



ARCHITECTS' COUNCIL OF EUROPE  
CONSEIL DES ARCHITECTES D'EUROPE

**20<sup>th</sup> November 2009**

**Statement to the Heads of State Gathered in Copenhagen for COP 15**

The Copenhagen Conference that will address the urgent challenge of Climate Change presents Heads of State with an opportunity to recognise the importance and role of architecture in lessening the impact of development on the environment. As a cross-sectoral discipline, architecture is capable of devising innovative and sustainable solutions for the design of new buildings and for the renovation of existing buildings that will effectively reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

We, the architects of Europe, unified under the Architects' Council of Europe (ACE)<sup>1</sup> call on the Heads of State and the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen (COP 15) to acknowledge that architecture is a powerful tool that should be used to mitigate the effects of Climate Change. We therefore request and expect that the architectural dimension will form an integral part in any binding commitments for the building sector that result from the work at COP15.

We state our commitment, based on the principles expressed in the attached *Declaration on Architecture and Sustainability*, to work towards a better integration of natural and man-made habitats, coupled with a sustainable, low emissions built environment that will ensure a quality of life that we all aspire to, for current and future generations.

**Annex:**  
ACE Declaration on Architecture & Sustainability

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<sup>1</sup> The Architects' Council of Europe (ACE) is the European organisation representing the architectural profession at European level. Its headquarters and Secretariat are located in Brussels. Its growing membership consists of Member Organisations, which are the nationally representative regulatory and professional bodies of all European Union (EU) Member States, Accession States, Switzerland and Norway. Through them, it represents the interests of about 480,000 architects. The principal function of the ACE is to monitor developments at EU level, seeking to influence those areas of EU Policy and legislation that have an impact on architectural practice and on the overall quality and sustainability of the built environment.

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**SECRETARIAT GENERAL**

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## **Architecture and Quality of Life**

ACE Declaration on Architecture and Sustainability<sup>1</sup>

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.

<sup>1</sup> 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.