







LOCAL LEADERSHIP FOR CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION



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Foreword



Cities started playing a leading role in addressing climate change as many as fifteen years ago by making efforts to reduce their emissions of climate change causing greenhouse gases. They have done so by putting in place building codes, transport strategies and suitable waste management systems; by promoting renewable energy, by rehabilitating urban ecosystems and by planning more sustainable cities. Yet, greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise and cities are beginning to feel climate change impacts. In anticipation of long term trends such as more severe floods, droughts, sea level rise accompanied by the loss of lives and livelihoods, health impacts and accelerated migration from rural areas, a new generation of visionary city leaders has started to take action, redoubling efforts in reducing green house gas emissions and preparing for climate change impacts.

Over the past few years, cities have attracted more attention on the international and national stages because climate change can be addressed only through local action that is aligned with global and national strategies. UN-HABITAT's Cities and Climate Change Initiative now works in almost 20 cities around the world collecting information on urban climate change challenges and preparing and implementing local action plans. The Initiative also supports national climate change action in support of local responses and the global discourse on Cities and Climate Change. Working closely with cities, national governments, other UN agencies, the World Bank, Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) and other international NGOs, academia and the private sector, the Initiative identifies emerging innovative practices and comprehensive responses to climate change. We are convinced that sustainable urban development is only possible when cities live up to the challenges that climate change poses. However, the overall message of this publication goes much further and is essentially positive: climate change provides cities with many opportunities and these include taking a long-term perspective, developing an integrated strategy, accessing technologies and practices and urban renewal. This overall call is broken down into 12 simple messages which introduce mayors and city leaders to the need for climate action and offers them ways to get started.

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Dr. Joan Clos Undersecretary General Executive Director, UN-HABITAT

Climate change is here

"Warming of the climate system is unequivocal as is now evident from observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice and rising global sea level".

- IPCC AR4 report

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Scientists now generally agree that climate change is happening, that it is caused by human actions and that there has already been an increase in the earth's average surface temperature by about 1 degree Celsius over the past century. By the last decade of the 21st century, predictions are for further increases ranging between 1.8 and 4 degrees Celsius and sea levels rising by 20 to 60 centimeters. Greenhouse gases which cause climate change, such as carbon dioxide and methane, have been increasing since the industrial revolution, trapping the earth's heat just as a greenhouse would. Such gases are emitted when fossil fuels such as oil and coal are burnt for heating, cooling, transport, and construction or in agricultural and industrial processes or deforestation.

CASE STUDY: MAPUTO, MOZAMBIQUE

One of the predicted consequences of climate change is worse and more frequent floods in cities across the world. One city already facing this threat is the coastal city of Maputo in Mozambique. The low altitude of many parts of the city also makes it vulnerable to rising sea levels.

One resident describes the challenges its citizens face: "Our houses are built in low areas. We have no shelter when the flood starts. The house owners do not help us drain water from our homes. Once water has gone, the real disaster has just begun. That is diseases."

After the initial flooding period is passed, pools of standing water and contaminated water supplies increase the risk of diseases such as malaria and cholera.

Type of greenhouse gas	Chemical Symbol	Some sources of emissions
Carbon Dioxide	CO ₂	Burning fossil fuels, deforestation and changes in land use
Methane	CH_4	Animal manure and gases, rice production and from decomposing waste in landfill
Nitrous Oxide	N ₂ O	Burning fossil fuels, nylon production, certain kinds of nitrate based fertilizers

Fluorinated gases or F-gases constitute groups of gases some of which are extremely powerful greenhouse gases, including Perfluorocarbons (PFCs), Hydrofluorocarbons (HFC), Sulphur hexafluoride (SF6), Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and Hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs). These gases are released in industrial process and cooling etc.

Identify your city's risks

"The environmental, economic and political implications of global warming are profound. Ecosystems – from mountain to ocean, from the Poles to the tropics – are undergoing rapid change. Low-lying cities face inundation, fertile lands are turning to desert, and weather patterns are becoming ever more unpredictable."

- Ban Ki-Moon General Secretary of United Nations

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