

Asian cities are rapidly urbanising and play an increasingly prominent role as engines for national economic growth. Presently, this growth is coupled with high rates of energy and resource consumption, which in turn is exacerbating pressures on the management of solid waste, wastewater, air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. With reference to relevant theory and case-studies, this session highlighted city government strategies to address these challenges, bringing together representatives from the OECD and Wuppertal Institute as well as panelists from Japanese local government. In addition to sharing insights on how to design and implement local sustainable development strategies, participants also discussed how Japan's Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM) can help balance economic and environmental priorities.

There is a growing consensus amongst urban theorists and practitioners that broad stakeholder involvement (i.e. government, private sector, academia, citizens' groups) is a key feature of strategy-making processes for sustainability transitions in cities. Such strategies and plans are further strengthened through the integration of relevant research findings and by considering established good-practice cases. Moreover, city networks at various scales fulfill an important role in this context, by disseminating experience, theory, raising awareness and strengthening local technical capacities. Japanese experience suggests that civic engagement and political leadership are crucial building blocks for the formulation of ambitious environmental goals and local actions. Having established integrated policy frameworks to minimise environmental impacts, Japanese cities are now committed to disseminating knowledge and transferring technology overseas. Supported by the Joint Credit Mechanism (by which carbon credits are generated through technology transfer) Japanese cities and private sector partners are engaged in activities to enable urban sustainability transitions in Asia that are also of mutual benefit economically.

Key messages of the session

- To realise green growth and environmentally friendly policies, cities must ensure that there is a shared vision across all stakeholders in the society, sustained across decades.
- Although the backing of senior figures in cities such as Mayors is vital, environmentally friendly policies cannot be sustained without the backing of the citizenry
- Cities must look to examples from research as well as national and international city networks in order to ensure that plans consider the best practices and incorporate them.