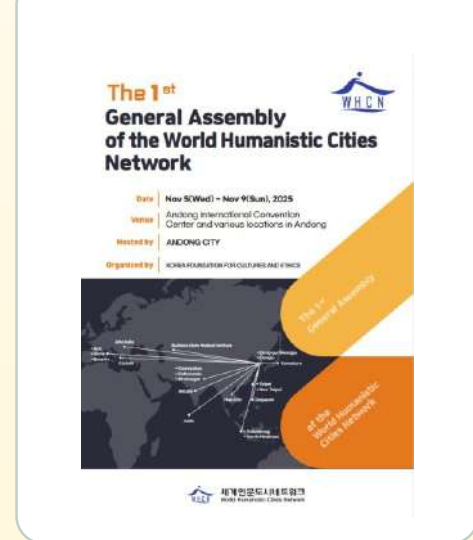
Since 2014, Andong City has led efforts to address universal social challenges in our rapidly changing world. Through the 21st Century Human Values Forum, we have sought solutions grounded in humanistic thinking, aiming to build a people-centred world.

Marking its 10th anniversary in 2023, the forum hosted the International Humanistic Cities Meeting, where representatives from six cities across five countries—including Andong—shared exemplary policy practices related to human values. During the roundtable, participants formed a consensus on the need for international communication and cooperation to spread humanistic values. Building upon this vision, Andong launched the World Humanistic Cities Network (WHCN) in 2024 with support from cities around the globe.

At the Inaugural General Assembly of WHCN, held in 2024, representatives from 27 cities and institutions across 16 countries visited Andong to join the movement for human values. In the policy session, discussions focused on themes such as “Sustainable Urban Development through Human Values” and “Universal Values in Diverse Cultures.” Delegates shared their humanistic visions and initiatives while engaging in thoughtful dialogue. Participants also explored Andong’s beautiful cultural heritage through visits to sites like Dosanseowon Confucian Academy and Bongjeongsa Temple.

This year, the WHCN General Assembly will be held again in Andong from November 5 to 9, 2025. The upcoming assembly will reflect on an essential question: In a world increasingly driven by technological and economic progress, are we truly living happy and fulfilling lives? As modern society advances, we face growing challenges such as conflict, social isolation, inequality, and environmental degradation. Together, we will explore the humanistic values that can help us pursue balance, harmony, and sustainable happiness.

We warmly invite you to Andong this November to share your city’s inspiring efforts for the well-being of your citizens. Join us in building a more human-centred, compassionate world.



Busan: Invitation to 1st Global City Tourism Summit and Busan Global City Week 2025



Bilateral Meeting between Mayor of Busan and Hamburg at Busan Global City Week 2024



Global Leaders' Conversation at Busan Global City Week 2024

Busan Metropolitan City, aspiring to become a global tourism hub, will host the 1st Global City Tourism Summit in conjunction with the Busan Global City Week 2025 from October 27 to October 29, 2025. The events will bring together delegations from Busan's sister and friendship cities, member cities of the Tourism Promotion Organisation for Global Cities (TPO), and key representatives from national and local governments, the Korea Tourism Organisation (KTO), international organisations, including UN Tourism, as well as distinguished members from academia and the private sector.

The 1st Global City Tourism Summit aims to develop global tourism content rooted in localism and explore actionable global tourism agendas. The summit will present a leading growth model for the future tourism industry and conclude with an announcement of a joint policy declaration. The Busan Global City Week 2025, now celebrating its second year, will deepen practical cooperation among cities through in-depth discussions on a wide range of topics, including international exchanges, developmental cooperation, and youth culture.

The programme will feature an opening ceremony, special dialogue sessions, bilateral meetings, thematic breakout sessions, networking dinners, joint declaration announcement, business consultations, tourism roadshow, and site visits to key attractions in Busan.



The Global Festival of Athletes: The 2026 World Masters Athletics Championships Returns to Daegu!

It will kick off with an opening ceremony on August 21, 2026 and will run for 13 days from August 22 to September 3, held across various venues in Daegu, including the Daegu Stadium (Main Stadium). Open to all athletes aged 35 and over, this event is expected to attract over 11,000 participants from more than 90 countries competing in 35 events (18 tracks, 11 fields, and 6 roads).

