

Enhancing Nationally Determined Contributions through Urban Climate Action





A guide for incorporating urban climate action and human settlement issues into the Nationally Determined Contributions enhancement process.

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For more information on the Urban-LEDs project;

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Enhancing Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) through Urban Climate Action

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Definitions & Terminology:

Human settlements and urban areas: this guide focuses on both urban areas and human settlements and considers these as a city or town of any size where people live and work in close proximity. It recognises that great variation exists between countries in terms of how they define urban areas. The terms “urban areas” and “cities and towns” are used interchangeably, where “Human settlements” is a broader term referring to any cluster of dwellings where people live.

Nature Based Solutions (NBS) use the features and complex system processes of nature, such as its ability to store carbon and regulate water flows, in order to achieve desired outcomes, such as reduced disaster risk and an environment that improves human well-being and socially inclusive green growth.

Sub-national government: This refers to regional, local, state, city, municipal level, or any tier of government below national level.

Urban content: This term broadly encompasses urban-specific references within NDCs – this could range from referring to city-specific climate monitoring or indicators; to addressing the urban sector in a dedicated section of the NDC; to including urban stakeholders in the consultation process. Essentially evidence that urban challenges have been considered and urban measures have been articulated that can be translated into action.

Urban stakeholders: This will vary on a country basis but could be drawn from; city governments and local authorities, utilities, private sector, community organisations (particularly those representing vulnerable groups, such as the urban poor or informal workers).

Urban climate action: this refers to all urban climate actions– whether they focus on mitigation, adaptation, resilience or an integrated approach of all of these.

Vertical Integration & Multilevel governance: These terms are used to describe intentional and strategic linkages and coordination between national and sub-national climate planning, implementation, communication and monitoring and evaluation.

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) embody efforts by each country to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change, collectively aiming at limiting warming to 1.5 to 2°C, as set out in the Paris Agreement.

Conditional/Unconditional contributions to Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs): An “unconditional contribution” is what countries could implement using domestic resources and capabilities, to contribute towards their NDC targets. A “conditional contribution” is one that would be implemented if international support were provided.

Foreword



As I write this, the current COVID-19 health emergency rightly consumes much of our attention. However, this crisis also clearly demonstrates the importance of accelerating progress towards realising the seventeen ambitious Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) the world's governments committed to in 2015, and the Paris Climate Change Agreement of the same year.

Had we been further advanced in meeting these goals, we would be better equipped to face this challenge - with stronger health systems, fewer people living in extreme poverty, less gender inequality, a healthier natural environment, and more resilient societies.

In order to accelerate progress, the UN has declared its Decade of Action to accelerate global action in support of Member States goals and aspirations in (i) eradicating poverty and reducing inequality, (ii) driving climate action and supporting a healthy planet, and (iii) achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

At UN-Habitat, we believe that the success of this Decade of Action will depend on how rapid urban growth is managed. Already, we live in an urban world: more than 55 % of the world population lives in urban areas today and this number is expected to rise to around 66% in the coming decade.

Human settlements are drivers of economic prosperity and hubs for social and human development. But they also generate a significant share of global Greenhouse gas emissions and are particularly vulnerable to its effects. Some of the communities most vulnerable to climate change are the urban poor. Integrating sustainable urban development into national climate commitments – Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) - is therefore of paramount importance.

According to UN-Habitat's analysis of the first round of national pledges submitted under the Paris Agreement, approximately two thirds of all countries have included some urban references in their submitted Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), but there remains much still to do.

It is our hope that this guide can inspire governments to go further in integrating urban and human settlement issues into NDCs, and effectively integrate the urban development community in the formulation and implementation process. It was informed by country representatives, partners, and experts in the urban development and climate change community over the course of the past 6 months in a participatory and consultative process.

With our attention focused on responding and recovering from the COVID-19 crises, let us ensure that every action we take today, every investment and support we mobilise, stimulates more sustainable, low-carbon and resilient development pathways that leave no one and no place behind.

