International Climate Alliance Conference 2007 in Zurich

A climate compatible society is realistic and practicable, this is the result of the Annual Conference of the Climate Alliance of European Cities in Zurich. Several local strategies showed this impressively. Prof. Dr. Hans-Peter Dürr, member of the Club of Rome and winner of the Right Livelihood Award, presented the necessary positions and reorientations of economy, politics and civil society. Central pillar of a climate friendly society is the economic use of energy. For the first time a new initiative of the European Commission was introduced: the Covenant of the mayors on energy efficiency.

“How Strategies for a Climate Compatible Society” was the motto of the 15th International Annual Conference and General Assembly of the Climate Alliance. About 220 representatives of cities and municipalities, as well as further interested participants from science and from environmental and human rights associations from altogether eleven countries in Europe and South America, met from the 9th to the 11th May 2007.

At the start of the conference City Councillor Robert Neukomm, Head of the Department of Health and Environment of the city of Zurich, emphasized “that future-oriented action is no utopia” and referred to the “2000-Watt Society” program of the city of Zurich. However Neukomm also pointed out the difficulties: “Zurich lives, as most other cities, beyond its means and is confronted with continually growing needs regarding mobility, living, comfort and consumer behaviour.”

How much human activity can the biosphere afford?

Prof. Dr. Hans-Peter Dürr, member of the Club of Rome, winner of the Right Livelihood Award and founder of the Global Challenges Network, demanded in his lecture new legal, financial and economic basic conditions as well as fundamental reforms that in the first place enable a sustainable society. He pictured the energy consumption per person very impressively in the form of ‘energy slaves’, of which the average human being in Europe claims 60 but in fact does not need them at all. Especially he demanded that the average annual energy consumption
should not amount to more than 15 energy slaves or 1500 watts per capita. According to the physicist this is achievable with energy efficiency and renewable energies without any problems.

**The climate compatible society – concepts of cities and municipalities**

Representatives of the four local authorities Zurich, Thüringerberg, Apeldoorn and Munich demonstrated, exemplary for the more than 1400 member cities and municipalities, how they want to reach the reduction goal of the Climate Alliance – reducing CO₂ emissions by about ten percent every five years and halving the emissions by 2030 at the latest.

The ambitious program “2000-Watt Society” of the city of Zurich (365,000 inhabitants) was illustrated by Dr. Marie-Therese Büsser of the Department of Health and Environment. With the program the annual average energy consumption per head should amount in the long-term to only one third compared with today, and the CO₂ emissions must be reduced to one ninth of current levels. In addition, at least 75 percent of energy must be produced from renewable sources. As a contribution to attaining these goals, energy efficiency and the use of renewable energies has to increase, the planning, construction and management of buildings has to consider energy-relevant objectives, and environmentally-friendly mobility must continue to be encouraged.

Thüringerberg (700 inhabitants) in Austria is setting its sights, as is the whole Great Walser Valley, on 100 percent renewable energies, particularly on biomass, small-scale hydropower and solar energy. Two thirds of the municipalities already heat their buildings with biomass and via a district heating grid. The demand for wood chips has risen by about a factor of 3 in the last five years. The electricity supplied via photovoltaic and hydropower today already exceeds consumption by 240,000 kilowatt hours. The trouble up to now is traffic, with 30 percent of energy consumption. A big proportion of daily outward-bound commuters should shift to an optimised public transport system and form carpools.

Goal or utopia? This is how Sjaak de Ligt titled the ‘Energy Neutral’ concept of the Dutch city of Apeldoorn (152,000 inhabitants). By 2020 the total energy needed (without transport, however) is to be produced in a sustainable way and within the city itself. Apeldoorn favours renewable energies, above all biomass and wind, as well as energy efficiency in buildings, administrations and in industry.