The Secretary-General of Local Organising Committee (L.O.C) of the WMAC Daegu 2026, Ki-hoon Chin, said, "Based on the successful hosting of the World Athletics Championships Daegu 2011 and the World Masters Athletics Championships Indoor Daegu 2017, we will ensure that the event is held at the highest level in all areas, including scale, event operations, accommodations, transportation, and volunteering." He continued, "I am confident that this event will be a great opportunity to experience not only athletics but also the culture, art, food, and beauty of Daegu. I ask for the active interest and participation of the cities of UCLG ASPAC member countries, and I look forward to seeing you in Daegu, the 'Mecca of World Athletics,' in 2026."

Daegu, with its rich experience hosting major global events like the World Athletics Championships Daegu 2011 and the World Masters Athletics Championships Indoor Daegu 2017, the first-ever indoor event in Asia, is set to host the 2026 World Masters Athletics Championships, the world's first-ever hosting of both indoor and outdoor events, rekindling the excitement of athletes from around the world.



The World Masters Athletics Championships, governed by World Masters Athletics (WMA), is a cost-effective competition as athletes aged 35 and older fund their own participation. Cities in athletics-powerhouse regions such as Japan and Europe often vie to host this internationally recognised event, motivated by the regional economic benefits it brings through tourism, marketing, and various local impacts.





Hamamatsu City's International Strategy

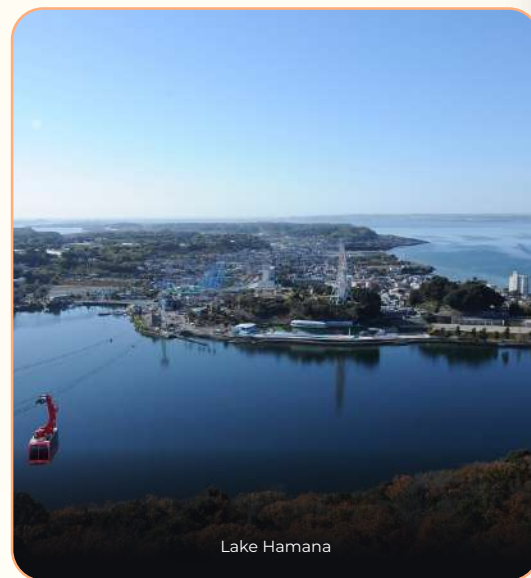
Hamamatsu City boasts the largest population in Shizuoka Prefecture with 787,000 residents, and ranks second nationwide in terms of land area, stretching across 1,558km². Located between Tokyo and Osaka, Hamamatsu is often referred to as “Japan in Microcosm” thanks to its unique blend of urban, rural, and mountainous areas.

Hamamatsu is internationally recognised as a pioneering “City of Manufacturing” and is home to several of Japan’s representative transportation equipment and musical instrument manufacturing companies, alongside leading photonics companies. As the birthplace of several world-renowned musical instrument manufacturers, Hamamatsu City has earned the title “City of Music”. We aim to capitalise on this strength by hosting several prestigious international music competitions such as the Hamamatsu International Piano Competition. Thanks to its thriving industrial economy and rich music culture, Hamamatsu attracts many seasoned professionals from abroad and individuals of diverse cultural backgrounds.

In response, Hamamatsu City established the “Hamamatsu City International Strategy Plan”, which supports ongoing exchange and collaboration with various cities around the globe. Through active participation in networks such as UCLG, Intercultural Cities (ICC), UNESCO Creative Cities, and ICLEI, Hamamatsu strengthens its global ties while laying the groundwork for international outreach and cooperation on global challenges. Hamamatsu is well-positioned to build mutually beneficial cooperative relationships worldwide thanks to its strong foundations in industry, tourism, music, and sports.

In April 2025, Hamamatsu City launched the 3rd phase of the “Hamamatsu City International Strategy Plan”, with a mission to become an inclusive and attractive international hub of a wide range of industrial, cultural, and sports-related activities.

As part of this effort, Hamamatsu City will host the “Intercity Collaboration Forum” on October 21, 2025, in partnership with UCLG ASPAC. This forum aims to explore new opportunities for intercity collaboration through the utilisation of international networks and promote future global collaboration.



