

Taking Actions against
Climate Change

Promise of Seoul

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Citizen Involvement Matters the Most

An answer to a challenging and persistent problem can often be found when citizens put their heads together to tap the collective wisdom. Citizen involvement, therefore, is the most meaningful beginning and a crucial process when addressing any problem.

The 'Promise of Seoul' embodies a strong and collective resolve of 10 million Seoul citizens who came together to create a healthy, safe city for the next generation. We believe that the 'Promise of Seoul' will inspire other cities to follow the footsteps of Seoul and eventually create the 'Promise of the World', triggering a wave of change across the globe.

Promise of Seoul:

Taking Actions against Climate Change

Global warming is happening at an unprecedented rate, and extreme weather conditions such as heat wave, heavy rain and drought are causing natural disasters, costing lives and significant property of many citizens. Given such severe weather events are major consequences of climate change, reducing greenhouse gas emissions—the main culprit of global warming—is of the paramount importance in tackling climate change. Such mitigation measures, however, have limits in effectively responding to climate change. Therefore, adaptation measures which focus on turning the challenge to an opportunity are required to supplement mitigation efforts.

Although responding to climate change is of a national concern, there is an increasing emphasis on the key role that cities play in meeting specific targets to address climate change. Against this backdrop, it is time for cities around the world to make a bold shift from development-oriented approach to low-carbon, energy-saving approach. The Seoul Metropolitan Government, in this regard, has demonstrated to the world the very possibility of a sustainable urban development by reducing greenhouse gas emissions through its One Less Nuclear Power Plant policy.

Seoul is now committed to becoming a role model in climate change response as part of its efforts to prepare for the Post-2020 New Climate Regime. Seoul also aspires to build a resilient and sustainable city by adopting approaches tailored to its unique characteristics and conditions.

Calling on all cities around the world to join in the cause at the ICLEI World Congress in April 2015, Seoul declares the ‘Promise of Seoul: Taking Actions against Climate Change’, an embodiment of the vision embraced by 10 million citizens of Seoul and the Seoul Metropolitan Government.

Seoul hereby declares the following eleven pledges that embrace the intent of citizens, businesses and the city government to take actions against climate change:

11 Promises of Seoul

Seoul will reduce its CO₂ emissions by 25% by 2020 and by 40% by 2030 from the 2005 level, thereby creating a low-carbon, high energy-efficient city.

Seoul will ensure energy welfare by sharing energy with the underprivileged communities that are vulnerable to climate change.

Seoul will set an example in countering climate change by adopting an integrated and comprehensive management system for greenhouse gas and air pollutants.

Seoul will create a city resilient to climate change.

Seoul will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by raising reuse and recycling level while reducing food waste.

Seoul will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by saving water and utilizing collected rainwater.

Seoul will strengthen its adaptive capacity to climate change by creating an eco-city with a rich and harmonious biodiversity.

Seoul will cut energy consumption by expanding urban agriculture to be practiced widely in citizen’s daily lives.

Seoul will ensure health of the city by employing preventive measures against infectious diseases and heat wave while improving its capacity to respond to climate change.

Seoul will ensure safety by building capacity to respond to and prevent climate disasters.

Seoul will stay at the forefront in pursuing cooperation at home and abroad as well as establishing an implementation system to effectively tackle climate change.

Meaning of ‘Promise of Seoul: Taking Actions against Climate Change’

A number of declarations and plans for greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction have been announced in the past. While Seoul’s own energy initiative named One Less Nuclear Power Plant has made a remarkable success, many such declarations and plans failed to galvanize public action.

Recognizing the need to engage the public, the city Seoul decided to draw up detailed tasks and action plans against climate change together with its citizens. It was an effort to change lifestyles of the 10 million Seoul citizens while living up to and enhancing the city’s reputation as a climate and environmental capital in the world. The result of such effort is manifested in the ‘Promise of Seoul: Taking Actions against Climate Change (hereinafter referred to as the ‘Promise of Seoul’). Though in line with the Seoul Agenda 21 and the Seoul Action 21 in principle, the ‘Promise of Seoul’ differs significantly from the already existing declarations, policies or plans associated with climate change in the following ways:

‘Promise of Seoul’ is

A common resolve for action unveiled to the world, made by participation of citizens, business and the city government.

The first attempt of Seoul to take an integrated approach to both mitigation and adaptation as a way to actively tackle climate change;

A comprehensive strategy covering all areas of climate change, including energy, air quality, transportation, resource recycling, water, ecology, urban agriculture, health, safety and urban planning;

Not only declarative in nature but also carries practical significance focusing on action. It suggests specific visions and tasks for each area as well as current status, targets and action plans for each task;

A goal-oriented policy with indicators for each area and task, with target years set progressively as 2020 and 2030;

A bridge to facilitate the shift to the Post-2020 Climate Change Regime which will be confirmed at the 21st Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to be held in Paris in December of 2015; and

A pledge that reaffirms the vital role cities play in making substantial reductions in GHG emissions and actively responding to climate change.

