

NEWS



Urban Innovation

Guangzhou celebrates World Cities Day with special forum and workshop on Urban Innovation

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Since 2014, every October 31, the World Cities Day marks one of the most important dates in the calendar of worldwide activities for cities and metropolitan areas. This year, Metropolis was proud to co-host the World Cities Day celebrations in Guangzhou, where our Co-presidency and our Regional Secretariat for Asia-Pacific are based. The Metropolis Secretary General, Octavi de la Varga, attended the 2017 World Cities Day Forum and the Workshop for Thought Leaders in Guangzhou, along with Senior Advisor Dr Sunil Dubey and Senior Manager for Institutional Relations & Asia Portfolio Ms Agnès Bickart.

The main event of the celebrations in Guangzhou was the 2017 World Cities Day Forum, opened by Dr Joan Clos, Under-Secretary-General of the UN and Executive Director of UN-Habitat. He commented on valuable urban lessons from Chinese cities, which can provide learning models for other developing cities of the

world, particularly in Asia. He expressed the support of the United Nations to China's Belt and Road Initiative and extended UN-Habitats' institutional support to the various urban activities of the initiative.

Mr Wen Guohui, Mayor of Guangzhou and Metropolis Co-president, delivered his opening speech and was followed by the dignitaries Mr Ma Xingrui, Governor of Guangdong Province, Mr Jiang Ping, Vice Mayor of Shanghai, Ms Dolana Msimang, Ambassador of South Africa to China, and Dr Robert Kaltenbrunner, Director of Building and Housing at the German Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR).

The Metropolis Secretary General also gave a speech at the forum, during which he emphasised the need for cities to work together, and assured our association's commitment to contributing to the accomplishment of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 and to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Furthermore, he explained Metropolis's key strategies, which seek to ensure that city to city learning and institutional capacity building remain a fundamental objective in addressing the challenges of rapid urbanisation and environmental sustainability worldwide.

Another remarkable event for the World Cities Day celebrations in Guangzhou was the Workshop for Thought Leaders: Innovation in Urban Transportation for the Future City. Organized between October 29 and November 2 by the Metropolis Regional Secretariat for Asia-Pacific in partnership with Sun Yat-Sen University Guangzhou, the workshop provided an opportunity for experts from the Metropolis membership and other international participants to discuss the key transport factors for the future of cities and how urban innovation can assist with reducing the physical infrastructure and heavy energy usage of new ways of mobility and transportation.

Octavi de la Varga also took part of this event, providing the welcome remarks of the workshop, on October 30, in which he underlined the importance of sustainable mobility as an essential part of urban planning and management. Our Regional Secretary for Asia-Pacific, Mr Liu Baochun, moderated the workshop's opening ceremony, explaining how Metropolis boosted the Guangzhou Awards for Urban Innovation and our current tools that facilitate city-to-city learning exchanges, with remarks to the Policy Transfer Platform. Mr Zhiying Chen, Deputy Mayor of Guangzhou, welcomed the thought leaders and offered the learnings from Guangzhou's urbanisation experiences to be shared with other global cities and academic institutions. The workshop counted on the active participation of representatives from our following members: Barcelona, Brussels, Guangzhou, Jakarta, Karaj, Mexico City, Seoul, Shanghai, South Tangerang and Valle de Aburrá.

Dr Sunil Dubey, Metropolis Senior Advisor who leads the Metropolis Urban Innovation programme funded by Guangzhou, joined the workshop's panel dialogue about shared transport and shared city along with the former mayor of Bristol, Mr George Ferguson, and the Guangzhou advisor Mr Nicholas You. This session discussed new planning paradigms and urban management practices, where end-to-end sharing of transport nodes and the importance of "car-free" cities were emphasised. Mr Ferguson encouraged the future city leaders and planners who attended the workshop to organize car-free days in their cities, giving the most vital public space of roads to the citizens. Dr Dubey provided compelling case studies and projects from Guangzhou and Seoul, where sharing of transport and mobility data is now a fundamental part of future planning, governance and management.

Dr Dubey also explained that the Metropolis Urban Innovation programme's immediate plans are strengthening the global learning about sharing and circular economy in accordance with the NUA and developing new ways for Guangzhou to lead the global dialogue on urban innovation and public transportation. Dr Dubey outlined the forthcoming publications on urban innovation which will be launched during the ninth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF9), in Kuala Lumpur in February 2018.

Dr Alfonso Govea, who is the architect, urbanist and professor who is working for the Metropolis Urban Innovation programme in the areas of urban blockchain and governance, participated in two focused dialogue sessions on smart transportation, mobility and big data. Dr Govea presented the outline of his key research for Metropolis and the Guangzhou Award Secretariat, where urban data collated through various

“AppScore” platforms can be used for future planning and sustainable management of urban transportation and mobility. Dr Govea’s research project is carried out with a team of international researchers from Sun Yat-Sen University, including Prof Yanling HE and Prof Lin YE.

For further information and opportunities regarding Metropolis Urban Innovation programme and the Asia-Pacific portfolio, please contact Ms Agnès Bickart.