

**LOCAL CLIMATE  
ACTION SUMMIT**

Powered by Bloomberg Philanthropies



**COP<sup>28</sup>  
UAE**

# PARIS TO DUBAI:

Local Climate  
Leadership in Action





## Michael R. Bloomberg

UN Special Envoy on Climate Ambition and Solutions

Founder of Bloomberg Philanthropies & Bloomberg L.P.

Mayor of New York City, 2002-2013

Beginning in 1992, two decades of United Nations climate summits were organized around efforts to reach a global treaty – and all failed. These efforts centered on national emissions quotas and the question of who should pay for them. Then something changed: Local leaders descended on COP21 in Paris in 2015 and demanded a new approach – one that focused on bottom-up leadership, not top-down mandates, and one that shifted the dialogue toward the extraordinary economic and health benefits that go hand-in-hand with fighting climate change.

The 2015 Paris Agreement was a validation of city efforts to tackle climate change in ways that benefit residents. National leaders saw how cities were creating jobs and strengthening their business environments by reducing emissions – and how, with national support, they were ready to do so much more. That realization helped convince national leaders to, for the first time, sign a global agreement with national commitments on emission reductions.

Since 2015, local leaders have continued racing ahead. As the recent Global Stocktake makes clear, meeting the promises made in Paris will require nations to act with more urgency – and that should begin by empowering cities and regions and their closest partners, including the private sector.

This report provides an update on the progress made since 2015 and outlines the concrete and evidence-based plans that cities, states, and regions intend to take in the years ahead to slash emissions and meet our commitments. Achieving them will require more support from national governments, and the good news is: Local leaders have a chance to make their case at COP28, the first time a COP is officially incorporating their voices into the proceedings at this scale.

The United Nations’ recognition of the importance and influence of local leaders shows how far cities, states, and regions have come, and how they can continue leading the way, with innovations and partnerships that allow them to be even bolder and move even faster.



## Anne Hidalgo

Mayor of Paris

Eight years ago in Paris, we witnessed an unprecedented moment of global cooperation. Faced with looming climate catastrophe, leaders representing 196 nations came together to launch the most ambitious project humanity has ever undertaken. Those present in Paris had no illusions about the scale of the challenge before them. Yet they chose to follow a new approach, setting an innovative, legally binding framework that has transformed the way societies undertake everything from finance to infrastructure to energy production.

As two of the organizers of that historic summit, we are proud of all that the Paris Agreement represents, and the progress it has driven to-date. Still, as the synthesis report of the UN’s first-ever Global Stocktake makes clear, that progress is not happening nearly fast enough. But fortunately, the last several years have shown us how to close the gap. To accelerate our work, we must update our strategy to better recognize the leadership of cities, states, and regional governments – collectively known as “subnationals” – in achieving our goals. Subnationals have been at the forefront of climate progress, setting and reaching more ambitious emissions reduction targets than their national counterparts. Yet to date, their impact has been limited by the absence of an explicit and formal mechanism for partnering with national and global decision-makers. That must change now.

The world needs global, national, and local actors to join forces. COP28 is our moment to share what we’ve learned and then enter the next phase of the climate change fight together, fully embracing cities and other subnationals as equal partners so that every country can deliver the ambitious climate action that future generations deserve. Only by sprinting forward together can we meet this critical moment, keep the goals of the Paris Agreement within reach, and ultimately, surpass them.



## Laurence Tubiana

CEO of the European Climate Foundation (ECF)

France’s Climate Change Ambassador and Special Representative for COP21

COP22 UN High-Level Champion for Climate Action



Mayors from around the world gathered in Paris's Hôtel de Ville at the Climate Summit for Local Leaders, part of COP21, on December 4th, 2015.

