

# Tall buildings reach for green sustainability

Sustainability experts headed to Dubai last month for the Council on Tall Buildings & Urban Habitat's world congress. **Michael Gordon** listened to the Chicago-based council's argument for skyscrapers as the energy-efficient answer to increasing populations and expanding communities



Dubai has a great opportunity to lead the world in creating sustainable tall buildings and showing the world the way forward, according to Antony Wood, Council on Tall Buildings & Urban Habitat (CTBUH) executive director.

The CTBUH kicked off its eighth world congress at the Grand Hyatt Dubai last month, under the theme 'Tall and Green: Typology for a Sustainable Urban Future'.

At the conference, which was attended by more than 800 delegates from 42 countries, and 92 speakers, Wood told delegates: "In an age where humans are looking to live vertically in tall buildings and create communities in the sky, rather than on the ground, developers, urban planners, architects, governments and the community at large have a huge role to play in making sure these densely populated areas remain as environmentally friendly as they are wondrous.

"In my opinion Dubai has a great opportunity to lead the world in creating sustainable tall buildings and showing the world the way forward." Dubai currently has 62 skyscrapers, including 12 super-tall buildings, under construction.

Kerry Galbraith, structural department head for KEO International Consultants, said: "To date, the track record for the GCC has not been good – many of the projects are leaving a large footprint on the environment. But on a global scale, when you consider China and the US, it needs to be put into perspective.

"More needs to be driven by Dubai Municipality which has now taken the step to introduce a green building mandated requirement – but you have to learn to walk before you can run.

"However, for the future there is a lot of improvement here. The UAE is definitely taking the lead in a lot of ways with their own green building council. In Qatar, the municipality hasn't taken any directives in terms of sustainable or green building design on board."

In the Gulf region, which is experiencing some of the world's fastest growth rates in construction, the need for more sustainable patterns of life as a response is becoming more and more critical. The construction boom in the Gulf region alone has reached new heights, with 2,837 projects estimated to be worth in excess of US\$2.4 trillion now underway. Moreover, this expansion of the construction sector and associated industries is expected to continue till 2030.

The UAE, for example, has the highest carbon footprint in the world with almost 9.06 global hectares per person, closely followed

