

Informal notes on meeting of Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction

On Monday and Tuesday (18-19 April) a two-day organizational meeting of GlobalABC took place in Paris at the Ministry of Environment, Energy and the Sea. The report below is an unofficial one, and a more considered version is to be issued by the GlobalABC secretariat.

The Global Alliance Buildings and Construction (Global ABC) is a joint initiative of 19 Member Countries and 45 Partner Institutions under the Lima Paris Action Agenda that created a partnership to put the building sector on a 1,5-2°C pathway.

The Alliance is intended to facilitate the mobilisation of ambitious levels of international resources for efficient local operational solutions, aligning existing initiatives, commitments and programs to achieve greater scale, and catalysing greater pace and impact of climate action in the buildings and construction sector

Primary organizers of the Alliance and of its inaugural meeting were UNEP and the French Ministry of the Environment, Energy and the Sea. Members of GlobalABC, who include governments, NGOs and private firms, were invited to send a single representative to the meeting. About 85+ representatives turned up for the meeting that was intended to define the structure of the organization, the best ways of working together and the scope of future work. The secretariat is led by Frédéric Auclair, who has been seconded to UNEP from the Ministry with support from other UNEP and Ministry staff.

There seemed to be a general determination to deal with real issues in a pragmatic way, and there was a high level of participation by those present.

An excellent introductory energy overview was provided by Brian Motherwell of IEA. He is the first head of the new EE Division within IEA and he emphasized that major energy savings are possible through improvement in building envelope performance.

Major discussion areas

1. Public policies (Mexico, France, IEA)

- For an overall strategy, it was suggested that the scope of GlobalABC should cover developed and developing countries, with participation of public and private stakeholders at national and local levels.
- It was agreed that a roadmap for action must be established for national sustainability strategies in the built environment sector.
- There was discussion about cities being key agencies to implement energy and emission-related initiatives and there seemed to be a consensus that they were not well enough represented at the meeting (although it was also pointed out that C40 has its own direct pipeline to Ban Ki Moon).
- There appeared to be a consensus that, although our focus is on buildings, the scope should include small urban areas.
- Given that existing buildings constitute well over 95% of the total building stock, renovation and performance upgrading of existing buildings appear to be a priority.
- Marie Lyne Tremblay (Canada) suggested that the 25 policy recommendations for EE, developed by IEA in 2008, should form a starting point. She also suggested that a priority should be for GlobalABC to show, as soon as possible, its worth to politicians who have an influence on its future, and then we can concentrate on actions related to individual countries.

2. Market transformation, including PPP, objectives and targets (Tunisia, WBCSD)
 - The importance of scaling up successful pilot initiatives was emphasized.
 - Solar hot water systems in some regions and countries (e.g. Tunisia) offer prospects for major energy savings at modest cost, if scaled up.
3. Investment and financing EE in buildings (UNEP FI, IPEEC)
 - Franck Hovorka, representing the UNEP Finance Initiative (UNEP-FI) and the Caisse des Depots, pointed out that the estimated asset value increase of EE improvements could be in the range of 3% to 4%, whereas the down-side risk is in the order of 10%.
 - It was agreed that reliable and transparent data (including linkages between performance and operating cost) is essential in order to encourage increased investment for high performance.
4. Education, awareness raising and professional training (Construction 21, CRLCL, 10YFP)
 - It was agreed that an annual global status report should be prepared, building on existing information developed by IEA and UNEP.
 - A website and intranet are to be established.
 - Yves Laurent Sapoval (France) suggested that information and data collected should be related to national INDCs.
 - Terri Wills (WGBC) emphasized the importance of training programs;
 - Nils Larsson (iiSBE) provided a short overview of the SBE series and plans of the SBE partnership to carry out an international survey of effective mitigation measures.

Working groups for major tasks proposed:

- Roadmap group (members are IEA, Mexico, UNEP, Veolia, Lafarge Holcim, France & iiSBE).
- Design and implementation of policies
- Metrics and indicators
- Measurement and accountability
- Surveys, including participation in the international being developed by the SBE partners (CIB, iiSBE, UNEP and FIDIC)
- Global annual report
- Retrofit of building stock
- Performance synergies possible in small urban areas (aka synergy zones).
- Low-emission vernacular housing
- Solar water heating
- Informal sector training
- Buildings in tropical climates, both new and existing.

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