Background

The passage of the ‘Basic Ordinance on Low Carbon Green Growth for the City of Seoul’ in July of 2011 obliged the Seoul Metropolitan Government to seek measures to meet its targets for energy saving and GHG emissions reduction.

In an attempt to proactively respond to climate change, the Seoul Metropolitan Government launched the One Less Nuclear Power Plant initiative in April 2012. The project facilitated the city to manage energy production, energy efficiency and energy saving in a comprehensive matter. Later in July of 2014, Seoul introduced the second phase of the initiative under the name of ‘Seoul Sustainable Energy Action Plan’. The plan promotes public engagement to better the lot of citizens and the city at the same time.

On a global stage, the Compact of Mayors was launched at the UN Climate Summit held in New York City in September of 2014. Partnered with global city networks—ICLEI, C40 and UCLG—the Compact highlights the vital role cities play in combating climate change. In addition, the 21st Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change will be held in Paris in December of 2015, during which the Post-2020 Climate Change Regime will be confirmed.



Furthermore, there has been an increasing focus on policy changes on a national level and the role of city governments in promoting voluntary participation. In this regard, at the ICLEI World Congress to be held in Seoul in April 2015, ICLEI will support the shift to the new global climate regime at the city level.

Recognizing that cities play a key role in tackling climate change and GHG emissions reduction, Seoul announced the ‘Promise of Seoul’ to deliver its duty as the host city of ICLEI World Congress and to publically announce the resolve of its citizens for actions.

Preparation Process

Citizen involvement was a crucial feature in the ‘Promise of Seoul’ even from agenda preparation. In fact, it was the Citizen Committee for Green Seoul—the city’s most representative body of eco-governance, Citizen Commission of One Less Nuclear Power Plant and

Executive Committee of One Less Nuclear Power Plant that called for visions and action plans to be drawn up to reduce GHG emissions.

Accordingly, the Preparation Committee was formed, consisting of members of each committee as well as qualified experts with extensive research experiences from Seoul Institute. To assign power to execute the plan, a working-level administrative organization consisted of public officials in charge of the action agenda was launched.

Aiming at citizen engagement from the initial stage, the Committee informed the public of all the information available at each stage of preparation while opening up to listen to the opinions of citizens via online and offline. Information was shared with the public through major web portals including the city government’s official website. Civil groups as well as schools played their part by proposing tasks for the ‘Promise of Seoul’ and participating in the

pledge for GHG reduction.

The ‘Promise of Seoul’ consists of the vision, goal, indicator, action plan and implementation strategy. In addition to the mitigation and adaptation measures on climate change, it also covers ten areas: Energy, Transportation, Air Quality, Resource Recycling, Water, Ecology, Urban Agriculture, Health, Safety and Urban Planning.

The ‘Promise of Seoul’ specifies detailed action plans on 36 tasks in 10 different areas for citizens, businesses and the city administration. In particular, the action plan for the administration focuses on the direction for the city’s support mechanism in helping all stakeholders meet their targets.

To be in line with the national GHG reduction targets and prepare for the Post-2020 New Climate Regime, the ‘Promise of Seoul’ modified the baseline year from 1990 to 2005. Accordingly, the target years for the ‘Promise of Seoul’ are set as 2020 and 2030.

The city of Seoul made every effort to ensure a governance that centers around civil society and to include as much valuable inputs from citizens and experts as possible. To this end, Seoul provided an online platform where citizens can freely submit their opinions while civic groups and school reached out to the public to listen to the real voices on the ground.

Seoul’s administrative districts also took part by holding various meetings and discussions with citizens from all walks of life, and the People’s Assembly held at the Gwanghwamun Square served as an important chance to include the collective wisdom into the ‘Promise of Seoul.’

An online survey was conducted with twenty questions on how to cut GHG emissions in everyday life. At the same time, an online poll helped the city prioritize the most important tasks in its fight against climate change.

Civil groups that participated in the drafting of the ‘Promise of Seoul’ pointed out the importance of taking initiative, leading to the establishment of the Citizen’s Movement Headquarter for ‘One Ton Less CO₂’, a move calling on each individual to reduce 1 ton of CO₂. The Korean Federation for Environmental Movement is playing a role as assistant administrators while several environment, women, and occupational associations are also partaking in the voluntarily formed headquarters. Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education, in particular, made every endeavor to engage young students—the leaders of tomorrow—by providing a variety of education programs on environment issues such as global warming. A total of 1,064,000 people from 1,299 schools have participated in the process, during which practical action plans were suggested.

Tremendous efforts have been made in drafting the ‘Promise of Seoul’, but we need to do more to put the words into action. In light of this, a civil campaign was launched to garner 1 million pledges for individual actions, calling on everyone to reduce 1 ton of CO₂ to achieve 10million tons of CO₂ emission reduction by 2020.

Endorsed by participating cities, Seoul is now planning to announce the ‘Promise of Seoul’ at the ICLEI World Congress 2015.



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