Workshop
Joint Action to Tackle Climate Change at the Local Level Strengthening Response Capacities

Initiated and organized by Dr. Kerstin Krellenberg (Mercator-IPC Fellow)

The workshop, Joint Action to Tackle Climate Change at the Local Level - Strengthening Response Capacities, was held on Monday, July 1, 2013, at the Istanbul Policy Center. It was a joint activity of the IPC-Sabanci University-Stiftung Mercator Initiative, Regional Environmental Center Turkey and United Nations Development Program Turkey, initiated and organized by Mercator-IPC Fellow Dr. Kerstin Krellenberg.

The workshop brought together policy makers, academics and civil society activists in order to strengthen response capacities regarding climate change in the Metropolitan Municipality of Istanbul. The event aimed at initiating a participatory process at the science-policy interface, to work on the existent policy with regard to climate change at local level, and to identify knowledge deficits and program needs. These objectives took into account that policies tackling climate change in Turkey are so far mostly made at the national level. However, cities, and especially megacities, are key sources of greenhouse gas emissions and at the same time, are highly vulnerable to the consequences of climate change. This calls for local answers in terms of concrete action in order to respond to climate change.

The workshop attracted 28 people who represented, in total, 20 different institutions: public, academia and civil society; a network that was established during the last months by Mercator-IPC Fellow Dr. Kerstin Krellenberg. People who attended contributed actively to make the workshop a fruitful event. Invited representatives from the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality did not participate, but with the contributions of a Member of Parliament, Mehmet Hilal Kaplan, Head of the Environmental Department of the Metropolitan Municipality of Gaziantep, Dr. Şafak Hengirmen Tercan, and Hülya Silkin, representative from the Ministry of Forestry and Water, three important public decision-making institutions were represented.
The event started with welcoming remarks from the three supporting organizations: IPC (Daniel Grütjen), UNDP Turkey (Dr. Katalin Zaim), and REC Turkey (Dr. Sibel Sezer). Afterwards, Dr. Kerstin Krellenberg gave a keynote speech in order to motivate climate change response at the local level in the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality by establishing links between megacities and climate change, using some concrete examples from Santiago de Chile. Furthermore, she highlighted the link of mitigation and adaptation activities as key components of climate policy and identified benefits as well as constraints of collaborative local response. She presented an approach that she and her colleagues developed for the case of Santiago de Chile, which she is currently developing further. In addition, she gave examples of how other megacities around the world developed their local climate change action plans and linked these insights to the case of Istanbul and the aims of the workshop.

The keynote speech was followed by interactive workshops in three working groups, guaranteeing a mix of representatives from public organizations, academia and civil society in each group. This activity allowed for and stimulated discussion between the different actors and sectors on climate change based on their own knowledge, expertise and experiences. The groups worked with their own concrete examples in the areas of scientific data, civil society activities and official policies, programs, and plans, and more importantly, discussed existing gaps and needs. Later on, the results of each working groups were represented in the plenary. These very valuable outcomes will be summarized and published separately.

The afternoon session was dedicated to a panel discussion and aimed at figuring out the aims, constraints, needs, and challenges for climate change in the Istanbul Metropolitan Munici-pality. Panellists likewise represented public organizations (national and local), academia (social and natural sciences) and civil society. Mehmet Hilal Kaplan opened the panel which was moderated by Dr. Kerstin Krellenberg. In his introductory remarks, the Member of Parliament pointed out a wide range of different examples where serious environmental problems, which also include climate change, are not taken into account seriously. Thereby, both the role of the national government as well as the local level became clear. Accordingly, the next panellist, Dr. Şafak Hengirmen Tercan, Head of the Environmental Department of the Metropolitan Municipality of Gaziantep, explained how Gaziantep, given the same national framework, was able to develop and implement a Local Climate Action Plan. It became apparent that such a project does not develop overnight and needs support from all kind of actors in order to be successful. The next panellist, Dr. Ümit Şahin from Istanbul Policy Center established the link between democracy and environmental issues where participation has a major role to play. In the following, Özgür Gürbüz from Heinrich-Böll Foundation pointed out the NGO perspective and the need to have some NGOs with a clear environmental focus. Last but not least, Prof. Dr. Levent Kurnaz from Bosporus University stressed a long-term planning perspective that is needed in order to work on a sustainable development that does not focus solely on economic growth. This broad overview of the main issues raised by the different panellists will also be worked out further in a separate document and will also include the valuable contributions of all other participants to this discussion.

In the closing session of the workshop, emphasis was given to follow-up activities. Several interesting suggestions came up that could be used for possible future collaborations between the relevant actors and institutions in the field of climate change.