



Economic and Social Council

ENV/DEV/1212

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

NEW INITIATIVE TO AID LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN MANAGING GROWING WASTE PROBLEM

A new partnership to assist local communities in managing ever-increasing amounts of waste — and the growing presence of chemicals and hazardous and toxic elements in the general waste stream — was launched today at the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development.

The new Partnership, the International Partnership for Expanding Waste Management Services of Local Authorities (IPLA), aims to help bring together local authorities and the private sector to develop public-private partnerships to tackle the waste problem and to create a conducive investment climate for expanding waste management services of local and municipal authorities. The Partnership will be hosted by Bangkok-based Asian Institute of Technology.

Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, said the provision of quality waste management services is critically important in achieving environmentally sound and sustainable development in all countries. “[The Department] supports this new and unique partnership which will not only be a catalyst to foster multi-stakeholder partnerships in expanding waste management services of local authorities, but also for a better and healthy life for people in developing countries.”

Managing waste has emerged as one of the biggest challenges facing cities and urban areas. The complexity and daunting nature of waste management challenges has prompted a more extensive collaboration among the different stakeholders — Governments, civil society, private sector, local communities, and the United Nations system. Governments and public utilities, which face enormous resource challenges in providing quality public services, are increasingly looking towards collaborating with the private sector for help to deliver their public service mandate.

The United Nations estimates that more than half of the world’s population already live in urban areas, and it is expected that by 2050, three quarters of the total world population will be city dwellers, with almost all the growth occurring in the developing world. At the same time, urbanization is a major driver of climate change, a major international concern for modern society, and climate change will also have a significant and compounding impact on urban environments, adding a dangerous feedback loop to growing urban stresses and issues.

Cities often spend between 5 to 15 per cent of their total budget on solid waste management, according to new data collected for United Nations Human Settlements Programme’s (UN-HABITAT) 2010 book *Solid Waste Management in the World’s Cities*. In low-income countries, 90 per cent or more of that budget is spent on waste collection alone, while only 45 to 60 per cent of the waste is actually collected.

“Providing waste collection to all people, while raising the environmental standards of waste disposal, is a major challenge for municipalities,” said Joan Clos, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-HABITAT, which has offered to serve as the Regional Secretariat of IPLA for three developing regions — Africa, Asia and Latin America. “Public-private partnerships could create win-win solutions both for the public utilities and private sector — if duly supported by appropriate policy frameworks.”

While conventional waste streams already pose a considerable challenge to local authorities

and municipalities in developing countries, they also have to contend with the rapid increase in the consumption of a wide range of electronic goods, adding another critical dimension to the existing problem. Wastes from electrical and electronic products (e-waste) and goods containing new and complex hazardous substances have become a serious health and environment issue worldwide and pose the fastest growing challenge for both developed and developing countries.

“The Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) is pleased to host the Global Secretariat of IPLA,” said Prof. Said Irandoust, President of the Institute. “AIT will, through active collaboration with IPLA partners, foster bridges between policy and practice across the local authorities of the world and build their capacities towards integrated solid waste management and the application of the 3Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle). AIT hopes that IPLA will lead to paradigm shifts in local level actions to address wastes as resources and move towards a resource efficient and zero waste society.

The Commission on Sustainable Development is presently meeting in New York to recommend concrete actions towards sustainable waste management. The Partnership will also contribute to the preparatory process leading to the Rio+20 Summit in 2012.

Membership in the IPLA partnership is open to all interested entities that align with its mission in expanding waste management related services of local authorities.

A list of partner organizations that have joined IPLA (as of 12 May 2011) can be found at: www.uncrd.or.jp.

For more information on IPLA, please contact: Dan Shepard, United Nations Department of Public Information at tel.: +1 212 963 9495, e-mail: shepard@un.org; Prof. C. Viswanathan, Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok, Thailand, at tel.: +66 2 524 5640, e-mail: visu@ait.ac.th; or Choudhury Rudra Charan Mohanty, United Nations Centre for Regional Development, Nagoya, Japan, at tel.: +81 52 561 9417, e-mail: environment@uncrd.or.jp

* * * * *

For information media • not an official record