UN-Habitat is grateful to its partners for their support in this endeavour, and hopes that it will be a useful contribution to government efforts to improve low-carbon urban development and climate resilience. I would like to encourage planners at the national and sub-national level, experts, and decision-makers working on climate change to use this Guidance to better understand the need and opportunities for climate change adaptation and mitigation in human settlements.

At the same time, I hope that this publication will also be useful for local authorities to contribute to NDC formulation and implementation and rally behind these important shared national commitments, and strengthen synergies and partnerships between all actors.

Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif
Under-Secretary-General and
Executive Director, UN-Habitat

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

In the coming months and years, Member States will continue to undertake domestic processes to review, strengthen and implement their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

Inclusion of urban climate action and subnational government stakeholders in NDC formulation, priority setting, targets, governance and implementation has the potential to support government efforts to enhance ambition and delivery of NDCs.

Similarly, the NDCs can inform urban policies and priority setting. Member States have requested support on how best to integrate human settlement and urban issues into their NDCs¹ and this guide aims to offer this in an applied manner.

The intention of this guide is to support Member States to:

- **Enhance** the ambition of their NDCs in the current 2020 and future revision processes, by harnessing the potential of human settlements and urban climate action to deliver a high quality of life while reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
- **Support** a more integrated approach to NDC development and implementation across national and local governments.
- **Implement** their NDCs by aligning the activities of urban stakeholders behind a common vision for human settlements.

- **Embed** their climate objectives into urban decision-making across all sectors of government
- **Create** the enabling frameworks towards the implementation of high-ambition NDCs at sub-national level and help climate authorities to engage with urban authorities through a common basis of language and understanding

Target audience

The guide aims to provide practical and succinct opportunities for incorporating urban climate action and human settlement issues into the current future NDC revision and enhancement process, drawing on existing knowledge and networks.

It is primarily targeted at national governments, specifically NDC coordinators and their teams, but also provides insight for sub-national stakeholders aiming to engage with the NDC process more effectively. We have included some extracts from submitted NDCs and some country case studies, to provide tangible examples.

To effectively integrate human settlements and urban content into the NDC process requires engagement of national stakeholders with urban importance - like ministries of housing and urban development, national utilities like energy, water and waste, housing companies, construction and transport sector – as well as sub-national

1 Through the Urban-LEDS project and the NDC Partnership

stakeholders such as city governments and local and regional governments in order to help achieve an economy-wide approach to addressing the climate challenge. This requires effective collaboration between public and private sector actors.

Who has contributed?

This UN-Habitat guide is a product of collaboration with a wide variety of expert contributors from organisations such as; Arup, the Coalition for Urban Transitions, C40, the Environment, Forest & Climate Change Commission of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the Environmental Protection Agency of Liberia , GIZ , Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy, Global Green Growth Institute, Go Green for Climate, ICLEI, NDC Partnership,

REN21, UNDP, UNEP, UNFCCC, and the University of Southern Denmark, who are partnering to support Member States to include urban and human settlements related actions in their NDCs.

The Guide was developed as part of the project "Accelerating climate action through the promotion of Urban Low Emission Development Strategies", implemented by UN-Habitat and ICLEI and funded by the European Commission.

How to use this guide

It is recommended that this guide can be used by NDC teams in national government in the following ways. UN-Habitat and its partners can support member states with this work by providing virtual or in-person technical and facilitation support:

Stage of NDC Revision	Activities to make use of the guide
Planning NDC 2020 revision process (e.g. submission prior to COP26)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use guide to review previous/draft NDC and identify gaps and opportunities• Use guide to review national planning processes (e.g check alignment with NUPs, existing city plans, financing opportunities etc.)
OR	
In the process of 2020 NDC revision (e.g. submission planned for next 3-6 months)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plan/implement sectoral workshops with lead Ministries focusing on the urban dimension of sectoral NDC responses• Secure support of an urban specialist to 'champion' issues as part of sectoral working groups• Reach out to international partners (e.g. NDCP members) to support in specific

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