Echoes of Harmony: Promoting Kolintang from North Minahasa to the World



Kolintang is a traditional wooden xylophone from North Minahasa, Indonesia. It produces melodic sounds and is usually played during cultural ceremonies and community events. Kolintang has been part of local identity for generations, symbolising harmony, togetherness, and respect. It is not just an instrument—it is a way to connect people and celebrate peace.

Over the years, our community—including musicians, craftsmen, teachers, and researchers—has worked together to preserve and promote Kolintang. We teach it in schools and community art centres, and we also hold performances at local and international events. One of our biggest achievements came in December 2024, when Kolintang was officially recognised by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This was announced during a global meeting in Asunción, Paraguay.

Our local leader, Joune Ganda, the Regent Major of North Minahasa, has been key in this journey. He not only led the campaign to protect and promote Kolintang, but also supported a film called Lokananta that introduced Kolintang to a wider audience. Kolintang has also been featured during international meetings, like the UCLG ASPAC Executive Bureau Meeting held in North Minahasa in June 2024.

We believe Kolintang can play a larger role—beyond music—by supporting education, cultural exchange, and even sustainable development. Our government has started reforestation projects in areas like Mount Klabat, linking Kolintang’s wooden materials with environmental protection.



Mayor Joune Ganda of North Minahasa dressed in local traditional customs.

Now, we hope to build partnerships with international cultural institutions, artists, and development agencies. We want to share our experience, learn from others, and work together to preserve traditional music around the world. By reading this article, we invite you to connect with us—whether to collaborate, support, or exchange ideas. Together, we can ensure that traditional music like Kolintang continues to inspire future generations.

Qingdao's Marine Sector Booms in 2024

Qingdao's marine economy is experiencing robust growth through high-quality development initiatives. In 2024, Qingdao's total marine GDP reached 551.32 billion yuan (\$75.82 billion), accounting for 5.2 percent of the national marine GDP, 30.6 percent of the provincial marine GDP, and 33 percent of the city's regional GDP, demonstrating strong momentum in the marine economy.

Last year, Qingdao saw the rise of the modern marine industry. The scale of marine economic market entities continued to expand, with 3,221 marine-related enterprises in the city, representing around 30 percent of the province.

Over the past two years, the city has approved 281 marine-use projects covering an area of 19,800 hectares. Implementing the 15 Policies Supporting the High-Quality Development of the Marine Economy in Qingdao, the city fulfilled 24 incentive policies, providing a total incentive fund of 140 million yuan to benefit 137 enterprises.

Qingdao has consolidated its development advantages by strengthening the foundation of the marine economy. By intensifying efforts to secure resources, six key marine projects are set to receive support totalling 700 million yuan from the central budget, ultra-long-term special national bonds, and government special bonds.



Among these, the Aoshan Bay Marine Ecological Protection and Restoration Project achieved the top ranking nationwide and secured 400 million yuan in central support. The city has also established eight modern marine industry technology innovation centres and 31 marine engineering technology collaborative innovation centres in Shandong province, accounting for 47 percent and 27 percent of the province respectively.

Qingdao City Libraries Making Reading Easier for Public

Qingdao's urban libraries, located across all 10 districts, have become vibrant public cultural spaces, inviting citizens and visitors to explore the city's cultural heritage.



As of now, the city has built 83 urban libraries, covering a total area of 26,000 square metres and housing nearly 600,000 books. By the end of 2025, the number of urban libraries in Qingdao is expected to exceed 100.

Qingdao is currently accelerating the development of public cultural facilities and creating new landmarks in public cultural spaces to improve public cultural services.

The Shibei branch of Qingdao urban library on Changyi Road offers an immersive experience for many readers. This two-story library spans over 2,500 square metres, featuring a bright and open reading space with over 30,000 books neatly displayed on towering wooden shelves. The library includes a children's picture book area, soundproof study rooms, a coffee area, and hosts various cultural activities periodically.

Ji Junshang, director of Shibei district library, stated, "The library, based on the expansion project of the Shibei district library, is currently open 66 hours per week, operating six days a week from 9 am to 8 pm. Since its opening, it has served over 200,000 readers, with nearly 2,000 readers during peak times and over 500 readers daily."

