

# The Local Agenda 21 Planning Guide

## AN INTRODUCTION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

### FOREWORD



By Maurice Strong Chairman, Earth Council

In 1992, the leaders of 179 countries gathered in Rio de Janeiro for the United Nations Earth Summit to finalize a global action plan for sustainable development, called Agenda 21. In this document, they recognized that because “so many of the problems and solutions being addressed by *Agenda 21* have their roots in local activities, the participation and cooperation of local authorities will be a determining factor in fulfilling its objectives.” *Agenda 21* further calls upon local authorities in every country “to undertake a consultative process with their populations and achieve a consensus on ‘Local Agenda 21’ for their communities.”

When this mandate was set out in 1992, there was little information available on how to proceed. It therefore gives me particular satisfaction to report that, since 1992, more than 1,300 local authorities from 31 countries have responded to the Agenda 21 mandate by developing their own Local Agenda 21 action plans for sustainable development.

The task of mobilizing and technically supporting Local Agenda 21 planning in these communities has been led by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) and national associations of local government. Now, with the further support of the International Development Research Centre and the United Nations Environment Programme, ICLEI is able to present the first worldwide documentation of Local Agenda 21 planning approaches, methods, and tools in this *Local Agenda 21 Planning Guide*.

The planning framework presented in the Guide has been derived from real-life Local Agenda 21 planning efforts around the world. The framework is being tested and reviewed by municipal professionals from 14 countries, North and South, East and West. The Guide should therefore provide a very useful introduction and technical resource on Local Agenda 21 planning to municipal professionals and NGOs facing a variety of development conditions.

The transition to sustainable development is not a soft option, but an imperative for our survival and well-being. It is going to require a great deal of courage and commitment from all sectors, including municipalities, to ensure its success.

Even as urban areas increasingly represent a concentration of our greatest social, economic, and environmental problems, they offer opportunities for some of the most effective solutions. They encompass great pools of talent and expertise within their many sectors, which local government officials can pull together to work on local strategies for action.

In my parting words at the conclusion of the Earth Summit, I said that we all "must move down from the Summit and into the trenches where the real world actions and decisions are taken that will, in the final analysis, determine whether the vision of Rio will be fulfilled and the agreements reached there implemented." Of the many programs that have resulted from the Earth Summit, none is more promising or important than this one, which has hundreds of local authorities around the world now setting out and implementing their Local Agenda 21s.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Maurice Strong". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized flourish at the end of the name.

Maurice Strong