EU-India Cooperation
Sustainable Development and Climate Change

The world saw two very positive developments in 2015. In September, leaders of 193 countries, both developed and developing, unanimously adopted the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with 17 goals and 169 specific targets in the areas of economic growth, social inclusion and environment protection. On 12 December, the Conference of Parties (i.e. countries) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) agreed to curb global greenhouse gases to a level which would limit temperature rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius compared with pre-industrial levels. This Agreement will come into force 30 days after it has been ratified by at least 55 countries accounting for 55% or more of global greenhouse gas emissions.

The European Union and India have recognised the importance of sustainable development and climate-related initiatives for several years. Most recently, at the EU-India Summit in Brussels on March 30, 2016, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, European Council President Donald Tusk and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi reinforced cooperation in these fields with a series of dynamic measures.
EU-India Cooperation: Water

A recently concluded € 80 mn. (Rs. 500 cr.) State Partnership between the EU and Rajasthan resulted in a water policy on integrated water resources management (IWRM) for the state, and the preparation of panchayat-based action plans for 3200 villages in 82 blocks of 11 districts. An allocation of Rs 2.5 lakhs per village plan was provided for the implementation. Following the EU’s intervention, Rajasthan also approved a water regulatory act in 2013.

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An EU-India Water Partnership agreed at the March 2016 Summit meeting is currently being formalised for signature by EU Commissioner for Environment Karmenu Vella and India’s Minister for Water Resources Uma Bharti. The Partnership foresees cooperation in water law and governance; promotion of research, innovation and exchange of business solutions, and joint initiatives to rejuvenate the iconic Ganga river and India’s other water bodies by bringing together a wide community of stakeholders on both sides.

Europe has achieved considerable success in managing its waters based on the Water Framework Directive. Adopted in the year 2000, the law bases the management of water according to river basins, 40 of them international, rather than administrative or political divisions. Member States of the EU have to prepare River Basin Management Plans with the objective of reaching good chemical and ecological status - stringently defined by common standards - before a given deadline. This method has been remarkably successful in improving water quality in the last 15 years. And to leverage the role of researchers and companies, a European Innovation Partnership on Water (EIP Water) both facilitates innovations and supports the creation of market opportunities for them, establishing another key component for the development of the water sector in Europe.

In anticipation of the formalisation of a partnership an EU-India workshop on River Basin Management and Governance was held on 14-15 June 2016 and another, in collaboration with the OECD and the WWF, on Water Allocation, Water Economics and Environment Flows on 14-15 September 2016. With more than 60 water sector managers from central and state governments participating, there is increased understanding of alternative approaches and success factors in water management on both sides.

With 2.45% of the earth’s land area, India has 17.5% of its population. Rainfall, though abundant is concentrated in a few weeks and leads to large run-offs. In between successive monsoons, there is growing reliance on groundwater (65% for irrigation and 85% for drinking water, leading to falling water tables and increased competition between users. With less than 40% of waste water in towns connected to a municipal sewage system, water pollution is leading to increasing illness and declining environmental quality.

The Danube River, Budapest, Hungary

Former Minister of State for Water Resources Prof. Sanwar Lal Jat and Ambassador Kozlowski
India’s government has taken up the challenge by launching the 100 Smart Cities Mission and the AMRUT (Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation) programme which will develop public transport, sewerage, water supply and public green spaces. The European Union has responded with the following initiatives:

The EU-Mumbai Partnership which has looked at innovative solutions to the challenges faced by a megacity (24 million in the last census) has led to dialogue on all major sectors over the last 3 years, and work is ongoing to scale up cooperation to state and national level with the development of an India-EU Urbanisation Partnership. This has been done with success with other major economies in recent years.

An innovative Metropolitan Lab on Maharashtra’s Sustainable Urbanisation supported by the EU and coordinated by a globally recognised EU expert has concluded 6 days of intensive discussions in Mumbai, leading to concrete ideas on sustainable urbanisation projects. This model shows potential for replication in other Indian megacities.

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In Europe, a pan-European Innovation Partnership on Smart Cities brings together more than 3,000 civic authorities, industry leaders and civic authorities to develop and replicate best practices in city governance, investment and job creation, environment, transport and waste minimisation. Green Capital Awards instituted by the European Commission have provided financial and other incentives to improvement. Sweden, for example, has reduced the waste accumulated at landfills from 62% to 4%; while buildings in Belgium are being designed to be energy neutral.

Under the EU’s World Cities Programme experts from Pune, Chandigarh, Mumbai and Navi Mumbai have examined sustainability projects in Stuttgart, Lazio and Copenhagen.

In the Clean Technologies and Energy Efficiency for Ecocities project funded by the EU and implemented by the IFC, Bangalore, Bhubaneswar, Chennai, Jamshedpur and Mumbai have begun to address their clean technology and energy efficiency needs based on European experience. Priority is being given to strengthening the enabling environment for green buildings through the voluntary green buildings market in India; enabling Climate-Smart Municipal Services; and promoting competitive green SMEs.

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Under a Technical Assistance project, best practices in sewage treatment and solid waste management in the cities of Mumbai and Delhi are being exchanged to create an enabling environment for promoting clean technologies.

As part of its programme to work with Urban Local Bodies the EU’s intervention with Pune municipality is improving access to community toilets. A community-led total sanitation initiative has been undertaken in 100 slums to bring about health and hygiene. Raisen and Burhanpur, both in Madhya Pradesh, have set up sewage treatment plants so that domestic wastewater is treated before release into water bodies. The EU initiative in Raisen is also helping improve the storm water drainage systems, public toilets and solid waste management. ICLEI South Asia and their European counterparts have developed a step by step guide for Kishangarh and Jaisalmer in Rajasthan and Solapur and Ichalkaranji in Maharashtra to help these cities plan for water, wastewater and storm water. The intervention in Shimla is improving capacities of municipal staff to deliver decentralised waste management. EU support to the All India Institute of Local Self Government (AILSG) intervention in Nagpur has been promoting equity in delivery of municipal services.

These initiatives and the experience gathered in their implementation will create a rich repository of experts on both sides who are familiar with the problems of urbanisation of the world’s fastest growing urban population on the one hand and the best available ways to tackle them. They will come together in 2017 in a Global EU programme with an Indian element. Called International Urban Cooperation: Sustainable and Innovative Cities and Regions, this project to be implemented over 3 years will have 2 components: a) 12 city-to-city projects contributing to India’s national flagship programmes; and b) a sustainable energy and climate mitigation and adaptation programme integrated into the Global Covenant of Mayors movement in the EU and elsewhere.

It is expected that 60% of the world’s people will be living in towns and cities in the next 10 years, creating opportunities for the efficient provision of services of energy, transport, waste management, health and education. At the same time, there are challenges of rural to urban migration (10 million per year in India) and overcrowding, pollution, and inadequate supply of these very same services on account of the costs, prices, technical constraints and administrative issues.
While India’s material consumption per capita is lower than that of other major economies, it is projected to rise substantially causing overall extraction to increase from 5 bn. tonnes at present to 15 bn. tonnes by 2030. The problem of waste, already evident, will increase. Delhi for example produces 8400 tonnes per day, which it is finding difficult to handle.

An EU-India Resource Efficiency Initiative aims to support the newly created Indian Resource Panel in developing strategies for resource efficiency in transport, buildings, renewable energy and waste recovery by promoting partnerships between partners such as businesses, NGOs and academia. Over the next 42 months it will also develop an outreach programme to build awareness of issues and options among agencies in all three groups as well as youth and media.