

## MUNICIPALITIES

# Cities need local climate action plans

*We need to scale up efforts to mitigate impact on ordinary citizens, says MEC*

NOMUSA DUBE-NCUBE

CLIMATE change is real. The evidence of a rapidly-changing environment is there for everyone to see and we all need to adapt. It is therefore encouraging our municipalities are ready to act where the negative impact of climate change is unmistakable – at local level.

When planning for the next decade or two, measures to cope with more extreme weather trends such as drought, flash floods, heatwaves and rising sea levels – all of which we are already experiencing with increasing frequency in this province – are of special importance with regard to the provision of municipal services such as water or sanitation.

Adaptation to climate change involves planning and crisis preparedness work, and many of the issues raised by climate change demand a long-term perspective and challenge traditional values and priorities in local planning. As an example, rising sea levels challenge plans for new housing along the coast in municipalities.

There are other barriers to smooth local adaptation, such as a lack of support in terms of financial resources or guidelines from decision-makers in organisations other than the municipality. The way in which such “external” decision-makers act influences whether climate change adaptation will succeed or fail at the local level.

Our local government institutions are now joining hands with other governing bodies, the academic com-

munity and international organisations to build sustainable, safe and resilient communities and cities in KwaZulu-Natal through the Compact of Mayors that was launched in Durban yesterday. These efforts need to be saluted.

I recently attended the Iclei World Congress in Montréal, Canada, to engage in open dialogue with other international organisations and government bodies on delivering on the global sustainable development agenda. I had a welcome opportunity to meet international partners to discuss matters of climate change support for our municipalities.

We resolved that KZN should support the Global Covenant of Mayors platform since it enables transformative action in our cities and communities through its inclusive and cross-cutting dialogues and processes.

The covenant is important because it enables us to strengthen action at all levels and help municipalities realise their climate ambitions.

The issue of science-policy interface, which emphasises the need for credible data and scientific approaches to climate change response, was also discussed extensively at the congress.

In line with this, the provincial government department I lead, is forming partnerships with academic institutions and organisations such as Iclei to ensure that our efforts in responding to climate change are science-based, results-orientated and, ultimately, measurable.



Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs Minister Nomusa Dube-Ncube, second from left, plants a tree during recent Mandela Day activities. | MANDLA MKHIZE

Municipalities across the globe experience similar challenges in their efforts to curb the negative impact of climate change. Cities are the most vulnerable to the severe impact and, consequently, play a critical role in implementing international agendas such as the Paris Agreement.

Solutions to addressing climate change and advancing sustainable development are high on the agenda of cities and, in particular, their residents. Shared learning and know-

edge transfer are valuable resources for implementing the Paris Agreement at local level. That is why we encourage municipalities to form compacts.

Ambitious municipalities like KwaDukuza signed the compact during the Iclei congress in 2015 and have since rolled out innovative low-carbon projects, such as the Groutville care homes project and solar/LED-powered street lights. We encourage other municipalities to follow suit.

All our municipalities are urged to

use the compact to share insight and solutions for a comprehensive local climate action plan, to learn from each other and to form new partnerships. I am confident that we can accelerate the implementation of the Paris Agreement and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We're in this together. Let's form a united front to tackle climate change.

*Dube-Ncube is Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs MEC in KZN.*