

UN-Habitat Executive Director's Statement on the latest IPCC Report on Climate Change

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has just released its much-anticipated report: [Climate Change 2021: the Physical Science Basis](#). This report outlines the data and analysis which points to the situation which we can already see around us: climate change is widespread, rapid, and intensifying. And it points to threats which will affect us all, especially the majority of people already living in cities: sea level rise is accelerating and extreme heat and rainfall continue to increase in frequency and intensity, contributing to the flooding, droughts and fires we have witnessed around the globe.

The report provides a clear-eyed prognosis for our planet: without immediate, rapid and large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, we will not be able to limit global warming to the target of 1.5°. If we do not heed the warning, this will be the last IPCC assessment cycle which still provides a small but rapidly closing window of opportunity to act.

Cities and urban leadership must be at the center of this action. We know that cities account for nearly three quarters of global greenhouse gas emissions, which means turning around this urban footprint is urgent business since urban infrastructure and the urban poor are the most vulnerable to climate change. More than 10,000 cities have already committed to take climate action. National and local governments must partner with the private sector and raise our collective level of ambition. Cities and urban stakeholders can turn these trends around by focusing on five key areas:

1. We need to decisively enter a pathway towards “net zero” carbon emissions by 2050 to avoid catastrophic climate change – many governments and cities have committed to doing so. The building and construction, transport and waste sectors are of particular importance for cities.
2. National governments need to commit to urban climate action – for example in their Nationally Determined Contributions and need to support them. Cities need ambitious and verifiable climate action plans.
3. Even if we start reducing greenhouse gas emission reductions, global temperatures will continue to rise and cities need to lead climate change adaptation to protect, people and livelihoods.
4. Without significantly more climate change finance – in particular in support of adaptation – we will not see the transformation that is needed. The COVID-19 recovery efforts provide us with the best opportunity in generations to invest into a green and resilient future.
5. The transition plans for a green and resilient future need to be just. Climate justice between and within countries is not only critical in order to sustain it but also to ensure that climate change goals and the broader Sustainable Development Goals are achieved in unison.

Urban October, the month where we come together across the global movement for sustainable urbanization, is focused on making these ideas a reality for action to make cities greener, more just and more inclusive. UN-Habitat has dedicated [World Habitat Day](#) on 4 October to ‘Accelerating urban action for a carbon-free world’. [World Cities Day](#) on 31 October will focus on a global call to Adapting Cities for Climate Resilience.

UN-Habitat and the Global Covenant of Mayors have partnered with a diverse range of city networks, think tanks, and stakeholders to make sure that we build the connections necessary to bring action together with science, research and policy at the [Innovate for Cities conference](#) during Urban October. This online event from 11 to 15 October will set the stage for dialogue and

recommendations which will be taken forward at COP 26, informing decisions and direction from an urban perspective.