

# CLIMATE ACTION 4 CITIES



**UN HABITAT**  
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE



IMPLEMENTING  
THE NEW  
URBAN AGENDA

## KEY MESSAGES



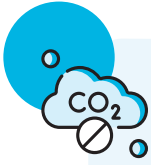
### Overall Messages

- ➔ The fight against climate change, which presents the single biggest threat to sustainable development, will be won or lost in cities and towns. The future of the planet depends on the collective action of governments, cities and communities.
- ➔ Cities are on the front line of climate change impact and must be at the heart of climate action. We need to inspire local climate action based on scientific research and business engagement.
- ➔ Cities, as hubs of resilience and human ingenuity, must take bold action to become zero-carbon, climate resilient and socially-just places to live, work and play.



### COVID-19, Health and climate change

- ➔ The health and economic impacts of COVID-19, climate change and inequality are linked. The recovery from COVID is an opportunity to rethink urban living to address the climate crisis and adapt to the reality of this and future pandemics. Cities must continue to play a central role to pioneer integrated solutions to combat climate change.
- ➔ UN-Habitat's Report on Cities and Pandemics: Towards a more just, green and healthy future recommends city leaders help build a new urban economy that reduces disaster risk and addresses climate change by investing in sustainable infrastructure which can save energy and enable low carbon transport and by using nature-based solutions.
- ➔ Good city planning is key to mitigating the devastating effects of pandemics. Integrating health in urban planning is essential to improve air quality, protect biodiversity and mitigate the spread of disease.
- ➔ A green, inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID in our cities leads to a healthier population, helps climate mitigation and adaptation and creates jobs. It is critical for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and essential to ensure that our cities are better prepared for future crises. Recovery budgets must deliver infrastructure and jobs that help achieve development and climate goals



## Zero carbon

- ➔ Cities are home to more than half of the world population and responsible for 70% of global energy consumption as well as approximately 70 percent of the global carbon footprint. Relatively simple low-carbon actions in cities could reduce emissions by over half the amount needed to keep global temperature rise below 2°C.
- ➔ There must be a significant shift towards sustainable consumption and production to achieve net zero emissions before 2050 to avoid the most severe climate impacts which are expected when global temperatures rise more than 1.5 degrees about pre-industrial records.
- ➔ Low and zero carbon ambitions provide domestic economic opportunities, increase the resilience of the energy grid, and trade and export competitiveness in an increasingly carbon-constrained world. Cities in developing nations can lead the way in maximising the development benefits of climate action including the health benefits from reduced air pollution.
- ➔ Cities need to generate clean, resource-efficient energy and move away from fossil fuels – they can also build energy efficient infrastructure designed for local conditions. Since 2009, the cost of renewable electricity has dropped both for solar and wind power and will keep going down.
- ➔ Towns and cities in developing countries can gain from adopting a zero-carbon pathway. Energy consumption and related costs now and in the future will be reduced and health-related benefits, for example by reducing air pollution will secure a more sustainable future.
- ➔ Ambitious net zero climate action must leave no one and no place behind, taking a holistic approach to action that reduces emissions while also protecting vulnerable people from the impacts of climate change.
- ➔ The buildings and construction sector accounts for over 20% of global greenhouse gases emissions. Three quarters of the infrastructure that will exist in 2050 has yet to be built, this is a critical moment to plan, build, manage and power cities differently. Addressing the infrastructure gap while cutting greenhouse gas emissions is becoming critical. Using materials which do not produce carbon dioxide while being extracted or manufactured will slash emissions.
- ➔ Cities, towns and villages can create buildings and infrastructure that are highly energy efficient and designed for the local climate using innovative technologies.
- ➔ Transport via road, rail, air and water generates approximately 15 percent of all global greenhouse gas emissions with road transport accounting for three-quarters of these emissions. Transportation is the fastest growing consumer of fossil fuels and the fastest growing source of carbon dioxide emissions.
- ➔ There is an urgent need for a shift to sustainable, inclusive transport focused on electrification in the context of more compact urban planning and a greater reliance on safe, accessible, affordable and low-carbon public transport, integrated with better facilities for walking and cycling. Bicycles are carbon-neutral while walking and cycling also improve public health and help prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- ➔ Huge gains, in terms of reducing harmful greenhouse gases, can be made by changing how cities and towns are planned, built, managed and powered. Well designed, compact, walkable cities with good public transport greatly reduce per capita carbon emissions.
- ➔ Every country, city, financial institution and company should adopt plans for transitioning to net zero emissions by 2050.



## Adaptation and Resilience

- ➔ Climate change will have serious impacts for cities. Building resilience to emerging threats can boost economies, make cities healthier and better places to live and work.
- ➔ At least 136 megacities will be affected by flooding in the next two decades. If no mitigating steps are taken, coastal flooding alone will cause damage totaling \$1 trillion annually by the year 2050.
- ➔ The costs of adapting are lower than those economies will face if they continue with a business-as-usual approach.

- ➔ The least well off in cities and communities will bear the brunt of climate change in the form of floods, landslides and extreme heat. Globally, there are more than 1 billion people living in informal settlements with 70% being highly vulnerable to climate change.
- ➔ Climate change is a poverty multiplier and will trap the poor further without a pro-poor approach to planning, building and managing cities. The most vulnerable communities must be prepared and made resilient to upcoming risks. Local and national governments must focus on resilience building for urban poor with including land rights, access to services, inclusion in National Determined Contributions, National Adaptation plans etc
- ➔ '*Building the Climate Resilience of the Urban Poor*' aims to support 150 million vulnerable slum-dwellers adapt to climate change. UN-Habitat's flagship RISE UP is mobilizing and coordinating large scale investments for urban adaptation and resilience-building into the global hotspots of vulnerability.
- ➔ Extreme weather, flooding, heat and water stress is likely to increase sudden migration to cities where 60 percent of migrants are already hosted. The influx of new migrants in already stressed cities will add to the complexities of urban planning, management and governance.
- ➔ Adaptation represents only 20 per cent of climate finance which prevents essential work for disaster risk reduction.



## Nature

- ➔ Nature-based solutions, such as green roofs, urban forests, green corridors, among many other, can bring nature into urban areas, while providing many environmental, social and economic benefits and supporting communities to build resilience and adapt to climate change.
- ➔ Healthy ecosystems have a crucial role to play in reducing the negative impacts of climate change in urban areas. These have the potential to provide flood defences, regulating climate and enhancing water storage capacity, among other.
- ➔ Urban growth is challenging ecosystems and the survival of various species. Enhancing biodiversity in cities can create more livable environments. The conservation of species is critical to our physical and mental well being.

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