



JOINT PRESS RELEASE

Study suggests countries can better tackle climate change by working with cities; Former Vancouver Mayor to spearhead global collaboration efforts

- New report highlights the untapped potential of cities in helping achieve Paris Agreement goals; greater emphasis on urban priorities in national plans urgently needed as countries update climate commitments before COP30.
- Low and middle income countries make up the bulk of NDCs with comprehensive urban priorities while high income and/or highly urbanized countries tend to have less urban priorities.
- Former Vancouver mayor Gregor Robertson to lead collaborative efforts between national governments and cities as Special Envoy for Cities in CHAMP.
- At the SB60 Bonn Climate Change Conference, Robertson calls on governments to deliver CHAMP commitments and build on multilevel partnerships to accelerate climate action.

Bonn, 5 June 2024 – A [report](#) released today at the SB60 Bonn Climate Change Conference reveals the untapped potential of cities in helping countries achieve their climate goals. The report published by UN-Habitat, UNDP, and the UNESCO Chair on Urban Resilience at the University of Southern Denmark (SDU.Resilience) analyzed the climate commitments of 194 countries party to the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement.

Using approximately 200 indicators, the nationally determined contributions (NDCs) of all 194 countries were examined and categorized into three broad clusters based on the level of urban elements: strong, moderate, and low or no urban content. Just 27 percent of NDCs had a strong focus, meaning there was one or more sections dedicated to urban priorities or sectors featured prominently, increasing from 14 percent in 2016.

NDCs are the cornerstone of the Paris Agreement and are the main policy instruments used to indicate national contributions toward global efforts for climate change mitigation and adaptation. NDCs are updated every five years with the next round of revisions due by COP30 in 2025.

Cities have a critical role in achieving the Paris Agreement as they are responsible for [70](#) percent of global primary energy consumption and [60](#) percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. However, the study found that the majority of NDCs still lack focus on urban elements. 141 have either moderate levels of urban content (39



percent) or low to no mentions of urban content (35 percent), demonstrating the need for many countries to go further and seize the opportunity that cities offer in achieving decarbonization targets.

According to the study, NDCs with strong urban content tend to be low and middle income countries including China, Colombia, Morocco, India, South Africa and Türkiye, while those with moderate and little or no urban content in NDCs include high-income and/or highly urbanized countries such as Canada, European Union Member States, Japan and the United States, along with Brazil, Indonesia and Nigeria, among others.

Michal Mlynár, Acting Executive Director of UN-Habitat, said: “The science is clear. Current urbanization processes drive greenhouse gas emissions and leave urban infrastructure and citizens extremely vulnerable to climate change. Yet, we can increasingly see that the right policy and planning decisions can make cities and communities resilient, and that carbon neutral urban development is possible. The NDCs must provide the framework for accelerated urban climate action.”

Marcos Neto, Assistant Secretary-General and Director of UNDP’s Bureau of Policy and Programme Support, said: “As countries embark on developing the third generation of NDCs, it is crucial to ensure urban climate solutions comprise a key place in all climate strategies. Although there is a rising emphasis on cities in climate mitigation and adaptation efforts, we can do more. UNDP stands ready to support countries on ambitious, bold action where all parties work together at global, national, and local levels.”

The report features, for the first time, an overview of the climate challenges faced by each country as well as responses for mitigation and adaptation at the national and global level. It also includes a set of 12 recommendations policymakers and practitioners could implement to improve collaboration between national and subnational governments, ensure policy coherence across all levels and increase climate ambition through the inclusion of more urban content in NDCs.

With less than a year left for countries to update their NDCs by COP30, organizations stand ready to support national governments to strengthen their NDCs. For example, UN-Habitat and ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability will establish a secretariat for the SURGe (Sustainable Urban Resilience for the Next Generation) initiative to accelerate multilevel climate action in this review process before COP30 and beyond.



Gregor Robertson appointed Special Envoy for Cities in CHAMP

With a year left for countries to submit their revised national climate plans (NDCs), urgency is needed for governments to work closely with mayors and other subnational actors.

To accelerate action, the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCoM), with the support of Bloomberg Philanthropies, has appointed former Vancouver mayor Gregor Robertson as its Special Envoy for Cities in CHAMP.

[CHAMP](#) (Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships) is a high-level initiative launched at COP28 in Dubai by the United Arab Emirates COP28 Presidency and Bloomberg Philanthropies. 72 countries are currently parties to CHAMP and have pledged to cooperate with their local governments and make their NDCs more ambitious ahead of COP30 in 2025.

Gregor Robertson's appointment builds on his strong credentials as GCoM Global Ambassador where he champions healthy, green and inclusive cities for over 13,000 cities around the world. In his expanded role, Robertson will act as the voice of cities when engaging with governments bilaterally and at multilateral forums to negotiate greater collaboration between policymakers at the national and subnational levels.

Robertson will also work closely with CHAMP supporters (including C40 Cities, GCoM, ICLEI, UCLG, Under2, WRI, the University of Maryland, the High-Level Climate Champions and UN-Habitat, with the support of Bloomberg Philanthropies) as well as the Local Governments and Municipal Authorities Constituency (LGMA) to advance the priorities of cities, local and regional governments at international climate negotiations.

