

High-level seminar on environmentally sustainable cities concluded

Influential policymakers, experts, and environmental practitioners from East and Southeast Asia concluded the two-day virtual forum on September 28-29, 2020 to share initiatives, opportunities, practical cooperation and collaboration on sustainable city development.

The 11th High-level Seminar (HLS) on Sustainable Cities focused presentations and discussions on localizing the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) primarily on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (SDG 11); quality education (SDG 4); decent work and economic growth (SDG 8); reduced inequalities (SDG 10); climate action (SDG 13); peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16); and partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17).

The organizers, spearheaded by the Ministry of the Environment, Japan, the ASEAN Working Group on Environmentally Sustainable Cities, ASEAN Secretariat and the Philippines, as host, through the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) facilitated the webinar on the 11th HLS on sustainable cities originally scheduled last March 2020 but was done last month due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The webinar series consisted of three parts – opening high-level plenary, thematic segment, and the concluding session where high-level officials exchanged views and discussed the direction of cities' development.

DENR Undersecretary for International Affairs Jonas R. Leones said, “high-level meetings such as this allows us to look back and measure how far we have come along in working together to make cities clean, green, and sustainable. We are positive that with the targeted initiatives we will help provide cities within the region, with the guidance they need, to address the tremendous challenges they face today, and in the future,” he added.

The HLS has become an avenue to develop specific recommendations to the East Asia Summit Environment Ministers Meeting, which includes ASEAN Environment Ministers, on practical cooperation activities on environmentally sustainable cities.

Currently, discussions on how to accelerate transformative changes to more sustainable and resilient city in the context of the New Normal is taking place in various occasions.

At a time when global leadership is lacking specifically due to the COVID-19 pandemic cities and their networks are stepping up, sharing on-going initiatives and considering future directions of recovery policies and measures on “building back better”.

The annual conference was attended by participants from Japan, China, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, India, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines. ###