

September, 15 2010 10:03:55

Forum looks at climate change

HA NOI — Climate change and its consequences for sustainable urban development were assessed at a seminar that opened in Ha Noi yesterday.

The Goethe Institute Viet Nam's director Almuth Meyer-Zollitsch reminded the gathering of German and Vietnamese policy makers, academics and industry representatives that Viet Nam was likely to be one of the five countries most affected by climate change.

It would mean not only drought, flood, the devastation of agriculture and shortages of food and energy, but also increased migration into cities, he said.

The University of Hamburg's Economic Geography Department's Dr Michael Waibel told the seminar that climate change was no longer a distant possibility in Viet Nam but a reality.

Climate change and urban development were closely linked and often interacted negatively, he warned.

"Urban sprawl has been identified as the most crucial cause for urban-related green house gas emissions," Dr Waibel said.

Strategic potential

But the economist argued that climate change could become an opportunity because the immense threat it posed might spur innovative governance that bridged the divide between sectors and institutional fragmentation.

"A restructuring towards a more energy-efficient and green economy would also unleash the strategic potential of Viet Nam's global and regional competitiveness," he said.

The Construction Ministry's Urban Development Department Deputy Director Do Tu Lan explained the response of Viet Nam's coastal urban system to climate change, especially in the major cities.

The impact of climate change had been anticipated and mitigation measures included the revision of regional planning, local adaptation and international co-operation, he said.

The Science and Technology Ministry's National Centre for Technological Progress's Ngo Thi To Nhien said responses to climate change included the application of solar energy to ensure energy security for sustainable development in the major cities.

It also means the creation of new jobs and business opportunities.

Policy recommendations included energy standards for public buildings - these should be strictly enforced for government structures - and the protection of consumers with certificates to renewable energy devices of approved technical standards.

Special licences for contractors capable of "green" projects were also suggested.

Institute of Architecture, Urban and Rural Planning deputy director Le Thi Bich Thuan complained that Viet Nam lacked environmentally-friendly materials.

Specific regulations governing construction licensing did not exist and the energy efficiency of multi-storey and commercial buildings had not been adequately addressed. "Viet Nam doesn't have laws and subordinate-law documents for energy conservation and efficiency," she said.

"Viet Nam does not have a specific mechanism for the promotion of green buildings; the environmentally-friendly use of materials and uniform and specific guidelines."



An overview of a corner of My Dinh urban area in Ha Noi. To adapt to climate change, Viet Nam needs a specific mechanism for the promotion of green buildings. — VNA/VNS Photo Tuan Anh

Stuttgart-based companies Behnisch Architekten and Transsolar Climate Engineering presented the "Energy Design Synergy" exhibition as part of yesterday's session.

These included international projects that used innovations to provide ecologically-responsible construction and environmentally sound architecture.

Today's session will include municipal adaptation to climate change and climate change education. — VNS