

PRESS RELEASE
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Cities and nations commit to reducing their carbon footprint by consuming sustainably

Reykjavik, 25-27 March 2009 - In Iceland's captivating capital, Reykjavik, public authority delegates from 41 nations at the seventh EcoProcura Conference pledged to use their vast economic purchasing power to help fight climate change, by strongly boosting the market for climate friendly products and services. They also called on national governments to put the issue firmly on agenda in the decisive round of global climate negotiations that are to take place in Copenhagen later this year.

The financial crisis has hit Reykjavik hard but the city is now forging ahead using sustainable purchasing as a sound basis for a sound future providing an excellent host for Ecoprocura 2009. Over 220 representatives from local governments, national governments and other public sector bodies spent three inspiring and intensive days discussing how sustainable public purchasing practices can make a substantial contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation. It was all the more fitting when the host nation seized the momentous opportunity to allow delegates to witness the official signing of a new Icelandic Sustainable Procurement National Action Plan by the Ministers of the Environment and Finance.

Home to 313.000 people, the island nation thrives on an abundance of natural renewable energy sources due to its volcanic construction. Iceland's renewed commitment to more responsible purchasing practices will make it easier for its public authorities and businesses to tap into the opportunities offered from increased savings, not only of greenhouse gas emissions, but also from savings in local energy bills from reduced consumption. Delegates were called to "think globally and act locally", which, according to Iceland's Environment Minister, Kolbrún Halldórsdóttir, "is the mantra that will lead us to a more sustainable society".

With over 2 trillion Euros spent on goods and services by public authorities in the European Union alone, the economic potential to push for sustainably innovative technologies and product solutions by local governments and all public bodies is enormous. However, as ICLEI's President and Councillor for the City of Vancouver, David Cadman, stressed - cities are what they consume - and only with effective local action from cities across the globe will the impacts from global warming be reduced.

Changing the way procurement is practiced by public bodies poses a challenge particularly because the bottom line for any city is to save money – one of the key issues debated extensively in Reykjavik. As our national and local governments strive for smarter consumption and leaner production, some of the pioneers in the field of sustainable development, such as the City of Vienna, can prove that carrying out environmentally friendly purchasing makes sound financial sense. Vienna can proudly boast about the 43 million Euros the City has saved (over four years) as a result of implementing a rigorous sustainable procurement policy.

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EcoProcura 2009 Background information

Hosts and organisers: City of Reykjavik and ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability

Sponsors: Umhverfissradu, Orkuveita Reykjavíkur, Ríkiskaup, Landsvirkjun

Endorsers: United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), Regional Environmental Centre (REC), International Green Purchasing Network (IGPN), Responsible Purchasing Network (RPN), ITC International Labour Organisation

ICLEI's EcoProcura Conferences

Since 1996, ICLEI has taken on the mandate from its members to assist local governments to use their purchasing power to achieve a more sustainable future for all citizens, and has since worked on numerous initiatives both nationally and internationally in the field of Sustainable Procurement, effectively mainstreaming the issue into European policy.

EcoProcura is the only European conference to provide a platform to promote exchange and dialogue amongst purchasers from all levels of governments, suppliers, policy-makers and multipliers on strategies and the latest practical solutions for implementing sustainable procurement.

ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability is an international association of local governments and associations of national and regional local governments that have made a commitment to sustainable development. More than 1000 cities, towns, counties, and their associations worldwide comprise ICLEI's growing membership. Website: <http://www.iclei.org>

For more information

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