

# Cities and Urbanisation at COP 29

Reflecting the importance of cities and urban areas in both climate mitigation and adaptation, recent COPs have seen several initiatives to include cities and local authorities in COP processes. Here are the main takeaways from COP29 which took place in Baku from 11 to 22 November 2024.

## Context: Cities are central to Climate issues and Global Agendas

- Approximately 56% of the world's population live in cities, 4.4 billion people, and this number is expected to double by 2025, which means 70% of the population will be urban by then. This population density and economy of scale make cities drivers for growth and prosperity, but also pose specific challenges. Cities consume 78% of global energy and are responsible for more than 60% of greenhouse gas emissions<sup>1</sup>. That is why the UN has repeatedly been highlighting the battle for climate change will be won or lost in cities.<sup>2</sup>
- Urban areas are, at the same time, much more exposed to the impacts of climate change, making urban population especially vulnerable. They are experiencing more frequent extreme weather events, and coastal cities have an increased vulnerability due to sea level rise and increased flood risk.

Moreover, cities exacerbate the effect of recurring heatwaves, with the urban heat island effect and, on the other hand, heatwaves worsen air quality in cities by increasing carbon emissions from ground-level ozone formation. Overall, urban areas are warming at twice the global average rate.<sup>3</sup>

- Sustainable cities can offer adaptation and mitigation benefits and pose a huge opportunity in achieving decarbonisation targets. Many cities already have ambitious climate action plans that are reducing per capita emissions faster than their respective countries.
- For climate change action to be a success, we must transform the global to the local, and tie local action back into to the global.

The next IPCC report will be focused specifically on Climate Change and Cities, in 2025<sup>4</sup>. And already the latest IPCC report highlights the interdependences underlying urban systems: cities function regionally, nationally and globally. City solutions to climate change problems must also function at an ecological, economic, technical, institutional, and legal governance level to succeed. On a global level, we need a network of multidimensional urban responses to tackle the climate emergency, we can't achieve social, economic, and human wellbeing without it.<sup>5</sup>

## Notable urban initiatives at COP29

1. **CHAMP – Coalition for High Ambition Multi-level Partnerships for Climate Action**, emphasizes the critical role of subnational governments in advancing national climate mitigation and adaptation goals –70 countries signed up and more to sign this year. Launched as one of the main outcomes of COP28<sup>6</sup>, the timeline builds for the increasing inclusion of subnational entities towards the review of NDC for COP30 in Brazil.

- It promotes collaboration between national and subnational governments to advance climate goals by integrating local perspectives, data, and actions into national strategies, while fostering inclusive processes and facilitating access to climate finance for subnational projects.

- CHAMP objectives are being included in this year's formal negotiations and UNFCCC processes, with a longer-term goal of embedding CHAMP into official COP outcome texts.
- Update and stocktaking of CHAMP will take place during the Ministerial meeting on Urbanisation

2. A **Ministerial meeting on Urbanisation and Climate Change** was held<sup>7</sup> on 20 Nov, the day dedicated to urbanisation. It opened with a High-Level Plenary Session on Multilevel Climate Action, co-hosted by the COP29 Presidency, UN-Habitat, SCUPA, and the UN Climate Change High-Level Champion, with support from Bloomberg Philanthropies. Following with four High-Level Roundtables focusing on:

- **Green Construction and Buildings**
- **Urban Transport and Infrastructure**
- **Nature, Health, and Resilience in Cities**
- **Urban Climate Finance – *especially relevant for the EU GG Investment Agenda***

This meeting builds on the momentum started in 2022, with the inaugural Ministerial Meeting on Urbanisation and Climate Change at COP27, which launched the Sustainable Urban Resilience for the Next Generation (SURGe)<sup>8</sup> initiative. The second meeting at COP28<sup>9</sup> resulted in a Joint Outcomes Statement with a ten-point strategy for advancing local climate action. This year's meeting launched the MAP initiative and signed the Baku Continuity Coalition on Urban and Multilevel Climate Action between COP27, COP28, COP29, COP30 Presidency and UN-Habitat.

3. **Launch of the COP29 Declaration on Multisectoral Actions Pathways (MAP) for Resilient and Healthy Cities**, that aims to strengthen cooperation, create coherence in all urban climate efforts and catalyse urban climate finance. Over 160 stakeholders, including countries and cities, have already endorsed the initiative, which aims to guide climate negotiations and policy discussions through COP30, highlighting the critical role of cities in tackling climate vulnerabilities and fostering a sustainable future.