## SCALE OF THE PROBLEM

As world leaders gathered in Paris at COP21 in 2015, global emissions were already approaching *53 gigatons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (GtCO<sub>2</sub>e)* and were *forecast to rise 16% by 2030*. The impacts of climate change were also increasingly being felt, with deadly flooding, record-breaking heat waves and wildfires, worsening air quality, and water scarcity – threatening the lives and livelihoods of millions around the world. It was in this context that the Paris Agreement was adopted at COP21, to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

## While climate change is a global problem, it has local solutions.

In 2015, cities were home to nearly 55% of the global population and responsible for three-quarters of global emissions. Yet it was in cities, where vulnerable groups faced the worst impacts of the climate crisis, that a movement for change began.

## COMMITMENT OF CITIES

To address the scale of the problem and drive real impact through climate action, Mike Bloomberg and Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo convened the Climate Summit for Local Leaders for mayors, governors, and local leaders at COP21 in 2015 – the largest-ever gathering of subnational stakeholders on climate change.

It was there in Paris that more than 6,000 cities committed to the Compact of Mayors and the European Covenant of Mayors, pledging to make significant and ambitious commitments to meet the climate challenge and to track progress transparently. Alongside this, 57 state and regional leaders committed to reduce emissions by 80% by 2050 through the Under2 Memorandum of Understanding and the Regions Adapt program was launched.

**Together, these commitments by cities and regions were estimated to be able to deliver over half of the world's potential urban emissions reductions by 2020.**

## WHAT WE'VE ACHIEVED

Since the Climate Summit for Local Leaders in Paris, major progress has been made by cities and regions to address climate change. Before 2015, fewer than 100 local and regional governments had committed to ambitious 2030 targets.

**Today, more than 1,000 subnational governments have ambitious 2030 targets, supported by tracking and reporting mechanisms put in place following the COP21 commitments.**

The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy (GCoM) was established the year after COP21 with a focus on helping cities make commitments, plan, act, track, and report transparently. GCoM is supported by a number of local, regional, and global city networks including ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG).

GCoM has now grown from the initial 6,000 signatories to include more than 13,000 cities and local governments, covering 6 continents and 144 countries, representing over 1 billion people and more than 13% of the global population.

Meanwhile, the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (C40) continues to support climate ambition in the world's largest megacities. Seventy-nine of the 96 global cities in the C40 network have a Paris compliant climate action plan, and 75% of C40 cities are cutting per capita emissions faster than their national governments.

States and regions are also raising ambition. The Under2 Coalition has grown to over 170 members. Many of these members, such as California – the world's 5th largest economy – have the same GDP as small countries.

Even beyond these formalized coalitions, more than ever city and regional leaders are demonstrating their accountability for delivering and integrating climate action across their jurisdictions.

## KEY MILESTONES ON THE CITIES AND REGIONS CLIMATE JOURNEY

**2015**

*Climate Summit for Local Leaders at COP21*

**2016**

*GCoM is established; C40 released Deadline 2020, a set of pathways on how C40 cities can meet the Paris Agreement ambition*

**2018**

*ICLEI Talanoa Dialogues represented the first time in the UNFCCC process that national governments met with non-Party stakeholders in an official setting to take stock of action toward the implementation of national commitments*

**2020**

*The City Climate Finance Gap Fund was launched to support cities with early-stage technical assistance for low carbon and climate resilient projects and urbanization plans; C40 published the Mayors' Agenda for a Green and Just Recovery*

**2021**

*More than 1,000 cities joined the Cities Race to Zero campaign ahead of COP26; Cities Race to Resilience was also launched to prioritize resilience and implement inclusive and resilient climate action*

**2022**

*First-ever Ministerial Meeting on Urbanization and Climate Change at COP27, where the Sustainable Urban Resilience for the Next Generation (SURGe) initiative was launched*

**2023**

*Local Climate Action Summit at COP28, the first time a COP has brought an event dedicated to cities and regional leaders directly into the official COP program*



Solar panels being installed in South Africa. Photo Credit: © natrass - Getty Images

## Climate action by cities and regions since COP21 in Paris has driven significant emissions reductions and created healthier, more resilient communities for residents.

