

OCTOBER/2010

POINTS

on the Marrakech Task Force on Sustainable
Buildings and Construction with Finland
as lead country 2006–2010

Built Environment in the Marrakech Process

Finland brought buildings and construction to the agenda of sustainable consumption and production.

Buildings, their construction, maintenance, operation, refurbishment and demolition have an enormous impact on natural resources, economies, employment, human health and the functioning of societies. About 40 per cent of all energy is used in buildings: the savings potential is huge. To promote the mainstreaming of low-energy construction and to highlight some best practices, the Marrakech Task Force on Sustainable Buildings and Construction was formed with Finland as lead country. This newsletter illustrates how the task force worked and what it produced.

Sustainable consumption and production is a broad concept, which covers all kinds of activities. But the concept remains useless unless it is first made concrete and brought into our daily life, and also linked with other global sustainability goals.

Sustainability means not only a 'green' agenda with rapid urbanization, but also the 'brown' agenda of the built



Construction methods based on local or regional capabilities and resources, requiring low processing energy and low capital. World Headquarters of Development Alternatives, Delhi, India.

environment has become equally urgent. These are some of the reasons why Finland chose to lead a Marrakech Task Force focusing on buildings and construction. In this context, 'buildings' refers to the consumption side, that is, the use of existing buildings – the major part of our built environment – while 'construction' highlights the processes of production and refurbishment. In this way the two-part name of the task force underlines the life-cycle approach of sustainable consumption and production.

It was necessary to narrow down the area of work of the task force further. Impacts on climate change (energy consumption and CO₂ emissions)

were an obvious focus, and limiting the scope of actors in the public sector was the other.

This newsletter asks two main questions: First, is this kind of a task force an innovative mechanism worth using again for other purposes? Second, how is the work going to be carried on?



Dr. Kaarin Taipale, Chair of the Marrakech Task Force on Sustainable Buildings and Construction.

Marrakech Task Force – What is in the name?

The World Summit on Sustainable Development was held in Johannesburg in 2002. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation called for "the development of a **10-year framework of programs (10YFP)** in support of regional and national initiatives to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production".

To initiate preparatory work on the 10YFP, the Marrakech Process on **Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP)** was launched in 2003 in Morocco – hence the name. Governments set up the concept of voluntary international task forces to support the implementation of the Process. Altogether seven **Marrakech Task Forces (MTFs)** were established.

In 2008 also an **Advisory Committee (AC)** of the **Marrakech Process (MP)** was founded, with its members representing all regions, key stakeholder groups and Task Forces. The task of a secretariat of both the AC and the MP has been shared by UNEP and UN DESA.

Check Point in May 2011

The 10-year framework of programmes is one of the main themes of the 19th session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development in May 2011. It offers an excellent opportunity to take concrete steps in meeting the global objectives agreed upon in Johannesburg.



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on the Marrakech Task Force on Sustainable Buildings and Construction with Finland as lead country 2006–2010

Marrakech Task Force as an innovative mechanism



ASHOK B. LALL ARCHITECTS



Simple technologies to produce high quality space. World Headquarters of Development Alternatives, Delhi, India.

In cooperation with others, the Task Force has brought the sustainability of buildings and construction, and especially the energy saving potential, to the SCP and climate agendas. It has helped translate vague concepts into concrete actions. The fundamental differences between 'green building', 'energy-efficient building' and 'sustainable buildings' have become more evident.

A clearinghouse rather than a working group

A Marrakech Task Force is a voluntary initiative led by a government. Each task force defined its own mission and working methods and chose a topic that the lead country found important.

The purpose of the Task Force on Sustainable Building and Construction was not to draft political statements but to summarize expert views based on research and best practice. The Task Force did not envision itself as the coordinator of all

initiatives, a project developer, a funder or a research project. An external expert in the field, Dr. Kaarin Taipale, was contracted to work as chair and secretary of the Task Force, while the Finnish Ministry of the Environment offered technical support.

The Task Force was conceived as a platform for information exchange and distribution to audiences which might not hear about the sustainability of buildings elsewhere. The tools were not uncommon as such: networking with organizations in and outside its sector, arranging its own workshops

or piggybacking on partners' events, sharing resources, giving presentations, editing publications, sending e-mail newsletters and posting a webpage.

The Task Force consisted of a core group with representatives from the governments of China, Finland, France, India, Lithuania, Mexico, Sweden, the United States and the City of Cape Town, and the Finnish Advisory Group with members from a dozen stakeholder organizations and ministries. In addition over 400 observers regularly received information on the activities by e-mail.

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Joining hands with other Task Forces

The seven Marrakech Task Forces have been a closely knit family. Germany invited other Task Forces to cooperate in Africa, and Sweden in Russia. A joint conference was held in Delhi. If one Task Force was not able to attend one of the many conferences, it was represented by another.

The Task Forces nominated Finland and Italy to hold the two seats that they had in the Advisory Committee of the Marrakech Process. The Task Force on Sustainable Buildings and Construction considered this an important role: it coordinated comments on the 10YFP drafts and hosted events of the Task Force leaders, including a 2009 workshop in Helsinki, where key features of the 10YFP were outlined.

What did the Task Force achieve?



