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South African municipalities commit towards taking action for a sustainable urban energy future

ICLEI Africa launches flagship urban low-emission development project together with national partners during the 'Local Renewables Initiative' closing event in South Africa.

Over 45 representatives from seven South African municipalities gathered today in Ekurhuleni, Gauteng, to officially launch the start of the South African component of ICLEI's flagship global project "Promoting Urban Low Emission Development Strategies in emerging economy countries", or "Urban-LEDS".

The project, with ICLEI Africa as South African implementing partner and UN-Habitat as contracting partner, recognises that cities that pioneer a low emission development model today will be the ones that attract future investment, reduce energy costs and become efficient, inclusive, clean places to live and work tomorrow. It aims to enable the seven municipalities to meet development objectives in a clean, green way, through the integration of low-emission priorities into existing development plans.

Lizanda du Preez, Low Emission Development Programme Manager at ICLEI-Africa, said: **"This is an exciting opportunity for ICLEI Africa to work together with a range of national, provincial and local partners to ensure fast-growing secondary cities can contribute to the development of a lowcarbon economy in South Africa. We are looking forward to profiling the early achievements of the municipalities during our upcoming Local Climate Solutions for Africa (LOCS2013) Congress, taking place in Dar es Salaam from 30 October-1 November 2013"**.

Over the next 2 years, ICLEI Africa, in partnership with key stakeholders such as SALGA, Sustainable Energy Africa and provincial and national government departments, will assist the municipalities to analyse existing development plans through a low-emission lens, identify priority solutions and investigate their feasibility as Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMA's), prepare for implementation and institutionalise a low-emission planning approach into city plans and processes. The global project will bring in expertise and share experiences with municipalities in India, Indonesia, Brazil and Europe.

Linda Manyuchi, who gave a short address on behalf of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), said: **"We are pleased to partner on this project towards creating knowledge exchange mechanisms in supporting local governments to be ambitious in meeting low emission development and energy efficiency objectives."**

During the event, keynote speaker Saliem Fakir, who heads up the World Wide Fund for Nature's low carbon unit, highlighted the need for concerted action to overcome the challenges faced by South Africa's fossil-fuel intensive economy, and the crucial role of renewables and major urban centres in doing so.

Francois Schippers, Mayor of Saldanha Bay Municipality, commented on receiving his certificate: **"We believe that with the help of ICLEI and international local governments who have had good experiences, we too can have success"**. Executive Mayor of Steve Tshwete Municipality, Michael Amos Masina, highlighted in his speech the importance of integrating these issues into municipal planning, commenting: **"Any Integrated Development Plan to be credible must be loaded with this program"**

The event also allowed for an opportunity for the 7 municipalities to learn best practices from ICLEI's Global South Local Renewables Initiative whereby Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality was the implementing city in South Africa. The project, entitled: 'Local Renewables: South-South cooperation between cities in India, Indonesia and South Africa' provided a platform to build on experiences from the existing Local Renewable Network City - Coimbatore Corporation in India in sharing guidance and knowledge exchange.

The MMC for Energy and Water of Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, Cllr Aubrey Nxumalo, formally closed this Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEEP)-funded Local Renewables Initiative. Through this project, Ekurhuleni undertook local level sustainable energy actions by following the steps of the global Local Renewables Initiative, which steers city governments through the integration of increased renewable energy and energy efficiency generation into all city activities. Key project highlights featured during the closing of this project included the showcasing of the recent Ekurhuleni Urban Energy Profile, the "Actonville Training Centre" retrofitting pilot project and a Local Renewables Resource Centre housed within the OR Tambo Narrative Centre.

As a further demonstration of Ekurhuleni's commitment towards climate action, Cllr Nxumalo signed the Mexico City Pact during the event, thereby joining a group of mayors across the world working together to commit to the reduction of emissions and fostering of city-to-city cooperation.



The Urban-LEDS project municipal leaders had the opportunity to introduce their municipality and its sustainable urban energy vision to the participants.



One of the local leaders included Mayor Wayile from Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality, accepting the Urban-LEDS project certificate here from project partners ICLEI Africa and UN-Habitat.

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