The Bavarian city of Munich (1,258,000 inhabitants) commissioned the Institute for Applied Ecology in Freiburg to perform a study on a far-reaching CO₂ reduction strategy for the energy and transport sectors. For the most ambitious scenario, about 50 percent of the achievable reductions arose in the area of private households, attainable through reinforced use of co-generation units and renewable energies as well as improved thermal protection. Result of the study: Many of the activities of the city and the public utilities are exemplary; however, there still exist big CO₂ reduction potentials - without or with only low additional costs, but partly with large further benefits like noise protection, employment etc. For additional CO₂ reductions, existing activities have to be stepped up and further instruments have to be applied, in which housing associations, public utilities and local firms are important actors. The target of halving the CO₂ emissions can be reached in Munich between 2020 and 2030 with an intensive climate protection program. Since the methodology and essential results of the study are applicable to other European cities, they can be used as signposts for the achievement of the Climate Alliance goal.
The climate compatible society – views of the European Union, the national level and environmental NGOs

Pedro Ballesteros Torres, responsible for new and renewable energy sources, energy efficiency and innovation at the European Commission, explained the EU action plan – 20 percent energy savings by 2020 – and invited all Climate Alliance cities and municipalities to take part in the European campaign for sustainable energy (see also www.sustenergy.org). Ballesteros emphasised the important role of cities and municipalities in implementing the EU climate and energy policy. For the first time he introduced the ‘Covenant of the Mayors’ intended by the Commission. The covenant should gather the political leaders of the most pioneering cities in Europe and mark a crucial step towards working cooperatively in protecting the climate.

Michael Kaufmann of the Swiss Federal Office of Energy explained that in Switzerland the expected damages caused by climate change, especially in the alpine region, will be higher than calculated up till now. The economic costs of well-directed climate protection are less than the emerging consequential damages of inactivity. He sees cities and municipalities as the important partners to coordinate climate policies and to implement relevant climate protection measures. “In the framework of the Energy City movement of EnergieSchweiz – which already has well over 130 municipalities involved – as well as in the Climate Alliance, our country has a very important, maybe essential network of municipalities that achieve direct and practical contributions.”

Successes – activities – challenges: 15 years association Climate Alliance / Alianza del Clima e.V.

In addition to this year’s presentation of the activities and projects, the new joint directors, Ulrike Janssen and Thomas Brose, offered a reflection on the achieved aims in the 15 years the association Climate Alliance / Alianza del Clima e.V. has existed. In the year 1992 16 cities and municipalities established the Climate Alliance in Freiburg im Breisgau, and today it has more than 1400 members in 17 countries.

For the only city network with a quantitative goal, monitoring and the development of instruments for the systematic recording of greenhouse gas emissions was an important pillar of the activities from the very first. Despite all agreements regarding methodology or emission factors, the individual emissions inventories are, however, never capable of being compared or assessed. The big challenge therefore remained the development of a Climate Alliance internet tool to monitor CO2 emissions. Developing this has now succeeded – after several fruitless efforts to acquire funds for it, but thanks to the co-financing of several member cities. After a testing phase a first version will be available for all German member municipalities at the end of the year.

For the build-up of local climate protection strategies, the Climate Alliance developed several tools in the past, for example the “10 steps”, the catalogue of measures, and the Climate Alliance indicators. Recently, the Climate Compass, developed within the framework of an EU project – a guide to local climate protection with a matrix of measures, recommenda-
tions for immediate measures and about 200 case studies – has also been made available to local authorities. The Climate Compass is currently being developed further within a research project on behalf of the German Federal Environment Agency to become a benchmarking system for local climate protection.

The Climate Alliance projects form a further pillar for the direct implementation of climate protection measures in cities and municipalities. These are, among others:

– PRIME for the opening of potentials for the utilization of renewable energies and energy efficiency in public buildings with the help of private investment,

– Fifty/fifty Plus as an incentive system for energy savings at schools,

– Cogen Challenge, to reinforce the use of small-scale co-generation units and for the supply of the necessary fundamentals of planning and decision making,

– AMICA as an instrument for the integrated planning of measures for climate protection and for adaptation to climate change,

– ECOLISH for the development of funding models for climate protection in households with low income or in (local) government-subsidized housing.