Among his first international engagements is the SB60 Bonn Climate Change Conference where he is meeting with policymakers to spotlight CHAMP as an initiative governments are encouraged to commit themselves to and take multi-level partnerships further.

Gregor Robertson said: "CHAMP is an unprecedented coalition of countries and cities, working together to tackle the mounting climate crisis. Real climate action hinges on effective partnerships between all levels of government - cities are on the front lines of climate disasters and stand ready to work together with nations. I'm honoured to serve as Special Envoy for Cities in CHAMP, strengthening climate plans and accelerating partnerships to urgently deliver climate solutions. Time is running out."



According to projections by GCoM, climate action undertaken by its signatory cities in the 72 CHAMP-endorsing countries could reduce 2.465 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (GtCO₂e) annually by 2050. This is approximately equivalent to the combined annual emissions of Germany, Japan and the United Kingdom ([2022 JRC/IEA emissions data](#)). It would also represent a significant contribution to the 19 to 24 GtCO₂e global emissions gap that needs to be bridged in order to achieve climate goals set out in the Paris Agreement.

During his decade as the longest serving Mayor of Vancouver, Robertson and his team transformed Vancouver into one of the greenest, most livable cities in the world, with the lowest carbon footprint per capita in North America. Under his leadership, the city received international acclaim on climate action, becoming the first major city globally to regulate embodied carbon in buildings and among the first to commit to 100 percent renewable energy, while creating the greenest building code in the Americas.

Vancouver also built unprecedented infrastructure to create walkable, bikeable communities and significantly expanded public transport. Prior to his decade as mayor, Robertson was elected to the British Columbia Parliament from 2005 to 2008, and was previously an organic farmer and entrepreneur.

In 2019, Robertson was appointed by GCoM as its Global Ambassador with a mandate to accelerate collaboration on research, innovation and investment between GCoM's 13,000+ signatory cities and partners including the United Nations, national governments, academia and the private sector.

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About the Organizations

About United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

UN-Habitat is the United Nations entity responsible for sustainable urbanization. It has programmes in over 90 countries that support policymakers and communities to create socially and environmentally sustainable cities and towns. UN-Habitat promotes transformative change in cities through knowledge, policy advice, technical assistance, and collaborative action.

To know more, visit unhabitat.org or follow on [X](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Instagram](#).



About United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

UNDP is the leading United Nations organization fighting to end the injustice of poverty, inequality and climate change. Working with our broad network of experts and partners in 170 countries, we help nations to build integrated, lasting solutions for people and planet.

Learn more at climatepromise.undp.org or follow on [X](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

About UNESCO Chair on Urban Resilience at the University of Southern Denmark (SDU.Resilience)

SDU. Resilience is a research group that develops transdisciplinary research, education and knowledge transfer activities on urban resilience internationally. SDU.Resilience's activities focus on urban resilient transition, systemically integrating disaster risk reduction, development and climate change, both mitigation and adaptation, in urban areas. SDU.Resilience aims at developing research to inform policymaking at national and international level and to support science-based urban planning and design for local action, both in the Global North and South.

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About the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy (GCoM)

GCoM is the largest global alliance for city climate leadership, uniting a global coalition of over 13,000 cities and local governments and 100+ supporting partners. The cities and partners of GCoM share a long-term vision of supporting voluntary action to combat climate change and towards a resilient and low-emission society. GCoM serves cities and local governments by mobilizing and supporting ambitious, measurable, planned climate and energy action in their communities by working with city/regional networks, national governments, and other partners to achieve our vision. The coalition comprises cities across 6 continents and 146 countries, representing over 1 billion people or more than 13 percent of the global population.

To learn more about GCoM, please visit our [website](#), or follow us on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

About C40 Cities

C40 is a network of nearly 100 mayors of the world's leading cities working to deliver the urgent action needed right now to confront the climate crisis and create a future where everyone, everywhere, can thrive. Mayors of C40 cities are committed to using a science-based and people-focused approach to help the world limit global heating to 1.5°C and build healthy, equitable and resilient communities. We work alongside a broad coalition of representatives from labour, business, the youth climate movement and civil society to support mayors to halve emissions by 2030 and help phase out fossil use while increasing urban climate resilience and equity. The current co-chairs of C40 are Mayor Sadiq Khan of London, United Kingdom, and Mayor Yvonne Aki-Sawyer of Freetown, Sierra Leone; three-term Mayor of New York City Michael R. Bloomberg serves as President of the Board. C40's work is made possible by our three strategic funders: Bloomberg Philanthropies, Children's Investment Fund Foundation and Realdania.

To learn more about the work of C40 and our cities, please visit our [website](#) or follow us on [X](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).



About ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability

ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability (known as "ICLEI") is a global network of more than 2,500 local and regional governments committed to sustainable urban development. Active in 125+ countries, ICLEI influences sustainability policy and drives local action for low emission, nature-based, equitable, resilient and circular development. ICLEI Members and its team of experts work together through peer exchange, partnerships and capacity building to create systemic change for urban sustainability.

To learn more about ICLEI, visit: <https://iclei.org/> or follow us on [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#).