

CTBUH 8TH World Congress Highlights Dubai as a Model of Sustainable Urban Future

According to the UN: 50 percent of the world's population resides in urban cities, growing to two-thirds in 25 years; by 2015, 23 'mega cities' will exist with nineteen of them located in developing countries



The Council on Tall Buildings & Urban Habitat (CTBUH) ended its 8th World Congress with participants agreeing that Dubai is well suited to lead the world in creating sustainable dense cities, if it followed new radical fundamental planning and sustainable designing strategies. The congress achieved remarkable success with 965 participants representing 44 countries and 92 speakers presenting papers on a variety of topics related to the congress theme 'Tall and Green: Typology for a Sustainable Urban Future.'

"The race to achieve new heights has not been without its challenges," said Antony Wood, CTBUH Executive Director. "With the advent of innovative technologies and sustainable designs, I believe towers and skyscrapers will continue to soar skyward. Whether it is in the UAE, UK, USA or Asia, tall buildings are not only a global trend. They also portray nationalistic ambitions and pride. Interestingly, the Dubai government's vision of contributing to a more 'sustainable built environment' seems to best sum up the aspirations of those leaders

gathered this week in Dubai." Speakers at the CTBUH congress agreed that sustainability is a philosophy that should be incorporated into the design of tall buildings from inception, noting that future tall building design should also address both the physical and the environmental aspects of the location and reinvent itself as the ideal solution for both dense and sustainable cities. "I believe that tall buildings can be unique and can deliver a positive contribution to society," said Adrian Smith from Adrian Smith and Gordon

Gill Architecture, and designer of Burj Dubai whilst at Skidmore Owings and Merrill. "Having said so, great care must go into the design and the execution of a landmark tower because it speaks to the viewer not only about its architect, but its owner and its country."

In the middle of the last century, one out of three people were living in towers and cities. Today, a majority of the world's population lives in urban settings. According to a recent United Nations (UN) report, 50 percent of the world's population now reside in urban centres. The report projects that in another 25 years, two-third of the world's population will be urbanized. By 2015, there will be 23 'mega cities,' with nineteen of them located in developing countries.

"Tall buildings offers significant challenges regarding the implementation of sustainable priorities because of their size and relatively small footprint," said Ken Dalton, the Chief Executive

of AECOM Europe. "However, they offer a more sustainable approach to development if a broader picture of urban development is considered. I think Dubai is on the right track on this issue."

The congress had three plenary sessions, as well as 21 multi-track sessions, which turned out to be a huge success. The first plenary session discussed the issue of tall buildings and sustainable cities taking Dubai, Chicago and London as urban case studies. The other two plenaries highlighted mega-projects, taking Burj Dubai as the case study, and tall, articulated sustainable towers. Other topics included urban sustainability, the sustainable design of tall buildings, energy creation at height, design thinking, façade and design dynamics of tall buildings, interior and social issues, fire and safety and the financial aspects of building tall.

Habiba Al-Marashi, the co-founder and Chairperson of Emirates Environmental Group, discussed the

urban challenges facing Dubai due to the current construction boom. "Adopting the cause of sustainable development is a big task. The Government of Dubai has done its duty and has provided the necessary impetus for strengthening the future of the Emirate. Now it's the duty of private developers and community-based organizations to lead the way forward and make this dream a reality."

The three-day congress, which was sponsored by Emmar, included a number of keynote speakers: HE Mohamed A. Alabbar, chairman of Emaar Properties, HH Hussein Nasser Lootah, the Deputy Director General of Dubai Municipality, Gordon Gill from Adrian Smith and Gordon Gill, Sadhu Johnson, Chief Environmental Officer of the City of Chicago, Peter Wynne Rees, Head of the City of London Planning Department and William Baker from Skidmore Owings and Merrill among others.

