

Busan, UN-Habitat and OCEANIX set to build the world's first sustainable floating city prototype as sea levels rise

Busan, Nairobi and New York, 18 November 2021 -- The Busan Metropolitan City of the Republic of Korea, UN-Habitat and OCEANIX today signed a historic agreement to build the world's first prototype sustainable floating city. On the heels of COP26, the partners seek to innovate breakthrough solutions for coastal cities threatened by sea level rise.

Coastal cities are on the frontlines of climate-related risks. Flooding is destroying billions of dollars worth of infrastructure and forcing millions of climate refugees to leave their homes. The challenge is huge: two out of every five people in the world live within 100 kilometres of the coast, and 90 percent of mega cities worldwide are vulnerable to rising sea levels. The floating city is envisaged as a flood-proof infrastructure that rises with the sea and produces its own food, energy and fresh water with fully integrated zero waste closed-loop systems.

“Sustainable floating cities are a part of the arsenal of climate adaptation strategies available to us. Instead of fighting with water, let us learn to live in harmony with it. We look forward to developing climate adaptation and nature-based solutions through the floating city concept, and Busan is the ideal choice to deploy the prototype,” said the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, Maimunah Mohd Sharif, stressing that the battle to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals would be won or lost in cities.

Coastal cities are facing unique demographic, environmental, economic, social and spatial challenges. With nowhere to expand, rapid urban population growth is pushing people closer to the water, driving housing costs to prohibitive levels, and squeezing the poorest families out.

“With the complex changes facing coastal cities, we need a new vision where it is possible for people, nature and technology to co-exist. There is no better place than Busan to take the first step towards sustainable human settlements on the ocean, proudly built by Korea for the world,” said Busan’s Mayor Park Heong-joon. Busan is also bidding for World Expo 2030.

“Sea level rise is a formidable threat, but sustainable floating infrastructure can help solve this looming catastrophe. We are excited to make history with Busan and UN-Habitat in ushering in humanity’s next frontier,” said OCEANIX Co-Founders, Itai Madamombe and Marc Collins Chen, adding that the prototype would be approached at a hyper-local level, taking into account the rich social, economic, political and cultural uniqueness of Korea as the host country.

BACKGROUND

OCEANIX is a blue tech company founded by Itai Madamombe and Marc Collins Chen in 2018. Its mission is to design and build self-sustaining floating cities. The vision of the world's first floating city for 10,000 residents was unveiled in April 2019 at a UN Roundtable co-convened by UN-Habitat, OCEANIX, the MIT Center for Ocean Engineering, and the Explorers Club. The scale model of the floating city can be viewed at the Smithsonian Museum's FUTURES Exhibition, which is running until July 2022. OCEANIX partners on the Busan prototype include: Prime Movers Lab, Helena, Arup, artist Olafur Eliasson and Studio Other Spaces, Bouygues Construction, Wartsila, Greenwave, Mobility in Chain, Sherwood Design Engineers, Agritecture, Center for Zero Waste Design, and the Global Coral Reef Alliance. www.oceanixcity.com

Busan is a city of 3.4 million residents located on the southeastern tip of the Korean peninsula. It is the second largest city in the Republic of Korea. Its deep harbor and gentle tides helped the city grow into the largest container handling port in the country and the fifth in the world. It is home to the biggest industrial complex in the 'Southeast Economic Region' of Korea. Busan is one of the most important maritime cities of the 21st century, making it a natural choice to deploy the prototype sustainable floating city. A key goal of the prototype is to cultivate a new generation of blue tech innovators, entrepreneurs, and researchers in Busan by creating a vibrant ecosystem through collaboration between international and local partners. www.busan.go.kr/eng

UN-Habitat, the United Nations Programme for Human Settlements, works towards a better urban future. UN-Habitat's vision is to achieve "a better quality of life for all in an urbanizing world". UN-Habitat works in over 90 countries to promote transformative change in cities and human settlements through knowledge, policy advice, technical assistance and collaborative action. UN-Habitat collaborates with governments, intergovernmental, UN agencies, civil society organizations, foundations, academic institutions and the private sector to achieve enduring results in addressing the challenges of urbanization. www.unhabitat.org

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