

Mayors sign declaration of intent at Sustainability Week

Mayors from 39 African capital cities signed a declaration of intent during Sustainability Week which took place from 23 to 25 June at the CSIR in Pretoria.



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The declaration's focus is to elevate the social, economic and environmental imperatives African cities need to adopt in order to develop society and the economy without adverse impacts on the environment.

The mayors made a commitment to convene every year to assess progress and find collaborative ways to consolidate their vision for urban sustainability. These include green building methods, waste management, reduction of poverty, transport efficiency, technology, and making the best use of human resources to help facilitate the changes.

Future of Africa

Jean-Pierre Elong Mbassi, the secretary-general of the United Cities and Local Governments in Africa, explained that the future of Africa depends on effectively managing integration and migration; sustainability and resilience; economic growth and job creation. Mbassi emphasised that all of these contribute towards making Africa sustainable and self-sufficient. "One of the daunting and demanding issues of global development is whether cities are an engine of growth, and whether this growth is sustainable and resilient."

Mbassi also pointed out that cities should resist the temptation to copy the unsustainable consumption pace of natural resources as other cities of the developed world. As Africa is the continent with one of the youngest populations, the sustainability of its economic, social and environmental resources should be a pressing matter on the agenda of the continent's leaders.

Sustainability Week highlighted that the core indicators of a country's sustainable success are energy and water management, waste management and manufacturing ventures. Another indicator is identifying where partnership opportunities are that can ensure funding for projects that will benefit a wide variety of people.

Other green events

Following the three day conference, the Youth and Green Economy event took place on 27 June at Tshwane University of Technology. The Green Home Fair hosted on 27 and 28 June at Brooklyn Mall marked the end of the eventful week. Lively discussions took place where 27 exhibitors offered the public a chance to be 'green' and environmentally conscious at home. Energy from the sun, home food gardening and general tips on becoming more energy efficient and resourceful at home made for practical engagement with residents.

"Communication is the key to helping all stakeholders understand what the sustainability issues are and where the solutions will come from. The conference's aim of 'putting ideas into motion' has activated the new wave of thinking around sustainability from a city perspective. The event provided unprecedented opportunities to collaborate and find solutions as the city sets its goals to secure a sustainable development path," said Gordon Brown, organiser of Sustainability Week.

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