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ISKANDAR MALAYSIA HAS A BLUEPRINT FOR A MORE SUSTAINABLE REGION

The region of Iskandar Malaysia joined the Global Covenant of Mayors on 29 November 2017. The region has developed and secured widespread individual and public sector support for a robust Low Carbon Society Blueprint and locally tailored Action Plans to guide them to ambitious emission reductions.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Iskandar Malaysia is located in the State of Johor and made up of five local authorities. The region is a leader in sustainable urban development, with a robust climate action "blueprint" for which it has secured backing from local, state, and international governing levels.

The Iskandar Regional Development Authority (IRDA) spearheads and coordinates climate efforts with the Iskandar Malaysia region. The Regional Authority agency believes in the critical importance of cooperating across sectors, government levels, and with international partners to meet sustainability goals.

Iskandar Malaysia launched a [Low Carbon Society Blueprint](#) in 2012, which guides the region to reduce its emissions by 58 percent by 2025. The holistic Blueprint includes 281 programmes across the themes of green economy, green community and green environment, and is complemented by [Low Carbon Society Action Plans](#) specifically crafted for each of the region's five local authorities. The

Blueprint provides an overarching strategic vision and regional climate actions, while the Action Plans map-out locally tailored implementation.

Iskandar Malaysia joined the Global Covenant of Mayors (GCoM) in November 2017, through which it has been able to learn from others' strengths and challenges, and work with international peers to continue to refine its climate actions. This has been supported by the European Union through the IUC programme in Asia, and has given Iskandar Malaysia the opportunity to learn how other cities such as Copenhagen, Milan and Zagreb address and adapt to climate change. Joining GCoM also provided opportunities to access new climate financing and other financial support from funding agencies.

The region faces challenges with flash floods, water quality, pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions. Addressing these head-on requires cross-sector planning and support from varied stakeholders spanning all levels of government, private sector bodies, civil society, and international counterparts.



CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Iskandar Malaysia faces a number of challenges in climate action planning that it has addressed head-on, including the need to secure: government support; buy-in from local stakeholders and communities; financing; cooperation with the wider global community; and high-quality data.

The IRDA works on holistic, cross-sector climate planning. Plans can only translate to concrete results if they have political support from the State of Johor and from the region's five local authorities. This required the IRDA to meet regularly with the State. Through this process, the IRDA gained governmental recognition and their Blueprint was embedded in State of Johor policies across sectors. The State has also established a Johor Low Carbon Council as a platform and decision-making body to discuss, plan and monitor the Low Carbon Society programme at the state level.

Even the best-planned strategies can only be effective, however, if they are supported by local stakeholders. The IRDA worked closely with local-level agencies and private sector organisations in the implementation of Action Plans. They shared their expertise and funding resources with partners in public-private partnerships, which enabled implementation to spread to, and be taken up by, civil society.

Given the comprehensive nature of the programme, its development, implementation and monitoring have all necessitated securing outside financial support. Iskandar Malaysia turned to the international community to tackle this challenge. The region secured funding for a five-year project through the Science and Technology Research Partnership for Sustainable Development, funded by two Japanese agencies, which resulted in invaluable research used to develop the Blueprint and Action Plans. In 2015, the Low Carbon Society Blueprint was included in the review of the Comprehensive Development Plan II and adopted as the strategic environmental policy for Iskandar Malaysia.

As a national leader – and the first city-region to develop a climate action document – Iskandar often needs to look to a wider global community to learn from peers. However, accessing such a global network is not an easy feat. Joining the Global Covenant of Mayors was a clear solution,

which has given the region access to an alliance of 10,000 cities, as well as cooperation opportunities and expert advice from peers and from the organisation itself. Boyd Dionysius Jouman, Lead of Resilient Environment of the IRDA explains that joining, “provides a great opportunity to learn how others are doing in tackling and combating climate-related issues.” He goes on to explain that, “We can learn and share so much through this involvement. Iskandar Malaysia strongly believes that joining the GCoM platform, [raises] new possibilities for IRDA's international commitment and profile.”



When the IRDA first began embarking on developing the Low Carbon Society Blueprint, there was a lack of high-quality data available for programme development and progress monitoring. This is a common challenge faced, and is at the heart of the Global Covenant of Mayors, which has a [Global Common Reporting Framework](#) to support cities in gathering and reporting climate data. IRDA has recently created a central body responsible for climate data gathering, management, monitoring and analysis, known as Iskandar Malaysia Urban Observatory.



RESULTS AND IMPACT

Iskandar's high ambitions and ability to tackle challenges head-on have resulted in substantial positive impacts. Solutions to garner support from local stakeholders, cooperate with international peers through the GCoM, and invest in data gathering, for example, have led to direct positive impacts.

IRDA worked closely in public-private partnerships with varied stakeholders for programme implementation and to ensure that Action Plans be taken-up by civil society, local organisations, and the general public. For example, the *Iskandar Malaysia Eco-life Challenge* engaged 475 schools and 47,000 students in low-carbon initiatives, accomplished through a successful collaboration between IRDA, University of Technology Malaysia, the Johor Education Department, and SWM Environment Sdn Bhd.

The IRDA understood that the goals and planning laid out in the Low Carbon Society Blueprint must be paired with climate monitoring and reporting to ensure effectiveness. Climate planning has thereby led the region to now release regular, comprehensive greenhouse gas inventories, which will be supported by the Global Covenant's reporting framework.