In Qingdao, the creation of new public cultural spaces is a comprehensive endeavour. Recent development initiatives have embraced a model of government leadership, social engagement, and universal participation. The city has broken operational barriers, encouraging diverse entities to engage in market-driven operations and fostering themed urban libraries to enhance cultural outreach and community engagement.

Xi'an Ranks 7th Among National Innovative Cities and its Sci-Tech Integration Ignites New Quality Productive Forces

According to the National Innovative City Capability Evaluation Report 2024 released by Ministry of Science and Technology of the People's Republic of China, Xi'an has secured the 7th position in national innovation capability rankings. The city also rose to 18th place in the World Intellectual Property Organisation's Global Innovation Index (GII) Top 100 Science and Technology Clusters, reflecting its growing influence as a global innovation hub. Leveraging the Qinchuangyuan innovation-driven platform, Xi'an has adopted a "Triple Integration" strategy, i.e. enterprises, research institutions, and innovation ecosystems, to overcome bottlenecks in commercialising technologies and explore the potential of its rich scientific and educational resources.

Through initiatives like the "Xi'an Entrepreneurs-Mayor Dialogue Mechanism," the city prioritises enterprise-led innovation, rolling out nine policies to strengthen corporates' R&D capabilities. Enterprises' investment in R&D has been raised to 48.99 percent in their total expenditure, and the number of national high-tech firms has reached 13,000, creating a new record. A creative Enlisting and Leading model is adopted by local enterprises and universities, which allows open bidding for selecting the best candidates to make breakthroughs in key technologies. Xi'an also fosters a two-way channel for scientists and engineers to join hands and tackle difficulties, demonstrating a new paradigm of effective solution seeking process.



Currently, Xi'an is deepening reforms in its science and technology governance system, promoting deep integration of innovation, industry, capital, and talent chain, while cultivating new quality productive forces in strategic sectors like aerospace and electronics. By redefining institutional frameworks, this ancient capital is transforming its vast resources in science, technology, and education into a powerful engine for high-quality development.

☆ 2-6 June United Nations Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction Geneva, Switzerland UN DRR	☆ 9-12 June First Session of UCLG ASPAC Executive Bureau 2025 Boracay, the Philippines UCLG ASPAC, Boracay	☆ 11-12 June Annual Meeting of the EU Global Gateway Brussels, Belgium EU	☆ 12 June Localising ASEAN Community Vision 2045 Boracay, Philippines (in conjunction with the First Session of the 2025 UCLG ASPAC Executive Bureau) UCLG ASPAC	☆ 9-15 June Urban 20 meeting Tshwane, South Africa C40
☆ 17-18 June Annual Meeting of the EU Partnership for Development Brussels, Belgium EU	☆ 30 June - 3 July Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development Seville, Spain UCLG	☆ 14-18 July High-Level Political Forum New York, USA UN	☆ 10-15 August ASEAN Governors and Mayors Forum 2025 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia UCLG ASPAC, Kuala Lumpur	☆ 12-14 September Urban 20 Mayoral Summit Johannesburg, South Africa UCLG, C40
☆ 24-26 September 10th UCLG ASPAC Congress Goyang, the Republic of Korea UCLG ASPAC, Goyang	☆ 5-7 October Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on Housing & Urban Development (APMCHUD) Penang, Malaysia	☆ 13-16 October International Mayors Forum 2025 Toyota UN DESA, Toyota City, UCLG ASPAC	☆ 16-18 October Second Session of the UCLG Executive Bureau 2025 & UCLG Council 2025 Xi'an, China Xi'an City Government, UCLG	☆ 21 October Intercity Collaboration Forum 2025 Hamamatsu Hamamatsu, Japan
☆ 10-21 November 30th Session of the Conference of the Parties on Climate Change (COP 30) Belem, Brazil UN	☆ 1-5 December 19th World Water Congress Marrakesh, Morocco International Water Resources Association (IWRA)	☆ 8-12 December 7thUnited Nations Environment Assembly Nairobi, Kenya UN	☆ December 3rd Urban Mekong Corridor Initiative (UMCI) Dialogue Luang Prabang UCLG ASPAC, Cities Alliance	

We would like to thank our members and partners for contributing photos and materials used for this publication.

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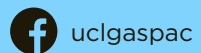
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