Nonetheless, the scale and urgency of the challenge still grows. In 2022, global emissions reached a new record exceeding 57 GtCO<sub>2</sub>e, while September 2023 saw the hottest month on record with global average temperature already 1.8°C above pre-industrial levels. We are now crossing dangerous thresholds for climate change, and while there has been some progress, the gap between existing commitments and a climate-safe trajectory is alarmingly large. According to a recent report published by the UN, the world is now projected to experience a temperature rise of 2.5-2.9°C above pre-industrial levels by the end of the century.

**Even while nations are falling behind on their climate commitments, the targets being set by subnational governments will cut global emissions by over 7 GtCO<sub>2</sub>e per year by 2050, equivalent to current annual emissions in the US, Australia, and the UK combined.**

- Under2 Coalition states and regions have reduced their emissions by 16% on average from their respective base years.
- Nearly four out of every five GCoM signatories have taken concrete actions to reduce emissions in line with the Paris Agreement, to increase resilience, or both.
- The impacts are multiplying worldwide. For example, between 2018 and 2021, average air pollution levels across C40 cities declined by 5%, resulting in 94 million C40 residents breathing cleaner air.
- Evidence shows that well-designed climate policies and strategic investments can pay off, with more than 14 million green jobs already created in 53 C40 member cities alone, helping to halve fossil fuel use by 2030 while improving livelihoods.
- Cities that recognize the benefits of climate action, like improving the health of residents and communities, are taking 2.5 times more climate actions than cities that have not identified these additional benefits.



An electric bus in Maharashtra, India.  
Photo Credit: © Abhijit Bhatlekar - AP - C40

## LEADING THE WAY

Cities and regions have set the standard for other levels of government and non-state actors to follow.

**The commitments, plans, action, tracking, and reporting that cities and regions began at COP21 in Paris have now been called for more widely by the UN High Level Expert Group in its 2022 report to improve the robustness and credibility of net-zero claims by non-state actors.**

### Case Study: Finance – South Asia

GCoM, through the City Climate Finance Gap Fund, supported energy-efficient and affordable housing strategies, along with green construction plans, in Greater Malé (Malé City, Hulhumalé, Thilafushi, and Gulhi Falhu) and two developing atolls (Addu City and Fuvahmulah City).

### Case Study: Transport – China (East Asia) and London (Europe)

In 2015, just two C40 cities were procuring only zero-emission buses. Now, 23 C40 cities are doing so. For example, Shenzhen, a city of more than 20 million residents, fully electrified the city’s fleet in 2017, totaling 16,000 electric buses and 22,000 electric taxis.

In 2015, 11 C40 cities had implemented a low-emission zone covering a significant part of the city. Now, more than double (25 C40 cities) have a low-emission zone. For example, London launched the the largest low-emission zone in the world. Within the first ten months, it helped reduce NO2 concentrations within the zone by 44% and PM2.5 concentrations by 27%. By late 2019, the number of Londoners living in areas with illegal NO2 levels had declined by 90% from 2016 levels.

### Case Study: Air quality – Sydney (Australia) and Lima (Peru)

Since 2019, Sydney has engaged a local university partner to deploy a total of 21 low-cost environmental monitoring sensors (including 14 air quality sensors) and to develop a

plan for a Breathable Sydney. The city has also continued working with the New South Wales State government to find suitable locations to install reference grade ambient air quality monitoring stations.

Lima has increased its citywide air quality monitoring capacity by 176% since 2019, with 35 air quality modules deployed at strategic points in the city – five of those focusing on children’s exposure to air pollution.

### Case Study: Sustainable development and green growth – Dubai (Middle East)

Dubai seeks to become a regional leader in sustainable development and green growth through its Carbon Abatement Strategy (CAS) 2021. Focusing primarily on the power, water, and waste sectors, the CAS seeks to eliminate 11 million tons of CO2 by 2021.

