
Press release:

Climate Change and COP15 meeting

Statement by the International Federation of Landscape Architects

The International Federation of Landscape Architects encourages the development and adoption of a Global Landscape Convention to assist nations working to address the impact of climate change on the world's landscapes and people. They offer this idea for consideration at the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, on 7-18 December 2009.

The President of the International Federation of Landscape Architects released this statement on Friday, 4 December in advance of the meeting of leaders from around the world for the United Nations Climate Change conference in Copenhagen.

'The leaders will be talking about the landscapes of the world, as we know them, and the future of people and species that live in them, Dr Diane Menzies, the President said.

'The expected participation by some 100 of the world's political leaders as well as from numerous other groups reflects extreme international concern, Dr Menzies said.

'One single change such as sea level rise, will have an immense impact on coastal cities and populations around the globe. Landscapes as we know them are endangered. In preparing an agreed approach landscape architects hope that effects on landscapes and those who live there will be reduced and processes for co-operation to mitigate impacts will be developed.'

'Countries such as Netherlands have been developing policies to manage landscapes threatened with inundation, but small Pacific Island nations lack the resources to adequately cope with expected impacts. They may lose their homes and islands. There are thousands of kilometres of coastline in my country, New Zealand which will irrevocably change, taking with it the history, ecology, and relations people have built with these loved coastlines. This is just one small example of the immensity of change we must address,' said Dr Menzies.

The statement released to United Nations continued with the following information.

Landscapes change

All landscapes change over time. Climate change though is the greatest threat to the Earth's landscapes. These threats include destruction of landscapes such as Pacific Islands through inundation caused by sea level rise. They include large-scale damage caused by floods and other weather related events and changes. They include impacts on ecosystems and species, and impacts on special heritage and everyday landscapes. Climate change will separate people from cherished places as they now know them.

Perversely the global thrust to minimise carbon discharge by moving to renewable energy resources including wind turbines, to reduce the effects of increased greenhouse gas emissions, is also having major visual and other impacts on landscapes around the globe. Thus the worlds landscapes (and people) are affected by the impact of climate change as well as current methods to develop renewable energy resources.

Sustainable land use practices

For more than a century since the profession of landscape architecture formed, we have supported the principle of stewardship of land. Landscape architects advocate the wise planning, artful design and careful maintenance of all landscapes through developing sustainable land use policies, ecologically conscious practices and working with communities to enable their loved places to be protected, or integrated into neighbourhoods and cities

Global Landscape Convention

Based on the success of the European Landscape Convention in forewarning and assisting land managers and decision makers to tackle climate change impacts on landscapes throughout Europe, the International Federation of Landscape Architects is promoting a Global Landscape Convention. This will assist people to address the immense changes that will come about from climate change. We seek your support to promote the value of this idea as a means to address climate change impacts on the landscapes of the globe.

Climate adaptation tools

A project to investigate, assess and promote suitable Climate Adaptation Tools for Sustainable Settlements (CATSS) is currently underway, the task being undertaken by our member the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects. This will provide practical support for those dealing with change and will be available next year.

Other initiatives underway will address the Right to Landscape and sustainable infrastructure, all intended to continue to find better ways to manage and minimise environmental risk through sustainable design, innovative storm water management and recognition of community values. IFLA is dedicated to using all traditional and non-traditional tools available to positively influence environmental outcomes including but not limited to climate change. These ideas may include design guidelines through to education and economic tools. IFLA supports the material profiling and economic market place tools being currently developed.

Sustainable by Design

The International Federation supports the International Union of Architects on their 'Sustainable by Design' initiative and commend this to decision-makers and practitioners.

Sustainable world

Our members work for a sustainable world and sustainable landscapes using wise practice, methods and tools. We look to the wisdom of decision-makers in Copenhagen to minimise climate change and so reduce impacts on threatened landscapes of the world.

Dr Diane Menzies

President, International Federation of Landscape Architects

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