SVEN DETERING

During its five-year life-span, the Task Force has contributed actively to the development of the 10-year framework of programmes. In its two most recent workshops, particular emphasis was put on elaboration of

Bamboo is cheap, easy to work with, energy efficient and readily available in many countries. Bamboo market hall in Mozambique. Illustration from the publication Sustainable Buildings and Construction in Africa.

Elements of the 10YFP for the built environment

I. Barriers to be recognized and overcome

- Lack of understanding of the potential of sustainable construction and urban planning and their co-benefits for the poor – a bigger barrier than lack of technology
- Lack of consumer demand results in insufficient incentive to create competition on the market
- Lack of incentives and split incentives along the supply chain of the sustainable building process
- Implementation gap: legal systems, regulations, rules and bylaws may exist nationally, but their implementation is not enforced locally.

2. Possible targets by 2021

- The target for slum dwellers of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) to be reformulated more ambitiously
- X countries to have an enabling framework (legislation, institutions, authorities and enforcement) for sustainable buildings and construction in place
- X countries to have created a national platform to promote sustainable construction, bringing together the main actors of the sector
- Reduction of CO₂ emissions from construction, including production of construction materials, and operation of buildings, by xx per cent
- All new and refurbished public buildings to have zero emissions and zero waste
- X countries to have introduced national level financing instruments, such as reinvestment of savings from increased energy efficiency of public buildings into poverty alleviation programmes.

3. Tools to reach the targets

- Awareness-raising at different levels and scales (communications campaigns, making the business case, demonstration projects, best practices)
- Capacity building adapted to regional and local needs
- Mechanisms for coordination and enforcement of policies
- Locally developed national evaluation systems for building performance
- Monitoring tools such as energy consumption benchmarks for sustainable buildings
- Introduction of sustainability criteria in building procurement policies
- Inclusion of valuation of buildings into financial considerations
- Systemic approach, integration of land use and infrastructure (water, energy, transport, housing and services) planning.

PUBLICATIONS

Raising awareness

All the publications mentioned here can be downloaded at www.environment.fi/sbc



Buildings and Climate Change – Status, Challenges and Opportunities (2007)



Buildings for a Better Future – Best Policy Practices (2007)



Sustainable Buildings and Construction in Africa (coming in 2010)



Sustainable Development Innovation Brief on SBC (2010)

KEY EVENTS

Raising awareness

2006

- Workshops, New York, Helsinki
- Presentation, Wuppertal

2007

- Workshops, New York, Stockholm, Kuala Lumpur
- Side events, New York, Bali
- Presentation, Rabat

2008

- Workshops, Johannesburg, Melbourne
- Side Event, Poznan
- Presentations, Cebu, New York
- MTF leaders meeting, Paris

2009

- Workshops, Delhi, St. Petersburg
- Presentations, New York, Bonn, Paris, Abu Dhabi, Dubai
- MTF leaders workshop, Helsinki
- Side Event, Copenhagen

2010

- Workshops, New York, Cairo
- Presentations, New York, Paris

KEY PARTNERS

Were there enough groups promoting sustainable buildings? Yes and no. Each one had its own viewpoint, which made cooperation worthwhile. That meant sharing research results, editing joint publications, asking for comments, board memberships, invitations as speakers, co-hosting events or outlining development cooperation projects.

Partners were, among others,

- Agence de l'Environnement et de la Maîtrise de l'Energie (ADEME)
- Green Building Initiative of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) linked with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)
- Holcim Foundation for Sustainable Construction
- International Initiative for a Sustainable Built Environment (iiSBE)
- Sustainable Building (SB) conferences
- The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)
- UNEP Sustainable Building and Climate Initiative
- UNEP Finance Initiative
- VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland
- World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)
- Wuppertal Institute

The way forward with UNEP SBCI – the Sister Initiative



UNEP's Sustainable Building and Climate Initiative (UNEP SBCI) is going to take forward

the work of the Task Force. **Kaarlin Taipale** interviewed **Niclas Svenningsen**, Head of UNEP's sustainable building & urban development programmes, about the way forward.

UNEP's SBCI was established at the same time as the Task Force in 2006. Why two different initiatives?

These two initiatives have a common objective and have in fact worked very closely together. The main difference is that the Task Force focused on promoting sustainable buildings as part of the Marrakech Process and, therefore, mostly had

policymakers as members, while the SBCI has a somewhat wider scope, thereby also bringing together a broader group of members such as industry, professional associations, property developers and also policy-makers.

The Task Force is now wrapping up and handing its legacy over to the UNEP SBCI. Are there elements that you can carry on?

Absolutely - we have received a great platform to stand on from the Task Force. We still have a long way to go, but the work done by the Task Force has given us a direction and thrust that is very helpful. In addition, we are developing specific follow-up projects that link directly to the legacy of the Task Force, for example, the project on developing sustainable building policies in developing countries.

Somehow, I feel that we will keep working together in other constellations with the people who took an active part in the Task Force, and that is something we look forward to.

Are there going to be guidelines for governments on how to include the built environment into their Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMA)?

Yes, absolutely. The role of buildings in NAMA is extremely important and we need to do whatever we can to get policymakers to recognize this fact.

What about the UN Commission on Sustainable Development in May 2011? Will you be there to flag the role of buildings and construction, when sustainable consumption and production and the 10YFP will be discussed?

But, of course!

Further information:

www.environment.fi/sbc
www.unep.org/sbci
esa.un.org/marrakechprocess

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