



Visiting to contribute to a sustainable future in East Asia

## **Gunnar Brundin Japan and China March 2008**

**Organizer: Sustainable Sweden Association**

### **Background in Sweden**

The National Association of Swedish Eco-Municipalities (SEKOM) has a membership of 71 municipalities, almost a fourth of all Swedish municipalities. Eco-municipalities have in common that they, on a political level, have made a commitment to strive for sustainable development and to do so within a common framework, a shared concept about the meaning of sustainability.

27–29 May 2008 the first International Eco-Municipality Conference, hosted by SEKOM, will take place, in Helsingborg, Sweden.

In January 2007 a group of four, including Lars Thunberg, Chairman of SEKOM, visited Japan with the purpose of reaching out to municipalities in Japan, inviting them to join the conference and work together with other eco-municipalities for a sustainable future. Among the visitors were also Torbjörn Lahti, a veteran from the early eco-municipality movement in the 1980's and one of the main developers of the eco-municipality concept and methods. Torbjörn co-authored a book about the eco-municipality movement. The book was translated and published in Japan in 2006. The visit and the book were well received.

Gunnar Brundin, who will visit Japan in March 2008, has worked together with Torbjörn since the beginning of the eco-municipality movement. Together they founded the consulting firm Esam AB now headed by Gunnar Brundin as CEO. Torbjörn Lahti is the Chairman of Sustainable Sweden Association (SSA) and a senior adviser to The Natural Step, an organization grounded in the same principles for sustainability as SEKOM and Esam AB. All four entities are working closely together. Gunnar Brundin is also a board member of the SSA.

### **Background in Japan**

In July 2008 Japan will play host to the G8 summit. The environment and climate change will top the agenda. Media and NGOs from all over the world will be watching Japan and many will visit the country. What will they learn about Japan? In our view many municipalities in Japan are working hard on moving forward towards sustainability. Others maybe have not started yet. They all have in common that they can play an important role in moving Japan's policies for sustainability forward. There are also networks of municipalities working for



sustainability. One, called Colgei (The Coalition of Local Governments for Environment Initiative) has 60 members and hold national meetings every year. In 2008 they will hold their general assembly in Yamagata Prefecture 28–30 May, almost at the same time as the international conference in Sweden. So there are many good initiatives in Japan deserving to be noticed and encouraged.

### **Purpose of March 2008 visit**

#### **– Japan**

In Sweden, the municipalities have often moved towards sustainability ahead of the government. In the United States, in a similar way, local governments are moving with more enthusiasm than the federal government. In Japan there is also a similar trend and we believe it can grow. One way to encourage such a development is to provide inspiration from other countries. Another way is to show interest from abroad in those positive initiatives that are taking place.

This is the purpose of inviting Gunnar Brundin to come to Japan. We want to provide an opportunity for municipalities in Japan to learn more and be inspired by what is happening in Sweden. We also want to provide an opportunity for many people already involved in many efforts, to exchange thoughts with someone who has been working with the same problems for a long time, helping people and municipalities to solve those problems.

#### **– China**

Working together for global sustainability within the Sustainable Sweden Association we have expanded our network in the United States, Europe, Africa and Japan. As we move forward we realize that China plays a very important role in our common future. China will also be in the spotlight as the host of the Olympic Games in August 2008. Therefore we would like to reach out to potential partners in China.

The three countries Japan, China and Sweden have very different historical background, diverse experiences, and face problems from different angles but our obvious common global goal is a peaceful and sustainable development. As long time bridge builders between East Asia and Sweden we would like to connect the motivating power in our networks and encourage us all to share and exchange experiences. Then we can be more successful in our struggle for this common goal – a Sustainable Development!

Lena Lindahl  
Member & Japan Representative  
Sustainable Sweden Association

Stig Valter Karlsson  
Founding Board Member  
Sustainable Sweden Association

Contact for Japan: [llindahl@igc.org](mailto:llindahl@igc.org)

Contact for China: [svk@algonet.se](mailto:svk@algonet.se)