- Also related to cities, it was also launched the **COP29 Declaration on Reducing Methane from Organic Waste**, that calls for developing and implementing policies, roadmaps, and action plans in the waste sector, recognising that household waste management is a core function of cities, as well as stepping up finance.

4. **Cities and Local Authorities are represented within UNFCCC through the Local Governments and Municipal Authorities Constituency (LGMA)**. Includes networks and organisations such as ICLEI, EU Committee of Regions, Global Covenant of Mayors, UCLG.

Since the first climate COP in 1995, LGMA advocates for a process that systematically recognises, engages, and empowers local and subnational government as central actors to global climate strategies. If successful at COP29 and COP30, this will become the new standard.

5. There was one pavilion dedicated entirely to **Multilevel Action and Urbanisation**<sup>10</sup>. As well as 46 general events related to urban and cities and 54 urban events in other pavilions. 20 Nov was dedicated thematically to Urbanisation and Climate Change.

## Urban outcomes from COP29 and way forward

COP29 achieved its goal of a finance deal, providing a starting point for giving developing countries access to funding. However, the target of US\$300 billion per year by 2035 offers little help to frontline communities and falls short of the strong financial backing needed for the ambitious national climate plans required to meet the Paris Agreement goals. There also remains a lack of clarity on how much of this funding will directly reach urban initiatives, as the agreement does not specify allocations for sectors or regions.

Another key achievement was the integration of urban areas into a global framework for carbon markets under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. This mechanism enables nations and entities, including cities, to offset emissions and attract funding for climate projects. For urban areas, carbon credits represent a new financial pathway to support sustainability efforts. These markets can help fund initiatives such as energy-efficient building retrofits, low-carbon public transport systems, and urban green infrastructure, although further guidelines for implementation are still needed and some concerns remain.

Cities, buildings and urban issues featured prominently in discussions about climate resilience, adaptation, and mitigation, around the Mitigation work programme. But it failed to deliver significant progress on reducing emissions and limiting global heating to 1.5°C. National governments also failed to reaffirm the COP28 pledge to phase out fossil fuels, delaying this critical action to 2025, as well as the Just transition work programme.

Regarding Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), Brazil's updated one stands out for its commitment to "climate federalism", showing how cities can help address the climate crisis while supporting vulnerable communities. The UAE also showed notable progress by putting CHAMP at the heart of its updated NDC. Other nations must do the same ahead of COP30.

Overall, although some progress has been made, the general feeling is that outcomes from this COP have been rather insufficient, especially regarding urban issues.

The general trend from the last years and the build up to COP29 has shown an increasing presence of cities and urban issues, but COP29 has not delivered accordingly. Looking ahead, COP30 offers an opportunity to strengthen urban discourse, solidify urban commitments by scaling CHAMP and MAP, and ensure that urban initiatives are better integrated into financial and governance frameworks.

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<sup>1</sup> [World Cities Report 2024: Cities and Climate Action | UN-Habitat](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Climate battle will be won or lost in cities, says U.N. climate chief | Reuters](#)  
[Guterres: "Cities Are Where the Climate Battle Will Largely Be Won or Lost" | UNFCCC](#)  
[Battle for Sustainability Will Be Won or Lost in Cities, Deputy Secretary-General Tells High-Level General Assembly Meeting on New Urban Agenda, UN-Habitat | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Beating the Heat: A Sustainable Cooling Handbook for Cities | UNEP - UN Environment Programme](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Special Report on Climate Change and Cities — IPCC](#)

<sup>5</sup> [AR6 Synthesis Report: Climate Change 2023 — IPCC](#)

<sup>6</sup> COP28 also recognised the importance of cities in advancing global climate action by including it in the UAE Consensus, the Outcomes of the First Global Stocktake, the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience and Global Goal on Adaptation, the decision to enable direct access to loss and damage response funds, and the organization of the first- ever Local Climate Action Summit.

<sup>7</sup> [Overview: Ministerial Meeting\(s\) on Urbanization and Climate Change at COP29](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Sustainable Urban Resilience for the Next Generation \(SURGe\)](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Ministerial meeting on Urbanization and Climate Change at COP28 Summary Report](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Agenda](#)