



ARCHITECTS' COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DES ARCHITECTES D'EUROPE

Date: 20th November 2009

Ref: 276/09/JOL/AS

Architecture and Quality of Life

ACE Declaration on Architecture and Sustainability¹

Adopted by the General Assembly of the ACE

Final

We, leaders and representatives of the architectural profession believe that the design of the built environment has a profound role to play in ensuring the survival of humans and thousands of other living species, the integrity of the earth and its biodiversity, and the heritage of future generations currently threatened by climate change and unsustainable development.

We are conscious that buildings account for half of the energy use in the western world, and if we add to that the impact of spatial planning on the movement of people and goods our responsibility as built environment professionals extends even further. Inequitable and unsustainable production and consumption patterns exacerbate environmental changes and aggravate poverty in many regions of the world. Can we find the collective wisdom to choose a more sustainable path of development?

Sustainable architectural design integrates consideration of resource conservation and energy efficiency, healthy buildings and materials, ecologically and socially sensitive land-use, protection and enhancement of biodiversity, and an aesthetic sensitivity that inspires, affirms, and ennobles. Sustainable design significantly reduces adverse human impacts on the natural environment while improving quality of life and economic well-being.

Market forces alone cannot ensure sustainable development; indeed climate change has been famously described as the "greatest market failure ever". We urge governments to rapidly come to a binding, science-based and equitable agreement to arrest the increasing concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. This will enable nations and regions to institute the right financial measures and regulatory regimes and will allow carbon trading and technology transfer that will enable the innovation and development that we need and to which we are ready to commit.

We strongly believe that sustainability and whole life value analysis of buildings are inseparable and together shift focus away from the short-sighted initial cost based approaches that have proved so destructive. Construction is a cultural act which always has a collective impact and which should fulfil human, social and technical functions.

The present environmental and energy crisis and the need for sustainable urban development demands an approach to architecture and planning that addresses both the city and the individual building as complex interactive systems which have symbiotic relationships with their wider natural surroundings. It is essential that quality of life is de-coupled from the irresponsible use of non-renewable resources.

We believe that urgent actions are needed to address these fundamental problems and reverse current trends.

¹ This text was principally drafted by the ACE and benefited from inputs from a number of contributors, in particular from UIA Regions I and II and from UMAR.

Taking account of the Declaration of Interdependence for a Sustainable Future of the UIA/AIA World Congress of Architects in Chicago, June 1993; the 2006 policy on Sustainable Development of the Union of Mediterranean Architects; the policy statement on Architecture and Sustainability of the Architects' Council of Europe agreed by the General Assembly in Brussels, April 2007; and the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities adopted in May 2007 by the EU Ministers for Urban Development and Territorial Cohesion:

Therefore, for our part, we commit to take the following actions:

1. Change our individual Professional Practices

Place sustainability at the core of our practices and professional responsibilities, promote and foster appropriate mitigation and adaptation strategies and develop and continually improve practices, procedures, products, curricula, services, technology and standards that will enable the implementation of sustainable design; work to bring all existing and future elements of the built environment -in their design, production, use, and eventual reuse- up to sustainable design standards, working towards the achievement of a zero emission built environment.

2. Promote Sustainable Design

Include energy and environmental performance information in all architectural competitions, public architectural awards and competitive selection processes, where appropriate as an assessment criterion, and encourage similar information to accompany all published architectural reviews

3. Foster Environmental Literacy and Competence

Support the creation of programmes to teach sustainable design skills to all undergraduate and graduate students of urban design and architecture, and encourage continuing professional education and research in relevant areas.

4. Practice Institutional Leadership

Set an example of environmental corporate responsibility by establishing policies and practices of resource conservation, recycling, waste reduction, and environmentally sound operations in the professions' institutions and organisations.

5. Collaborate for Interdisciplinary Approaches

Convene sister professions and industry interests to develop interdisciplinary approaches to curricula, research initiatives, and industry practices that support an environmentally sustainable future; and seek to establish policies, regulations, and practices in government and business that ensure sustainable design becomes normal practice.

6. Broaden Service and Outreach Nationally and Internationally

Work with national and international organizations to promote a worldwide effort toward a sustainable future.