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## Empty Chair in Kyoto

International Call aims to help world cities network to become "Kyoto Compliant"

Source: Kyoto World Cities Challenge Initiative at <http://kyotocities.org>

### Kyoto Treaty Needs Help in Cities

After years of arduous work on many sides, the Kyoto Protocols finally entered into effect on 16<sup>th</sup> February. And with it the obligation of 141 signatory nations to do something about their greenhouse gas emissions. For the advanced industrial economies, the targets are going to be extremely hard to meet. But at least there is now a process in place which is starting to point the way. In *some* parts of the economy.

However when it comes to transport in cities, there can be no grounds for optimism. 141 countries may have signed the Treaty, but not one city even initialed it. Transportation was the empty chair in Kyoto.

How is that possible? It is well known that transport accounts for as much as 50%, and often more, of all air pollution cranked out in our cities. However, and despite the many useful improvements made in recent years on the part of a number of leading innovating cities and projects, all the trends are harshly moving in the wrong direction. Each year and in almost every single city on the planet we are seeing more traffic, more lost time, more pollution, more accidents, more unnecessary deficits, and more urban amenity and quality of life washed away by aimless short-sighted policies.

How can we move ahead on the challenges of Kyoto unless we figure out how to fill that missing chair?

### The Kyoto Cities Challenge

On the day the Kyoto Protocols entered into international law, the New Mobility Agenda, a Paris-based NGO, seconded by a world wide network of distinguished colleagues with deep experience in the sustainable transport field, announced a Call for an international cooperative effort to join forces to face this challenge.

The groundwork for the Call was prepared over the last months with a first cycle of meetings, internet discussions and videoconference exchanges which have encouraged this idea of international cooperation in support of radical remedial projects and programs -- in what is hoped will become a cooperating network of pioneering cities. But this is only the beginning, not least because there are many groups and programs already working in these areas and it is important that any new effort add value to their own on-going efforts

The Challenge goals are ambitious -- as indeed they must be under the circumstances. It not only invites each participating city to set exceptionally tough public performance targets for itself to move toward "Kyoto Compliance", but also to do this in terms of a very tight timetable of less than two years. And then to network with each other to exchange results and provide other forms of peer support.

One ambitious variant receiving close attention is the "20/20 Challenge". The goal is to create a high profile city-wide action program to achieve some form of "20% reduction" in a target period of 20 months. The question comes up of course "20% of what". And this is something that needs to be sorted out by the planning teams in each city. Thus one city might target a 20% reduction of CO2 emissions, another of some indicator of motorized traffic, a third perhaps some public health metric such as pulmonary infections. But in each case these need to be set carefully during the proposed three month *blueprint plan* stage.

The international expert group is confident that this challenge can be met, but well aware that this is going to require exceptionally strong local leadership, considerable technical virtuosity, and a broad base of public support if it is to work. The cooperating experts are confident that once a first group of pioneer cities show the way, this approach will capture the attention of many others and spread like wildfire. What is needed now is that first set of high visibility, high impact city programs. The rest will follow.

And in this way we will have at last filled that empty chair in Kyoto.

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For more information and interviews contact: Eric Britton

The New Mobility Agenda at <http://newmobility.org>  
Le Frene, 8/10 rue Joseph Bara, 75006 Paris, France  
E: [postmaster@newmobility.org](mailto:postmaster@newmobility.org) T: +331 4326 1323 Skype: ericbritton IP video, SightSpeed: ericbritton