Iskandar Malaysia has been effective in planning for emission reductions, gaining broad support, monitoring progress, and engaging with international peers. *How has this work bolstered sustainability in the region?* One clear example is the rehabilitation of the Segget River. Prior to this effort, the river was plagued with extremely high levels of pollution. In 2017, a Combined Centralised Sewerage Treatment Plant was constructed along the river, which has – alongside the establishment of flood mitigation drainage channels in the City of Johor Bahru – minimised the effects of flash floods, improved water quality, and reduced water pollution downstream to the Straits of Johor. Since

August 2018, no flash floods have been recorded in the area, and fish have even returned to the river and are increasing in numbers!

Through its involvement in the Global Covenant of Mayors, Iskandar Malaysia has affirmed its belief in the critical importance of cooperating amongst agencies, governmental levels, and with international peers. Through the GCoM, IRDA was able to learn from other regions' strengths and challenges, and is continually applying this knowledge to forge a more sustainable region.

In 2018, for example, IRDA carried out a stocktaking exercise to determine the effectiveness of the Low Carbon Society Blueprint. The study found that two-thirds of the Blueprint's programmes had been carried out. However, emissions reduction was still small – only 13% of the targeted 58%. Iskandar is now turning to GCoM peers to learn how others have managed significant reductions.

Now that the Blueprint and the Action Plans are progressing well, IRDA has decided to carry out a comprehensive review of the Low Carbon Society Blueprint. The current Blueprint is now over eight years old and much has changed since the document was prepared, both locally and internationally. Furthermore, the region may be expanded to double its current size, making it necessary to prepare a fresh blueprint to cover a much larger and more varied area. GCoM's assistance in technical advice and accessing funds will greatly help this undertaking.

Within Asia, Iskandar Malaysia has become a best practice often showcased and used for capacity-building in Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia. Moreover, with support from the IUC programme, Iskandar Malaysia's Blueprint has been presented to wide, international audiences at the 7th Asia Pacific Urban Forum, the COP24 in Katowice, and beyond.





LESSONS LEARNED

Low carbon concepts must be incorporated across all sectors, using a holistic view that considers economic, social and environmental well-being.

To ensure that low-carbon programming is widely incorporated, it is critical to have buy-in at the State and local levels, including inclusion in State policy guidance and spatial planning documents.

Active and continuous engagement with diverse stakeholders is critically important.

Forging international partnerships with other cities, agencies, and academic institutions helps ensure that necessary research, pilot projects, capacity-building and funding opportunities are realised.





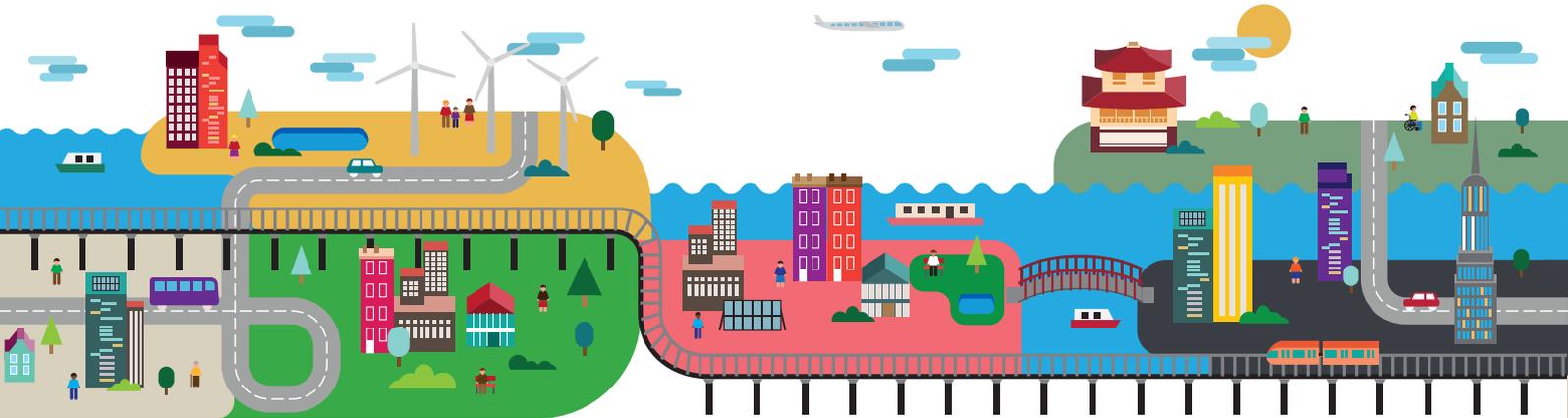
THE IUC PROGRAMME

The International Urban Cooperation (IUC) programme enables cities in different global regions to link up and share solutions to common problems. It is part of a long-term strategy by the European Union to foster sustainable urban development in cooperation with the public and private sectors, as well as representatives of research and innovation, community groups and citizens. Through engaging in the IUC, cities will have the chance to share and exchange knowledge with their international counterparts, building a greener, more prosperous future. The IUC programme is an opportunity for local governments to learn from each other, set ambitious targets, forge lasting partnerships, test new solutions, and boost their city's international profile. Its activities will support the achievement of policy objectives as well as major international agreements on urban development and climate change, such as the EU Urban Agenda, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the Paris Agreement.

THE GLOBAL COVENANT OF MAYORS FOR CLIMATE & ENERGY

The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy (GCoM) is an international alliance of local governments with a shared vision of a world where urban leaders and their partners accelerate ambitious, measurable climate and energy initiatives that lead to a just, low-emission and climate resilient future. The GCoM enables cities, local governments, and the networks that support them to move from ambition to action. It elevates climate leadership and facilitates partnerships at the crossroads of research, data, finance, and communications. The GCoM emphasises climate change mitigation, adaptation, and access to clean and affordable energy.

The GCoM supports locally-relevant solutions in sectors where cities can have the greatest impact. GCoM cities register, implement, and monitor their strategic action plans and make information on their efforts publicly available.



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