In addition, the Climate Alliance is carrying out many campaigns and communication projects, such as the Green Footprints campaign for kids and the European Mobility Week, the Climate Toolbox with the ice block challenge, as well as the European award Climate Star 2007.

Regarding cooperation with indigenous peoples in the Amazon rainforest, the Climate Alliance is able to look back on many positive initiatives and incentives. Since the foundation of the Climate Alliance innumerable smaller and bigger projects supporting indigenous communities were financed by European member municipalities. Austria has built up a stable regional partnership with the indigenous organizations on the Rio Negro in Brazil. Generated by the initiative of municipalities in several European countries, additional cooperation and funding have emerged from NGOs and national development ministries. In this way the municipalities’ own resources have been multiplied. Visits of indigenous representatives in Europe as well as delegation trips of mayors to Amazonia have triggered personal concern and commitment.

At an international level, the indigenous peoples have been able to gain greater recognition from national governments. The most important milestone is certainly the setting up of a Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues under the umbrella of the United Nations. However, the threats to human being and nature have also grown in the last years. Oil and natural gas production, mining of gold, diamonds and other important raw materials, as well as the illegal deforestation and the expansion of monocultures into the rainforest, reduce the living space of the indigenous peoples more and more. New threats occur from our thirst for alternative energy sources, for example oil from palms. Climate change leaves clear tracks, such as extensive dryness and mass dying of fish. The global link between climate change and its negative effects on the South that the Climate Alliance always had in mind is now noticed more strongly also by other governmental and non-governmental institutions.

One of the big challenges for the coming years will be the ‘Europeanisation’ of the Climate Alliance, i.e. an increase of the number of members and a structural strengthening in further European countries, as well as a bigger recognition of the Climate Alliance by the European Commission and Parliament. Above all this latter point was a big concern for the new management, which is why the Climate Alliance office was opened in Brussels in May 2007. The new employee there, Pirita Lindholm, has considerable experience in EU lobbying because of her prior job at the Council of European Municipalities and Regions in the fields of sustainable development and energy.
Climate protection in everyday political life

More than 60 politicians from municipalities of 1000 to 1,000,000 inhabitants took part in the workshop for politicians organised jointly by Climate Alliance and Energy Cities Switzerland. How should climate protection policies be designed, which success and cooperation models are available and what do municipalities need to practice more effective climate protection?

The city of Luxembourg has already achieved much since joining the Climate Alliance in the year 2000: the extension of the local heating grid by about a factor 5, along with more intensive use of renewable energies (e.g. multi-year plan for hydraulic power) and energy efficiency criteria in urban land use planning. At present the subsidy for solar heating is being reduced and replaced by energy advice to assist in planning and construction.

"Without a goal there is no effort to move forward", city councillor Robert Neukomm pointed out, describing the development of the energy master plan of the city of Zurich, which should make full use of the opportunities for an active local energy policy with exemplary effects. The legislative priority “2000-Watt Society” sets the long-term course for this. The important steps to realize the ambitious goals include a pioneering role in energy-efficient construction (minergy passive standard), rigorous implementation of measures and beacon projects as well as systematic controlling.

Mayor Georg Moosbrugger from the Austrian town of Langenegg reported on some of the 150 climate protection measures that have already been implemented in the small municipality and for which in the last ten years they have already received 20 awards, among others the Climate Star 2002 and the Energy-Globe 2001. How can climate activities prosper? According to Moosbrugger not only idealists with stamina are necessary but also collective experiences of success, space for creativity and support from politicians and external partners. Indications of financial benefits, personal conversations and the role model function and credibility of those responsible help to overcome resistance.

Transport is the biggest headache for all politicians. Restrictions are very unpopular and contribute to competition between the local authorities over residents and new businesses. Therefore Neukomm called on the national government to take steps towards the reduction of car traffic. Mobility management within businesses and in the administration is one of the keys to success in the city of Olten, reported Mayor Ernst Zingg, as the traffic situation is gradually improving.

