Local Action, Global Goals

Cities delivering on the Global Stocktake and Global Goal on Adaptation

November 20, 2025

Executive Summary

Context: Urgent Need for Acceleration

- Ten years after the Paris Agreement, the Global Stocktake (GST) confirms the world is not on track to meet the Paris Agreement. While the global emissions curve is bending, the pace is insufficient.
- There is a surge in "whole-of-society" approaches. 64% of analyzed NDCs now reference multilevel governance, identifying cities and regions as essential partners in planning and implementation.
- Systematically integrating subnational governments into national processes (via initiatives like CHAMP) is the most effective strategy to close the implementation gap.

Local Action is Accelerating and Delivering Results

- Local climate action is accelerating rapidly. Since 2015, reported mitigation and adaptation actions in CHAMP-endorsing countries have increased over tenfold
- Decoupling growth from emissions is a reality. 61% of analyzed cities in CHAMP countries and 73% of C40 cities have officially peaked their emissions and are on a downward trajectory.
- City-level mitigation efforts are essential delivery mechanisms for the goals of the Global Stocktake (GST). Cities in CHAMP countries reported 4,723 mitigation actions in 2024, addressing all emissions sectors.
- Cities are increasingly aligning their climate plans with the Paris Agreement, with more actions now in the implementation and operational phase than ever before.
- Cities are delivering reductions beyond current NDCs. If cities meet their commitments, they could close the gap between national targets and the Paris-aligned goal by 37% in 2030.

Adaptation: Building Resilience

- Reported high-risk hazards (primarily extreme heat and flooding) jumped from 42% to 59% between 2019 and 2024.
- Cities are actively addressing 85% of these high-risk hazards.
- Responses vary by threat type—flooding is largely addressed via engineering/structural solutions (40%), while extreme heat is tackled through ecosystem-based solutions (~25%).
- A significant implementation deficit exists in Africa and the Middle East, highlighting a need for targeted support.

Key Recommendations for Parties

- Endorse CHAMP:
  - Expand the Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships (CHAMP) beyond the current 78 endorsers.
  - Utilize the COP30 Presidency's 'Plan to Accelerate Solutions' (PAS) to embed local priorities into national climate plans and accelerate delivery.
- Increase finance flows to subnational governments:
  - Use the Baku to Belém Roadmap to unlock the required $1.3 trillion for developing countries, with a specific mandate to localize these flows.
  - Prioritize funding for the 2,500+ transformative local projects identified, specifically targeting the transport sector and adaptation in under-resourced regions.
- Create a dialogue for cities and regions within the UNFCCC:
  - Move beyond Preamble recognition to a Mandated Dialogue on Multilevel Governance and Urbanization.

Introduction

Ten years on from the signature of the Paris Agreement, Parties are setting out new national climate targets in their NDC 3.0, and plans to achieve them, that differ in pace and scale. According to the synthesis report, Parties are bending their combined emission curve further downward, but still not quickly enough to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement. They must respond to the evidence of the first Global Stocktake (GST): the world is not on track to limit warming in line with the Paris agreement.

The NDC Synthesis Report clearly reveals that major acceleration is still needed to deliver faster, deeper emission reductions and ensure that climate benefits reach all countries and communities. Closing this gap necessitates accelerated implementation across all sectors and levels of government. A promising sign, however, is the increasing adoption of 'whole-of-society' approaches. The newly released NDC 3.0 Urban Content Snapshot confirms this surge in subnational involvement: the number of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) with strong urban content has almost doubled, and 64% of the analysed NDCs now reference multilevel governance, making it the most visible means of implementation in the analysis.

These data proves that cities, states, and regions are increasingly recognized as essential partners in planning, implementing, and monitoring climate action, helping to embed national goals into local contexts. Based on an analysis conducted in partnership with Arup utilizing data from CDP-ICLEI Track as well as MyCovenant, across all GCoM cities. This brief argues that strengthening multilevel governance is an effective strategy to bridge the ambition and implementation gap. Initiatives like the Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships (CHAMP), offer a clear path forward. By systematically integrating cities and regions, which are already delivering results into national climate processes, Parties can unlock the ambition needed to respond to the GST, close the ambition and implementation gap.

The Evidence: Subnational Climate Action is Accelerating

Subnational climate action is increasing worldwide and delivering tangible results. Data from cities in CHAMP-endorsing countries provide clear, measurable evidence of this delivery in both mitigation and adaptation. The exponential increase in mitigation actions is particularly evident: As shown in Figure 1, the number of reported mitigation actions has surged from 449 in 2015 to over 2,000 in 2019, and again to 4,723 in 2024. This represents a total volume over ten times higher than a decade ago. The acceleration is equally pronounced in adaptation. Reported adaptation actions have seen a similar tenfold increase, underscoring the rapid mobilization of cities to build resilience against escalating climate risks. Evidence is clear there is a powerful shift from planning to large-scale implementation.