Launched in 2012, the CAS has already increased resource and system efficiency by yielding water savings of nearly 16 million m<sup>3</sup> between 2011 and 2014, increasing the recycling rate to 10% from close to zero over three years, and committing 48 km<sup>2</sup> for the development of large-scale utility solar power projects.

### Case Study: Waste – Global (Africa, Europe, South Asia, and Southeast Asia)

UN-Habitat launched “Waste Wise Cities” to support local authorities in tackling the growing challenge of municipal solid waste management and to contribute to a circular economy. So far, more than 200 cities have joined the campaign, 10 city-to-city partnerships have been established, and 50 waste management officers from 30 African countries have been trained.

### Case Study: Energy – Argentina, Kenya, and Indonesia

The 100% Renewables Cities and Regions Roadmap project, implemented by ICLEI and funded by the International Climate Initiative, aims to support nine cities and regions in three countries (Argentina, Kenya, and Indonesia) to develop a roadmap toward 100% renewable energy and effectively implement local climate and energy action. The project will enable participating local and regional governments to develop financially viable and bankable renewable energy projects and explore access to public and private investment.

## Key

-  Waste
-  Energy
-  Finance
-  Transport
-  Air quality
-  Sustainable development



**DESPITE THE PROGRESS SINCE 2015, THE GOALS OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT ARE QUICKLY SLIPPING OUT OF REACH, PUTTING LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS AT RISK. IN THIS CRITICAL MOMENT, WE NEED URGENT ACTION, ENGAGEMENT, AND COORDINATION AT ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT TO DELIVER THE EMISSIONS REDUCTIONS NECESSARY BY 2030.**

## **OUR CALLS TO ACTION**

### **1. Countries should formally acknowledge contributions from local and regional leaders in their national climate action plans.**

According to the UN, only 24% of existing national climate pledges under the Paris Agreement include strong urban content. To deliver stronger national climate targets, which are due before the end of 2025, every nation should pledge to work with local climate leaders.

### **2. Countries should deliver both public and private financial solutions for local climate action.**

Today, only 10-15% of global climate finance reaches local and regional governments. To ensure greater, more equitable access to sustainable financing, countries should expand policies and financial mechanisms for subnational climate action and include local climate finance solutions in their national climate action investment plans.

### **3. The World Bank and other international financial institutions should make reforms to ensure climate financing reaches local and regional governments seeking to implement climate action.**

Dedicated city climate investment strategies are essential to create better enabling environments for local climate finance and improve access to funding, and should prioritize urban adaptation investment projects in cities in the Global South that are most vulnerable to climate impacts.

### **4. Countries should create formal forums for dialogue with local climate leaders.**

These will identify how cooperation at all levels of government can best unlock climate action at the local level.

## **GLOBAL CLIMATE TALKS MUST EVOLVE TO REFLECT THAT WE HAVE ENTERED A NEW ERA – THE AGE OF IMPLEMENTATION.**

Success depends on forging new, collaborative partnerships between climate leaders across all levels of government. Local and regional governments are on the frontlines of climate change and essential players in the fight to avert climate catastrophes. It is time for the international process to formally recognize their contribution to achieving our global goals and empower climate-forward mayors and governors around the world with the authority and resources they need to deliver ambitious results for the planet.

## **WITH THANKS TO THE LOCAL CLIMATE ACTION SUMMIT (LCAS) PARTNERS:**

**America Is All In**

**C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group**

**Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy**

**ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability**

**UN-Habitat**

**Under2 Coalition**

**United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)**

**University of Maryland Center for Global Sustainability**

**US Conference of Mayors**

**World Resources Institute**

**Bloomberg  
Philanthropies**

Created in partnership  
with Arup and Creature & Co.

**LOCAL CLIMATE  
ACTION SUMMIT**  
Powered by Bloomberg Philanthropies



**COP<sup>28</sup>  
UAE**