Bruno Bébie, energy deputy of the city of Zurich and facilitator of the workshop, emphasized that local authorities in Switzerland are dependent on the canton, for instance in order to determine the energy standard of buildings. Only the national level can decide and implement further climate protection measures. In order to strengthen the influence on the national framework conditions, a good cooperation with higher political levels as well as cooperation with neighbouring municipalities is very beneficial. Luxembourg’s councillor for the environment Viviane Loschetter underscored the huge significance of cooperation and mentioned the joint work in the area of traffic with the neighbouring municipalities and an international cooperation in the framework of QuattroPole with the cities of Metz, Saarbrücken and Trier. Finally the expectation was formulated that the Climate Alliance should initiate talks with the national governments about topics where cities and municipalities themselves can make no decisions, for instance on taxes.
Biofuels – Climate protection at the cost of indigenous peoples?

The demand for renewable fuels from palm-oil, maize, sugar cane and soya is rising drastically world-wide and reinforces the pressure on the rainforests. Therefore the interest in the topic was big and the workshop was well attended.

Diego Iván Escobar, environment coordinator of the COICA, and Stephan Suhner of the working group Switzerland-Colombia predominantly portrayed the effects and situation of the already existing palm-oil plantations in Colombia. Besides ecological problems, like deforestation of the rainforests and siting of monocultures, the violation of human rights against peasants and indigenous communities came to the fore. The merging of agribusiness with the civil war parties has disastrous consequences for the population. The situation is made worse by miserable working conditions and low wages on the plantations.

The facilitator Thomas Brose pointed out that, as far back as 2004 at the Renewables Conference in Bonn, representatives of the indigenous peoples demanded in a declaration still current today: “The states promoting renewable energies must respect the rights of the indigenous peoples...”

Steffen Hofman, of the energy utility Schwäbisch Hall, spoke about the strong public criticism of plans to run a power plant on palm-oil, while Matthias Diemer informed about the network “Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil”, in which business, human rights and environment groups try to develop criteria for the cultivation and export of palm-oil. Above all, the decision made at EU level to add vegetable fuels to the fuel mix increases the pressure on the extension of plantations and, with it, the deforestation of the rainforests.

The participants at the workshop agreed that strict ecological and social criteria must be introduced for the import of palm-oil. Whether the certification of palm-oil plantations is a realistic approach was questioned due to experiences with other certification systems. Beyond dispute was that these problems have even more serious effects without a reduction of our energy needs and consumption in the future and will lead to even more intense conflicts. In order to reach a climate friendly society an efficient use of energy and a reduction of consumption are absolutely necessary.

The impacts of climate change on indigenous peoples

This year the traditional launch event of the Climate Alliance conference was arranged jointly with the human rights organisation Incomindios Switzerland (International Committee for the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas), Samuel Cuaper Piñedo, a Shipibo from the Peruvian Amazon region and representative of the organisation CINDES (Asociación Centro Indígena para El Desarrollo Sostenible) reported vividly on the effects of climate change in the rainforest. Afterwards the impressions were still deepened by a film about the situation in Amazonia.

Diego Iván Escobar, vice president of the Climate Alliance and coordinator for the environment of the COICA, additionally pointed out the consequences of climate change for the entire region: “Our survival depends on the survival of the rainforest. If the rainforest dies, we too are threatened in our existence.” He explained that extended dryness has already had disastrous effects on local communities over the last years. Fish mortality and water shortage in a region that shelters huge freshwater reserves are the first heralds of a development that is caused by climate change. He emphasized also the importance of measures in the European cities and municipalities in order to contain climate change.
Climate protection and adaptation – the European AMICA project

Within the EU project AMICA measures are brought together that are necessary for adaptation to climate change and useful for climate protection. Dr. Andreas Kress of the European Secretariat of Climate Alliance presented the AMICA “adaptation tool” as one result of this Interreg project. It consists of a matrix with adaptation measures and a list of practical examples. This instrument describes for the regional and local level more than 40 adaptation measures to climate changes like increased heatwaves and floods.

