

GCOM Open House

Regional GCoM Covenants come together to accelerate local climate actions collectively

Abhishek Pandey

Brussels (Belgium): Global Secretariat of Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy organised a five-day Open House at International Press Centre and Hotel NH Berlaymont in Brussels from Jan 23-27, 2023. Representatives of regional covenants, country representatives, and delegations from partner organisations, including the European Commission, Bloomberg Philanthropies, GIZ, ICLEI, DAI, and UCLG Global, among others, were present in-person to participate in a series of meetings, knowledge-sharing sessions, technical working group presentations, and interactive city-to-city exchange sessions. During the five-day event, one day was dedicated to the Common Reporting Framework (CRF) Academy, which enabled participants to understand the latest reporting platform's updates, common mistakes, energy access and poverty pillars, data challenges and progress tracking. The event was organised in person for the first time after the Covid-19 Pandemic. A delegation from GCoM South Asia was also present.

The main objective of the Open House was to exchange updates on the activities and work that the GCoM is implementing at the Global level and to collect feedback, experiences, and input from the partners engaging in and promoting the GCoM across regions. The planned sessions provided the opportunity to engage across multiple initiatives. They served as a platform for Regional and National Covenants to exchange and share results, solutions developed, and insights on the activities carried out.

On day one, Eero Ailio, Adviser: Energy transition and local governance, European Commission, spoke on the importance of collective actions of cities, covenants and the urgency of the issue. He began his speech with inputs from an AI tool and underlined the importance of modern technology and climate actions at the local level. Piero Remitti and Andy Deacon explained the works of the GCoM.

Giorgia Rambelli and Gisela Garrido Veron, in the Back to Basic-GCom Governance Structure, provided the details of governance structure in the regions and told the attendees about how policy decisions are taken. Benjamin Jance and Vanni Puccioni presented the details of Technical Working Group Research and Innovation working towards a simplified reporting platform and data collection methods in collaboration with CDP, ICLEI, and JRC. There are three energy pillars: climate change mitigation, adaptation, and access to energy. Other TWG presentations during the event included Finance, Communication, and Regional Strategy. During the first Interactive Regional Session, participants got the opportunity to learn about the progress and challenges in Sub-Saharan Africa.

On day two, the next Interactive Regional Session focused on the activities undertaken by Eastern Europe and Central Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Japan, Korea, and Latin America. Giving details about the activities of the South Asia region, Ravi Ranjan Guru, Deputy Director General of AILSG, Networking and Governance Coordinator, GCoM South Asia, said that the cities in the region are showing interest in joining the covenant and taking local climate actions. In the last seven months, five Indian cities and three cities from the region have joined the covenant. He said that the GCoM SA is focusing on increasing activities at the city level and engaging partners through the India coordination group led by the European Union Delegation to India. More than ten organisations are part of the group, collectively working on enhancing the impact. Asih Budiati, Team Leader, GCoM Asia, spoke on the series of training program workshops executed in the previous year and the upcoming events, as well as the deepening understanding of climate change issues among city representatives.

Justine Audraine provided the details of avenues available to cities for accessing finances for their local projects. GCoM Global secretariat also provided details of technical assistance they have been providing to regional covenants.

These included assistance to cities through Urban Transition Mission, City Climate Gap Fund, Bankable Climate Project Initiative, Business Matchmaking, and Expert Exchange Programme. In a bilateral meeting, GCoM Asia Project team members had the opportunity to meet with GCoM Global, JRC, with Global-Regional Coherence TWG and Gap Fund to discuss potential collaboration for GCoM signatories in the region. The third day of the GCoM Open House was focused on the importance of a simplified Common Reporting Framework (CRF) linked to the CDP-ICLEI Track and My Covenant. It was informed that CDP-ICLEI Track had been simplified to 60% fewer questions from the previous version. And, My Covenant will introduce a simplified version by reducing and replacing indicators. It will also develop a dashboard to make data comparisons between cities visible.

The fourth day focused on providing details on badging for signatory cities and the aggregation report launched last year and available on the GCOM website. The participants visited Leuven city and learnt about the sustainable practices implemented at the local level in the city. Participants visited the city and attended a session where city representatives were informed about their activities. Participants also learnt about the 'Leuven 2030', a citizen co-creation platform. It has been sponsoring it ever since. The local NGO promotes the implementation of sustainable projects involving citizen participation. Leuven 2030 is a non-profit organisation founded in 2013 by 60 members, including the city and committed citizens. The NGO has grown into a solid organisation with more than 600 members. Inhabitants, companies, civil society organisations, knowledge institutions and public authorities are equally represented in the organisation. In 2018, Leuven 2030 developed a Roadmap for 2025 – 2035 – 2050 with the help of the urban-planning agency and over 70 local experts. Currently, 180 climate initiatives from 13 programs are ongoing. They concern housing, mobility, energy (mainly), agriculture and nutrition, nature and consumption etc.

As the Networking and Governance Coordinator for GCoM South Asia, the AILLSG's Urban Update team also conducted two interviews with the senior officials from the European Commission — Eero Ailio and Tomasz Gawlik during the Open House. These interviews will be released in the upcoming editions of the magazine and as podcasts on Spotify. The five-day event ended on a positive note with a focus on accelerating collective climate actions at the local level.

Blurb

The main objective of the Open House was to exchange updates on the activities and work that the GCoM is implementing at the Global level and to collect feedback, experiences, and input from the partners engaging in and promoting the GCoM across regions.