

BRAZIL

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Second National Conference of the Heads of the Municipal Departments for Environmental Affairs

The Heads of Departments for Environmental Affairs of the capitals of the Brazilian federal states (CB-27, Capitais Brasileiras) met in Porto Alegre on the 22nd of April. The Second National Conference, held on the "Earth Day", resulted in the successful signing of the Charta of Porto Alegre.

The representatives of the CB-27 municipalities were welcomed by the Department for Environmental Affairs of Porto Alegre, the Latin-American Institute for Sustainable Economic Development (Instituto Latino Americano de Desenvolvimento Econômico Sustentável, ILADES), the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Municipal Department for Environmental Affairs of Rio de Janeiro. The forum followed the First National Conference, which was held during the Rio+20 Conference, and a series of regional meetings which had taken place earlier and which had been of preparatory character. Since over 80% of the Heads of the Municipal Departments for Environmental Affairs had been replaced after the last nationwide municipal elections in January, this edition of the conference mainly focused on presenting the CB-27 to the new incumbents as well as on introducing the colleagues to each other. Furthermore, the expansion of the existing network between the present departments at the municipal level and the promotion of the exchange of experiences, visions and "best practice models", composed key goals of the gathering.

José Fortunati, Mayor of Porto Alegre, opened the event by emphasizing the particular role of cities, a role that he directly

linked with the task of increasing the citizen's well-being and his/hers overall quality of life. According to Mr. Fortunati, the municipalities were however bound to fail in delivering on such a premise, should the Brazilian state continue to prioritize the Federal States prerogatives at the municipalities' expense. Referring to the process of dept reduction, he pointed out that municipalities must be assisted in restoring their financial health.

In reflection of the importance of local and regional environmental governance, the CB27 brought together representatives of 25 federal capitals, among them 19 Heads of their respective municipal departments for Environmental Affairs. A key object was the consultation on how the future cooperation between the environmental departments could be institutionalized. Under the leadership of the host parties, the participating incumbents exchanged information on their respective regional environmental challenges, working priorities and conditions as well as on existing environmental concepts. Aside from numerous reforestation and replanting projects, projects concerned with the elevation of the quality of public transportation and green energy projects, the initiatives presented by the northern members of the CB27 focused on public awareness campaigns which's aim it was to improve the general population's stance towards the environment.

Furthermore, Marina Grossi, president of Brazil's Economic Council for Sustainable Development (Conselho Empresarial Brasileiro para o Desenvolvimento Sustentável,

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

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CEBDS), and Emilo Lèbre La Rovere, director of the Climate Centre of the University of Rio de Janeiro, spoke about the significance of the establishment of programmes in the State's capitals to control and reduce the emission of greenhouse gases as well as to achieve sustainability. According to these experts, around 70 % of all global emissions are currently caused by cities. The event did not only count with the presence of local and regional decisions makers and experts but also with the active participation of Dr. Gregor V. Wolf, Chief of the World Bank's Section for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. Mr. Wolf started off by presenting his organization, and then moved on to explain the funding programs of the World Bank. Future projects of the CB-27 could receive financial benefits as well as technical support.

Overall, objectives of the CB-27 were emphasized and strengthened during the gathering. Notwithstanding the distinct regional characteristics of each of the Brazilian capitals, the incumbents identified many common challenges and as such benefited from the exchange of experiences with their colleagues. After the presentation of different city related projects particular difficulties and viable solutions were discussed. Furthermore, the aim to improve the standing of the often overlooked environmental departments within the municipal administrations as well as their relationships with the state and the federal governments through the creation of a platform for formulating their interests was successfully pursued. In term of general strategic aims, the CB27 intends, on the one hand, to put the environmental department on equal footing with other departments within the municipal administrations. On the other hand, the promotion of cooperation between the municipal level departments and other state and federal government entities in areas such as waste disposal, house building and traffic planning is of utmost importance. This integration process between municipalities, state and federal government is the only way forward towards the establishment of sustainable urban areas, the efficient and integral implementation of Carbon dioxide reduction policies and of measures aimed at

adjusting to the realities of a changed climate. The attendance of Karen Silverwood-Cope of the Brazilian Federal Department of Environmental Affairs gave the representatives of the CB-27 the opportunity to communicate their concerns to the Union and to receive suggestions from her.

In order to guarantee a further flow and exchange of information, the Charta of Porto Alegre was signed. Substantially, 25 represents of the CB-27 club agreed on giving their collaboration an institutional standing this year, which is sought to be developed by a working group until July 2013. In this way, the cornerstone for a long term and efficient cooperation in the field of local environmental policy and for the professionalization of this policy area should be set up to achieve the objective of sustainable development.

The next national conference is planned for September 2013 in Salvador da Bahia.