Current work in the framework of the project AMICA focuses on areas such as spatial planning, energy and construction, since the biggest potentials for an integration of adaptation and mitigation measures probably lie here. For example, a decentralized energy supply based on renewable energies is more adapted to climate extremes and resulting black-outs than big centralized coal-burning power plants, and at the same time contributes to mitigation of climate change.

Sjaak de Ligt of Klimaatverbond Nederland presented practical experiences from the Netherlands. For example, in areas with too much water the pumped off water is used also for heat recovery and cooling. Storage basins – for example under greenhouses – simultaneously serve the irrigation in periods with little rainfall. In the workshop it became apparent that the potential for combined measures for adaptation and mitigation is now very big already.

Synergies emerge if measures that reduce greenhouse gas emissions also mitigate the effects of climate change, and vice versa. A tool with the corresponding measures will be available by AMICA by the end of the year.

Sustainable energy financed by citizens’ investments – the European PRIME project

Dieter Seifried, one of the pioneers in the field of citizens contracting, introduced a pilot project initiated by him at a school in Freiburg. There, measures for energy and water savings were established and a photovoltaic unit was mounted on the roof of the school. The parents, teachers and other persons supplied the funding and are paid back out of the savings made. That is a yield of three to six percent for this ecological investment. Later this concept was implemented by the Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment, Energy under the title ‘Solar & Savings’ in four schools in North Rhine-Westphalia.

During the presentation of their activities in the countries that take part in the EU project PRIME (Private Investments Move Ecopower), it became clear that the conditions for such projects are quite different in Europe. For example, the concept of contracting is not known by many actors in Belgium and there are only few service companies which offer it. Nevertheless, the city of Antwerp has decided to implement energy efficiency measures in a selected school building.

However, there is no citizens funding for this; instead, the money is allocated by the local authority.

In Berlin, Graz and the province of Bologna contracting has been used for public buildings for some time now. However with the citizens funding for public buildings they are breaking new ground. While Berlin and Graz are still searching for a suitable building for the implementation of a local PRIME project, the building in the province of Bologna is already decided, even if the implementation has been stopped because of a legal dispute at present.

The concept of citizens contracting is a complex and very ambitious approach. A precondition for success is that the financing citizens can identify with the building and the saving measures. And: It can only be implemented if politicians and administrators are fully committed to working for it. The materials and tools developed for the project PRIME, as well as the information and experiences collected from the different countries involved in the project, will be combined in an action package. It is available on the internet and on CD-ROM from late summer for anyone interested.

The action package offers municipalities and engaged citizens support for implementing a sustainable use of energy with citizens funding in public buildings.
General Assembly

At the General Assembly the activity and finance report of the year 2006 was presented and explained. Dr. Arentz of the city of Cologne expressed his thanks on behalf of the General Meeting for the good work and proposed that the activities of the Executive Board be approved. This was adopted unanimously. Furthermore the planning for this and the next year was introduced.

The following have been confirmed as board members for a further two years: Joachim Lorenz (head of the department of health and environment of the state capital Munich, Germany) as President, Diego Iván Escobar (coordinator for environment, land rights and biodiversity in the COICA), as Vice President as well as Dr. Christiana Dolezal (vice mayor of the city of Linz, Austria) and Dr. Karl-Ludwig Schibel (city of Città di Castello, Italy). The term of office of the two other board members Giovanni Franco Orlando (head of the environment department of the city of Modena, Italy), and Camille Gira (mayor of the municipality of Beckerich, Luxembourg) continues until 2008.

Two amendments of the statutes were decided: Firstly the CO₂ reduction target of the Climate Alliance, already modified in the last year, was formally included in the statutes. Secondly in future small municipalities will be admitted only as full and no longer as associated members.

In addition the General Assembly debated the issue of CO₂ compensation, or “carbon neutrality”. Because of the complexity of the topic and the need for discussion, it was decided to adopt a resolution at a later time.

