

LEARNING NOTE

Emission
Reduction!

Sustainability!

Earth and
Climate!

REFLECTIONS FROM COP21: MANAGEMENT
SEMINAR

Moses Mabhida Stadium PBC1, 16 March
2016

Climate Change!

Environmental
Protection!



1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, there have been ongoing changes in temperature, precipitation and overall weather patterns, these changes have been accompanied by various effects which directly impact development as a whole. Given that the African continent is still fighting against poverty, unemployment and many other development challenges, climate related stresses add to the burden as this continent is considered to be the most vulnerable to climate change. It has been stated that climate change is one of the greatest threat facing humanity in the 21st century. Undoubtedly a need for responses against this threat should be regarded as top priority especially for leadership and overall government.

With the rising need to act against climate change, a joint effort between the Environmental Planning and Climate Protection Department and the Municipal Institute of Learning hosted a Management Seminar on the 16th of March 2016. This session opened a platform for engagement and robust discussions where 36 Municipality officials from different department within management of eThekweni reflected on COP21. Dr Debra Roberts presented detailed information from the 2011 December COP17 in a form of a way forward by the national team leading up to discussing perspectives that transpired from the Paris Agreement in 2015.

2. KEY DISCUSSIONS

In creating a culture of efficiently managing developmental issues, interdepartmental integration is fundamental. Utilising presentation and discussion method as a tool, dispersed reflections on climate change, COP21 perspective and the Paris Agreement were main key areas of this management seminar. Breaking down the key lessons learned, two main themes transpired: **why climate change is such a huge international debate** and **what does COP21 mean to the city with a way forward on what the city needs to do.**



2.1 Climate Change: a huge international debate

Internationally, climate change presents a cross cutting challenge that threatens human livelihoods and nature itself as it has been considered as probably the greatest long-term challenge facing the human race. Such reference is demonstrated through the current stressors that are presently occurring and that will continue to threaten development as a whole. Explaining change in the state of the climate due to human activities, flagging the Energy sector, Agriculture, Forests and other Land uses, Industry, Transport and the Building sector, Dr Roberts exemplified these sectors as main contributors pumping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Man-made emissions require all-man contribution towards steering this challenge into a controllable one. Thus clearly indicating that climate change is not solely an issue for the environmental sector, rather utterly a developmental challenge that cuts through aspects of life.

Impacting all sectors of life, ranging from economic, social, physical and environmental sectors; climate change has posed a challenging threat. Impacting human health, agricultural production, food security, increasing heat and water stress are some realities that many countries face. Going beyond threats against the global economy, an alarming large number of loss of human life was released by the World Health Organisation Report. Differing from country to country, especially in the African continent which has been hit hard, water and agricultural yield decline have been linked to leading into the increase of food insecurity, elevation of food prices, and loss of livestock for plus harsh weather events are some fundamental threats of climate change realities. Undoubtedly these impacts have threatened livelihoods and development, making it a global challenge that is an interest of debate internationally.

Worldwide, both leaders and ordinary people have been increasingly concerned with



climate change. Beyond this, the main concern has shifted from the impacts of this challenge now the focus is on failure of climate change mitigation and adaptation. It has been evident that existing processes of lessening the emission of greenhouse gases and adjusting to climate change have been minimum in efficiency which has opened room for the world to question how to increase the limitation of emission. Given this difficulty of dropping emission, it was then incumbent upon different countries to establish a general policy discourse on the emission issue. Considering the variety and diversity of countries affected a need for unifying strategies was one of the milestones leading to a common agreement, a radical one which intends on ensuring global average temperature does not exceed two degrees Celsius in the coming decades. Such a turning point can be seen as a global goal and responsibility that will keep countries in agreement accountable.

2.2 What does this mean to us as a city: Way forward and Conclusions

Aligning the eThekweni with this universal agreement will shape this city's development action for decades into the future, this means its end of business as usual, in the words of Dr Roberts. In this context, the city needs to recognise and take the Paris agreement aggressively from short, medium to long term plans. Initiatives towards recognising climate change and the Paris agreement must be reflected in the Integrated Development Planning, Agenda 2063 vision for all African cities, integrated risk management and the city must know how much it is willing to spend in the efforts of translating climate change agreement into the city's plans.

It is critical to acknowledge that climate change affects all line functions therefore, all departments must understand how they are affected; how can they respond and contribute towards meeting COP21 agreements, Zama Khuzwayo from the Climate Change Protection Department explained. This means that integration accompanied by administrative and governance support are key in mainstreaming the agendas of the COP21 agreements. Such actions require moving beyond just spreading awareness and put most emphasis on mobilisation within different department in order to champion cooperation and both political and administrative commitment.



The emphasis is to expose leadership to matters relating to the climate change agreements and move beyond the current situation where they are left in the hands of selected individuals (champions) within departments.

Recognising these agreements, the city will be joining a revolution of this century. Looking at an economic development perspective, Denny Thaver of eThekweni Municipality raised a critical point for discussion on whether the city is ready financially given its take on this international political response to climate change looking at the dynamics of increasing city population, decrease in vegetation and the status measurement of CO₂ within the city. A positive response on the above dynamics clarified that the city has been good on greens as the energy office has been tirelessly working on the CO₂ measurements and the city is on good oxygen status. Further to this, the effort has been focused on how to keep developmental operations whilst prioritising sustainability without compromising the other, which calls for a strong political commitment, in the words of Dr Roberts.

Stepping into this climate change global action plan that has been adopted by a hundred and ninety-five countries, a way forward for the city is to ensure full mobilisation of all units and start planning for short disasters with an understanding and admiration that the world is changing which calls for bold and revolutionary leadership. Proposing to reach out to the movers and shakers, leadership, practitioners as awareness and mobilisation action will potentially eradicate ignorance within governance, administration and political support. Such action has the potential to accelerate positive awareness and preparedness as different sectors who might be under the impression that matters of climate change are for the environmental sector may cooperatively join this global vision of low carbon and climate resilient sustainable goal.





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