



CITY COUNCIL OF PORT LOUIS
AFRICA ADAPTATION PROGRAMME
KNOWLEDGE FAIR ON CLIMATE CHANGE

ORGANISED BY

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

SYMPOSIUM ON CLIMATE CHANGE

THEME : *THE CITY COUNCIL OF PORT LOUIS*

AND CLIMATE CHANGE –

THE SENSITISATION PROCESS

TALK BY

DR MAHMAD ANIFF KODABACCUS,

LORD MAYOR OF PORT LOUIS



Good Afternoon

Many thanks to the Ministry of Environment
for organising

this symposium on climate change and the
Climate Knowledge Fair.



This is a knowledge fair. Participating in this event is a means to know to each and everyone that the City Council of Port Louis is already engaged in the Climate Adaptation Programme. Port Louis, as Capital City, has to be prepared for what is expected from the impact of climate change and its many variables.

A remark was made a few years back, during a project presentation on climate change at the Port Louis City Hall : *what does a municipality has to do with climate change?* A very pertinent remark in fact to which the only reply being that local authorities have a lot to do in respect of climate change. It is an issue of utmost importance worldwide. The whole world will have to be prepared and to adapt. It has therefore to be on the agenda of all development stakeholders, local government being a key partner of the central government.



It has been said that preparing and mitigating the impact of climate changes is a very challenging issue for local authorities. Yes, very true. A very big challenge when viewed in many aspects. It is a challenge and a process:

- *acquiring knowledge about the whole concept of climate change*
- *getting sensitized about the concept*
- *making an inventory of all the recipients of the impact*
- *identifying and implementing measures to build up resilience and mitigate the impact, the*
- *measures having to be beneficial in the short term and even more benefits in the long term.*



Knowledge, in bits and pieces, came to us in the 1990's, following *Rio UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992*. The **Earth Summit and Agenda 21** rang the alarm bell when damages to environment were assessed, and, among the identified culprits : *climate change effects*.

We cannot say that we have been caught unawares by climate changes. We cannot also deny the fact that we human beings are greatly responsible for the increasing changes in climate and the consequences thereof on health, environment and our own safety, well being and future.



In view of such consequences, local authorities who have to manage cities and towns in particular are therefore among the main stakeholders to initiate climate change actions, mainly through *planning and permitting processes*. **Agenda 21** had called upon local authorities to assume their responsibilities and to review/reshape their strategies/policies, their development programmes and legislations. Creating awareness about sustainable development issues was also a major recommendation.



It was a blessing for the City Council of Port Louis when Port Louis was selected, in 2009, by the organisation *ICLEI Local Government for Sustainability* to form part of a *Five City Network to Pioneer Climate Adaptation through Participation Research and Local Action*.

Strengthening local government planning and action for adaptation to changes in climatic conditions and its effects. The project's target was to sensitise the five cities' administrators on this crucial issue of the third millennium. The sensitisation process for Port Louis, Cape Town (South Africa), Maputo (Mozambique), Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania) and Walvis Bay (Namibia) began with this selection by ICLEI.



From 2009 to 2012, Port Louis has been in the front line in regional and international forums on climate change issues. The Lord Mayor of Port Louis had the honour of representing the Capital City at the

- *Local Climate Solutions for Africa 2011 Congress (Cape Town)*
- *Durban Local Government Convention: adapting to a climate change*
- *ICLEI Five City Adaptation Network Workshop/ Understanding Risk Forum/ Mayor's Roundtable on Urbanisation (Cape Town).*

Besides participation as speaker on climate change issues for Port Louis in these forums outside Mauritius, the City Council had hosted the *ICLEI Consultative Research Workshops on Risk Assessment and Adaptation Options* in March 2011 as well as a *High Level Mayoral Workshop for Mayors and Chairpersons of Local Authorities*.



Mayors and Chairpersons of local authorities who participated in this high level workshop are signatories of the *Durban Adaptation Charter for Local Governments* which was adopted on 4 December 2011. That was a joint initiative to express concern as local authorities administrators in Mauritius on the climate change issues.

This charter, was first signed during the *Cape Town Durban Local Government Convention* by **114** mayors, including the Lord Mayor of Port Louis, and other elected local leaders representing over **950** local governments from around the world. It was an event which made history. A common initiative for **advocacy, adaptation and mitigation** in respect of the expected impact of changing climatic conditions in our respective cities and towns.



Now about why the City Council of Port Louis feels greatly concerned. We all know that Mauritius is already experiencing climate change.

What is then happening in Port Louis?

Enclosed between the sea in front and a range of mountains at the back. This is the specificity of Port Louis, besides having all economic and other activities concentrated within the City's precincts. The result:

- rising temperatures
- rising sea temperature and sea level
- heavy downpour
- flash floods
- inundated roads
- sliding down of earth, rocks and other debris from mountain slopes into courtyards and onto roads.



The advocacy of the Lord Mayor of Port Louis at the *Durban Local Government Convention* was that all should

- manage our carbon footprints and aim at zero-carbon
- fight deforestation
- encourage planting of trees
- save energy
- go green

This is precisely what has been started doing in Port Louis. The Council's project for adaptation to climate change is “***Port Louis Vision 2020 – the first Zero Carbon City in Africa***” .



It is a very ambitious project, with many challenges, many constraints. Nevertheless we have to start somewhere and to do all possible efforts to meet our objective:

- the greening campaign “*a citizen – a plant*” is on.
- the reforestation of the *Montagne des Signaux* has started to date nearly 200 “*flamboyants*” have been planted along the road starting from Bell Village. Some 200 more “*flamboyants*” will be planted along the mountain range.
- the planting of some 200 “*Cassia Fistula*” at the northern entrance of Port Louis has started.
- the City Hall of Port Louis is using solar energy since July 2012 -- the first local authority in Mauritius to implement such a project.
- the street lighting network will go photovoltaic by next year, hopefully if we have funds.



- the Council is encouraging eco-building
- the Council is being very strict in respect of conditions for building permits, particularly.
- no authorization for any construction on rivers, rivulets, canals, drains & reserves.
- actions against illegal constructions.
- no extensive cultivation necessitating use of herbicides/pesticides on river reserves as preventive measures against pollution.
- water solar system to be mandatory in the building permit conditions.
- proposals of legislations are being worked out to make some streets in the City Centre pedestrian.



So much, in a nutshell, for what the City Council of Port Louis has been doing since the sensitization process about climate change impact has begun. Our prime objective is **resilience** and **sustainability** and we shall continue working on it.

It is a matter of urgency for all stakeholders to come together and join their efforts for climate adaptation and mitigation measures. Initiatives such as this *Climate Knowledge Fair* are most worthwhile as the sensitisation process is a never-ending process. We have to be prepared to understand the implications of the **Climate Change Legislation** which will be coming shortly.

Whatever actions we take, as a local authority, will add up to those of government and other stakeholders. Eventually the whole planet earth will benefit from our concerted actions, not forgetting that future generations will thank us.

Thank you for your attention.