Atop: Diego Iván Escobar and Joachim Lorenz. Beneath: Dr. Karl-Ludwig Schibel and Giovanni Franco Orlando. Middle: Camille Gira. Below: City Councillor Robert Neukomm during the reception of the city of Zurich
New Directors

Last year they took over this function only temporarily, now they are the new management team of Climate Alliance: Ulrike Janssen and Thomas Brose.

Ulrike Janssen, a professional with an advanced degree in meteorology and specialist for environmental protection, has already worked at the Climate Alliance since 1993. She started her activities in the former EU research project “Climate protection strategies of local authorities in Europe” and then was responsible for the field of mobility. Besides her work on local action strategies, partly within the EU project SMILE, she developed the two large traffic campaigns in the Climate Alliance: the European Week of Mobility and the ‘Kids on the Move’ campaign. In the last few years her work has focussed on climate protection strategies of cities and municipalities again. These are the Climate Alliance climate protection methodology, the catalogue of measures and indicators, the Climate Compass, and the present project for the development of a benchmarking system for local climate protection.

Thomas Brose has worked since March 2000 in the field of cooperation with indigenous peoples. The postgraduate agricultural engineer brought in his experience as a development worker in Brazil into the coordination with the COICA and the International Alliance of Indigenous Peoples. In the framework of projects – for instance for the support of indigenous organisations, for solar lamps and the production of vegetable oil for indigenous communities in Amazonia – he coordinates the cooperation between European municipalities and the indigenous Climate Alliance partners in the Amazon basin. However, another main focus is also the information and educational work about the North-South cooperation of the Climate Alliance in Europe. He collaborated within the EU project ‘Petroleum in Amazonia’ and visited indigenous communities in remote areas in Peru and Ecuador. He tries to moderate the interests of the indigenous partners vis-à-vis the European member municipalities, but also governmental and non-governmental institutions, and to initiate new cooperations.

Climate Alliance in Brussels

The Climate Alliance has, with immediate effect, an office in Brussels. Our new colleague Pirita Lindholm shares the office with a co-worker of Energie-Cités. Climate Alliance and Energie-Cités have been cooperating for some years now. So the two city networks together handle EU projects, like SMILE, Cogen Challenge or the European Mobility Week, have common members and plan political initiatives at European level.

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Climate Alliance members

We cordially welcome our new members. Since the beginning of 2007, the following cities and municipalities have joined the Climate Alliance as full members: Altmünster, Großweikersdorf, Gutenbrunn, Jenbach, Kirchberg am Walde, Lanzendorf, Obritzberg-Rust, Oed-Ohling, Rußbach, Ulrichskirchen-Schleimbach, Untersiebenbrunn, Weißenkirchen a.d. Perschling, Wöbling and Wolfsbach from Austria, Extental, Kreis Lippe, Lüdenscheid and Schorndorf from Germany, Nantes from France, Cles and Lodi from Italy, Frisange, Junglinster, Kayl, Lac de la Haute Sûre, Niederanven and Sandweiler from Luxembourg as well as Heerlen from the Netherlands.

New associated members are: Allerheiligen im Mühlkreis, Bad Kreuzen, Baumgartenberg, Dimbach, Feistritz an der Gail, Grein, Grinzens, Kematen an der Krems, Klam, Langenstein, Mils, Münzbach, Naarn im Machlande, Neukirchen an der Vöckla, Oberhofen im Inntal, Pram, Radfeld, Reißeck, Saxen, Scharnstein, St. Nikola an der Donau, St. Thomas am Blasenstein, Trebesing, Waldhausen im Strudengau, Windhaag bei Perg, Zell am Pettenfirst from Austria, Deutschnofen/Nova Ponente, Freienfeld/Campo di Trens and Tschermis/Cermes from Italy as well as Reflex – Environmental Protection Society from Hungary.

Presently (May 2007) 1365 cities, municipalities and districts as well as 63 provinces, NGOs and further organizations are member of the Climate Alliance. The members are in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.