

MEDIA RELEASE



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For Immediate Release
September 19, 2008

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Capitals Alliance Delegates Sign Declaration for National Capitals to Lead the Way in Green Design & Sustainability

Greening the World's Capital Cities Conference wraps up the Week with Pledge to be Green

Washington, DC – Delegates from national capitals around the world closed out a week long conference on green and sustainability with a pledge to lead by example in creating a more sustainable planet. Fifteen national capitals attended this week's Capitals Alliance 2008: Greening the World's Capital Cities, hosted by the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC). NCPC is one of four founding members of the Alliance, along with its sister agencies in Brasilia, Canberra, and Ottawa.

In signing the declaration, the delegates agreed to promote green building design, energy efficient practices, low impact development techniques, protection of open space, and the development of mass transit systems that reduce reliance on the automobile.

Throughout the week experts on sustainability joined delegates in exploring ways to put more national capitals on the road to a greener and more sustainable future. Some of the world's most respected leaders in the field shared their knowledge and discussed strategies behind successful green practices.

"Today, cities face a significant challenge to develop and promote green and sustainable policies that will be viable now and in the future," said NCPC Executive Director **Marcel Acosta**. "The declaration demonstrates our commitment to support principles of sustainability as central to the development of our capital cities."

By 2050, three-fourths of the world's population is expected to reside in cities. Capital cities, as the seat of government, will need to play a vital role in creating and maintaining sustainable communities. Taking part in the week-long discussion were delegates from Abu Dhabi, Bogotá, Brasilia, Canberra, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Islamabad, Moscow, Oslo, Ottawa, Paris, Stockholm, Tshwane, Vienna, and Washington, D.C.

While cities cover only two percent of the Earth's surface, they consume 75 percent of its resources. Creating sustainable cities is therefore a key challenge to urban planners in the 21st century, a challenge highlighted during the opening keynote by **Herbert Girardet**, renowned author and documentary filmmaker on sustainability. Girardet, the director of programs at the World Future Council and chair of the UK Sustainability Alliance stated that we have only about ten years to "get serious about the environment."

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Other speakers throughout the week included **Frances Beinecke**, president of the Natural Resources Defense Council; **Majora Carter**, founder and executive director of Sustainable South Bronx; **George Hawkins**, director of the DC Department of the Environment, **Thomas Hicks**, vice president of LEED Neighborhood Development and International Programs at the U.S. Green Building Council; **Robert Stacey**, executive director of 1,000 Friends of Oregon; **Tom Murphy**, former mayor of Pittsburgh; and DC's planning director **Harriet Tregoning**. A featured event included a joint program with the National Building Museum with U.S. Congressman **Earl Blumenauer**, former Curitiba mayor **Cassio Taniguchi**, and Stockholm's Chief Executive Officer **Irene Svenonius**. The three speakers highlighted the innovative approaches taken in their cities to create greener communities. **Marcel Beaudry**, the former chairman of Canada's National Capital Commission facilitated the discussion.

"The best lesson that other cities can learn from Curitiba is to make things happen," said the city's former Mayor **Cassio Taniguchi**. "When you take too much time discussing if a forest or a wood must be preserved, both may be destroyed. It is important to give examples of how to 'green' the city through attitudes and a real change of the life style, consuming less and in a smarter way. All the population must be participating in the process to make a city green."

The conference closing session focused on what impact green design will have on capital city architecture. Panelists included **Diana Balmori**, landscape architect and member of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts; **Laurel Colless** executive director of the Energy Efficiency Partnership of Greater Washington; **Richard Moe**, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation; and **David L. Winstead**, commissioner of the Public Buildings Service of the U.S. General Services Administration. **Roger K. Lewis**, practicing architect, educator, and journalist moderated.

"Forty three percent of all carbon emissions come from the operation of buildings," explained National Trust President **Richard Moe**. "That is a compelling figure. If we don't deal with this issue it's going to change life as we know it."

Before departing for their home cities, lead delegates reflected on the week's conference and talked about the information and ideas they would be able to incorporate into their own sustainability initiatives.

"The Alliance advice received this week is so valued and it will go into our decision making at home," offered **Bernard Hanekom**, one of two delegates representing Tshwane, South Africa.

"It's an extraordinary opportunity to share our experiences and knowledge," said Ottawa delegate **Michelle Comeau**. "We are going back knowing the time to act is now. There is great strength in leadership."

"It was extremely beneficial to hear about the challenges our sister cities face in greening their capitals and how they are coping with these challenges," said NCPC's **Marcel Acosta**. "The Alliance network enables us to share our respective experiences and to learn from other cities about strategies that work, as well as those that don't."

Capitals Alliance is an international forum for capital city planners from around the world. Founded by Brasilia, Canberra, Ottawa, and Washington, DC in 2001, the Alliance enables a valuable exchange of information on issues and challenges that are unique to national capitals. Previous Capitals Alliance conferences were held in 2007 and 2002 in Canberra; 2005 in Ottawa, 2004 in Brasilia; and 2003 in Washington, DC. The next gathering is tentatively scheduled to take place in Brasilia in March of 2010.