

Publication: The Edge Singapore Online

Date: 7 June 2023

Headline: Public-private partnerships must be 'a lasting marriage, not a short wedding ceremony': Ecosperity Week panel

Public-private partnerships must be 'a lasting marriage, not a short wedding ceremony': Ecosperity Week panel



More than 70 cities worldwide have pledged to become carbon-neutral by 2050, which means they will produce less emissions than they can offset. However, in Asia-Pacific (APAC) gateway cities, more than 65% of the buildings were built before 2005, further complicating the sustainability challenge, says Vinamra Srivastava, chief sustainability officer of CapitaLand Investment (CLI) 9CI -1.21%

Speaking at Temasek's Ecosperity Week on June 7 at a panel titled "Harnessing Public-Private Cooperation for Zero-Carbon Cities", Srivastava adds that the difficulty is further exacerbated by the fact that real estate the size of New York City will be developed every month for the next 40 years, and capex investments needed to decarbonise these buildings have a challenging returns profile in the short term.

Despite these implementation challenges, Srivastava says public-private partnerships have a huge potential in tackling zero carbon. He cites data sharing and collaboration between governments and corporations as an example, which ensures the standardisation of metrics so that performance across the city can give customers and investors clear insights.

"All of these, I think, are the softer... public-private examples that can help to address some of these challenges," says Srivastava.

Fellow panellist Claire Perry O'Neill, former UK Minister for Energy and Clean Growth and now sustainability advisor for Singapore-headquartered climate-tech venture Terrascope, agrees that the goal is incredibly difficult to achieve, "much like trying to fix a rubik's cube".

**Publication: The Edge Singapore Online**

**Date: 7 June 2023**

**Headline: Public-private partnerships must be 'a lasting marriage, not a short wedding ceremony': Ecosperity Week panel**

Acknowledging that there is no one solution to the problem, O'Neill says regulators can do well to be a leader and to motivate those in the private sector who often have "fantastic solutions tucked in the drawer" — to bring those forward to work.

O'Neill and Srivastava were joined by Wang Tianyi, the former chairman of China Everbright Environment Group, and moderator Winston Chow, associate professor of urban climate at the Singapore Management University.

Chow, who posed a question about the feasibility of public-private partnerships, says one of the hurdles for the development of zero-carbon cities is scepticism that the private sector may be driven more by profit, rather than a genuine commitment to sustainability.

But Srivastava highlights the "huge opportunity cost" that the private sector might face if they do not employ sustainability as a driver. He says companies need to move on from just thinking about risk and compliance, to two things: The first is to use sustainability as a driver for achieving operational excellence, and the second is to use sustainability to create new lines of businesses and new revenue opportunities.

"You take buildings as an example, your investments and energy efficiency of buildings can lead to easily 15% to 20% of opex savings, right? If you don't invest enough in greening the buildings, the assets may get stranded, you may not be able to sell them and there's a huge opportunity cost there," he says.

Citing the Tampines urban rejuvenation district cooling system project and a net-zero business park in India as examples, Srivastava says these are successes that have showcased that companies do not need to compromise on financial returns when investing in sustainable solutions.

O'Neill adds that the world cannot wait for a perfect solution to achieve zero-carbon cities. Instead, all players will need to experiment very quickly with different models at small city levels, which will eventually cascade into the future.

Finally, Wang adds that the partnership between public and private sectors will need to be like "a lasting marriage, not a short wedding ceremony".