

Thematic Track: Private Sector's Role in Achieving Climate Resilience: Leading Examples from Coastal Cities at the World Sustainable Development Summit 2021

At the [World Sustainable Development Summit \(WSDS\) 2021 - New Delhi \(teriin.org\)](https://www.teriin.org) the thematic track on **Private Sector's Role in Achieving Climate Resilience: Leading Examples from Coastal Cities** was organized on 10th February 2021 from 3.15 – 5:00 pm IST. The session was in partnership with the Strategic Partnership for the Implementation of Paris Agreement (SPIPA) project. The SPIPA project is funded by the EU and the German Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU). The session provided a platform for private sector entities leading climate action efforts in coastal cities to showcase their ongoing initiatives and achievements and highlight the challenges they face. The session also discussed the need and potential for collaborations and partnerships between private and public sectors to achieve urban climate change resilience.

As part of the introductory remarks, **Mr. Edwin Koekkoek, Counsellor, Energy and Climate Action, Delegation of the European Union to India** explained that in the past few decades changes in climate have become more visible and severe, so climate action efforts should focus on both adaptation and mitigation interventions to achieve resilience in cities. He highlighted that the session aims to discuss adaptation strategies and mitigation solutions for coastal cities as they face multiple risks due to climate change.

Mr. Narinder Nayar, Chairman, Mumbai First explained that the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) is under threat due to changes in monsoon pattern, extreme weather events, risk of coastal floods, and the rise of seawater levels. He further presented the key recommendations from the conference titled "Climate Crisis Action for Tropical Coastal Cities" organized in February 2020 by Mumbai First and the SPIPA project (see <https://www.cecp-eu.in/events/post/climate-crisis-action-for-tropical-coastal-cities>) such as the management of climate-vulnerable transport infrastructure, that can be utilized to accelerate ambitious and measurable climate and energy initiatives that lead to a low-emission and climate-resilient future. As an outcome of the conference, the Mumbai Mayor and the Municipal Commissioner of the city signed up to be a part of the global network of "Global Convent of Mayors (GCoM)" for climate and energy to accelerate ambitious and innovative initiatives for the city of Mumbai.

Mr. Saurabh Bhardwaj, Fellow, Earth Science and Climate Change Division, TERI elaborated on the takeaways from the 6th Adaptation Futures Webinar Series "Building Resilience through Climate Science and Policy". He emphasised that climate hazards are increasing, and Indian cities are facing the brunt, in addition to being overburdened with challenges of the urban population growth. He added that recent calamities have drawn attention towards the fact that development goals of cities are seriously undermined by climate change impacts, and hence, building climate resilience is an option that offers holistic mechanisms to address climate variability and change without compromising on present development challenges. He emphasized the need for policies, plans, and a vision at the national level to recognize the economic, social, environmental and health risks arising from climatic events. Moreover, there is a need to recognize that floods, heatwaves, and cyclones impact not just vulnerable communities and ecosystems but also businesses, both at the micro and macro-economic levels.

Ms. Sanne van der Mijl, Project Leader, Climate Adaptation Summit, Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, The Netherlands, presented the key takeaways from the Climate Adaptation Summit 2021 (<https://www.cas2021.com/>) which focused on urban resilience. She mentioned that the summit showcased that Climate Adaptation is essential, fundable, doable, and plannable. The three main goals of the summit were - (i) to launch the adaptation action agenda as a roadmap to climate resilient future by 2030; (ii) to create a broader support for climate adaptation; and (iii) to build a climate adaptation community. The adaptation action agenda is the most significant deliverable of the Summit as it is an open and inclusive framework for accelerating adaptation action. The agenda will incorporate increasing adaptation action efforts; and the climate-agenda component of SDGs plays a crucial role wherein individual multi-stakeholder initiatives are mapped against the SDGs to build upon the existing key efforts.

The session included a panel discussion moderated by **Mr. Anirban Ghosh**, Chief Sustainability Officer (CSO), Mahindra Group.

Mr. Ram Vaidyanathan, Head - Environmental Sustainability, Godrej Group, mentioned that as climate resilience is not factored into the infrastructure decision-making in Mumbai and other coastal cities several adverse impacts of climate change are being observed. For instance, it was recently observed that many plans were made to develop large infrastructural projects which would replace mangrove stretches, and this caused a lot of public outcries. Not incorporating climate change considerations into urban planning processes is thus an important reason for cities to remain continuously at risk. He added that the Godrej Group is creating products that would help mitigate or minimize the effects of climate change. Further, the panelists highlighted that though there is an increase in awareness about how cities face tremendous ecological and social challenges, yet much of the analysis has been concentrated on isolated events rather than building a systematic lens towards building a risk profile of cities.

Ms. Shloka Nath, Executive Director, India Climate Collaborative and Leader, Sustainability Portfolio, Tata Trusts, emphasized that even though business leaders could play an important role in the implementation of adaptation and mitigation strategies at the ground level, they currently have inadequate information about the future impacts of climate change. There have been limited efforts to quantify the economic costs of past environmental disasters and the financial implications of future climate trends in coastal cities. She also mentioned about Climate Risk Atlas which aims at providing information about critical vulnerability areas such as coastal resilience, urban heat stress, water stress, etc. It provides a basis to understand, identify and quantify hazards arising from specific climate risks across various sectors, and to analyse how business leaders might climate-proof their investments.

Mr. Lennart Silvis, Global Director, Water for Industry, Royal Haskoning DHV, highlighted that climate resilient infrastructure will help to reduce direct losses and reduce the indirect costs of disruption. He stated that any impact on the supply chain and production networks could lead to global disruptions and further will affect the local economies and growth of cities.

Mr. Frédéric Woringer, Director, Climate and Infrastructures Department, AETS, informed about a French government funded project in partnership with the Government of Kerala being implemented by AETS that is finding alternatives ways to build coastal resilience. One of the best practices mentioned by him included using flora and fauna to rejuvenate habitats as it acts as a good carbon sink and, these interventions can also boost eco-tourism.

Mr. Hans-Peter Egler, Director, Public Affairs, South Pole, highlighted the significance of considering disaster resilience at the design stage aspect of large infrastructural projects. He elaborated that incorporating resilience in the project design itself would involve undertaking vulnerability analyses and ensure consideration of the vulnerabilities. He added that they are working on the dissemination of resilience toolkits for different sectors, including for water and solid waste management, and that such toolkits should become an integral part of the building bye-laws and regulations for their successful implementation.

The moderator Mr. Ghosh added that these are early days in resilience building and private players can provide directive pathways for future generations to follow. He highlighted that innovation in all fields can bring a holistic change in the development process. For instance, innovations in the insurance and digital sectors can also play an important role in creating financial incentives and digital solutions that aid in minimising damages and preparing cities for future disaster risks. He concluded that the public-private partnership model can play a significant role in building, operating, and managing resilient infrastructure and scale-up sustainable solutions for future development.

The video recording of the session is available at: [\(153\) Thematic Track: Private Sector's Role in Achieving Climate Resilience - YouTube](#)