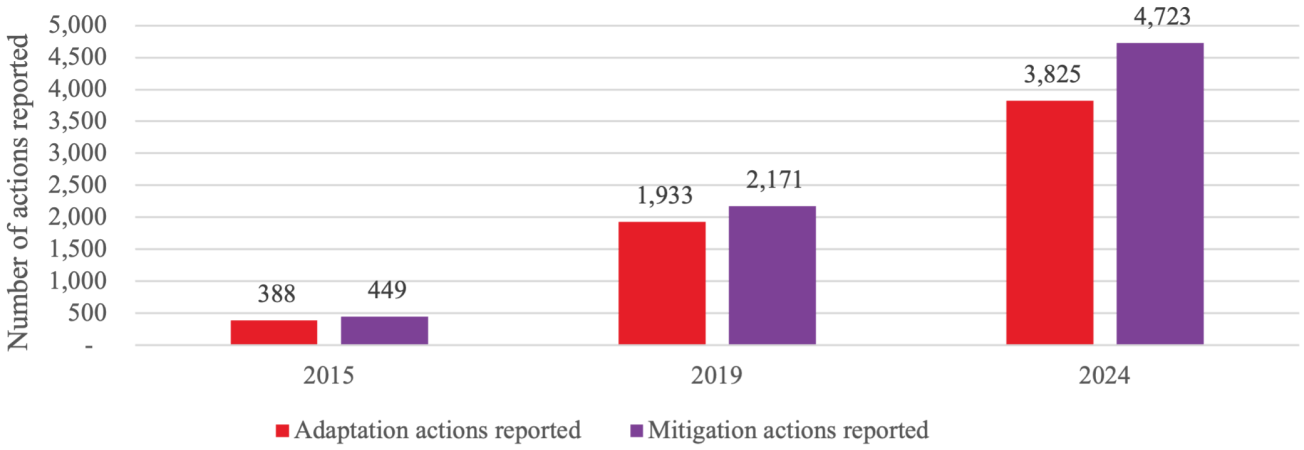

Figure 1

Mitigation: Peaking Emissions and Alignment

Cities are proving that decoupling urban growth from emissions is possible. This is not isolated to a few frontrunners; it is a clear trend.

- Peaking emissions: The analysis conducted in partnership with Arup revealed that among the 1,056 cities of CHAMP endorsing countries that have reported more than one emission inventory since 2015, a significant majority (61%) are already on a trajectory of decreasing emissions. Similarly, C40 Peaking Emissions Report confirms that 73% of C40 cities have officially peaked their emissions and are on a steady, downward trend.

However, this progress varies across regions. As shown in Figure 2, South Asia is the only region where the percentage of cities on a declining trajectory is lower than 55%. In all other regions, the majority of cities are reporting declining emissions, corroborating the widespread peaking trend.

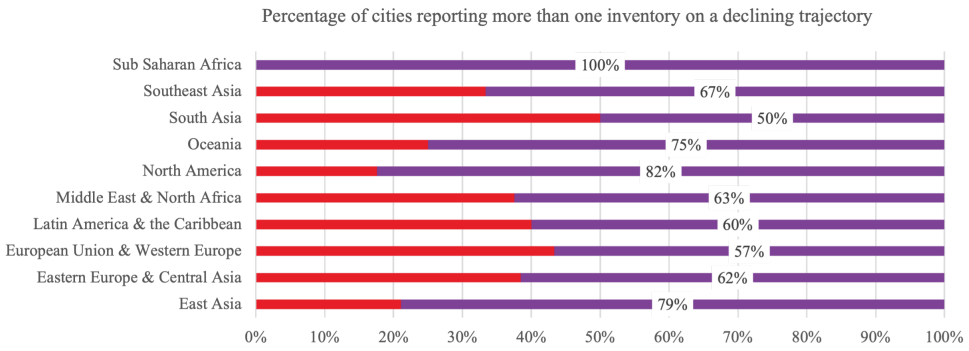

Figure 2

- Paris aligned: Arup's aggregation analysis shows that cities in CHAMP countries are increasingly aligning their climate action plans in line with the Paris agreement.

These Paris aligned climate actions are being implemented. Cities in CHAMP countries are reporting more mitigation actions in the "implementation" or "operation" phase in 2024 than in 2019 - particularly in North America and Europe where the largest number of actions are in operation. This demonstrates a critical shift as actions move past the pre-feasibility, scoping, and feasibility stages. This shift is already showing concrete results.

Within CHAMP countries, city-level climate building policies are delivering tangible results. Between 2015 and 2024, building emissions have reduced by around one-fifth, exceeding the 19% decarbonization of the electricity grid in the same countries, proving that local policy can drive faster emission reductions. This progress is vital, as buildings remain the dominant source of emissions for CHAMP cities in every region with the exception of Latin America.

However, the analysis also identified sectors where multilevel action must be urgently directed. Transport emissions in CHAMP countries rose by 18% over the same period (2015–2024), suggesting the sector needs stronger, coordinated climate policies. As noted in a recently released C40 report, success relies on complementary interventions: national governments must unlock affordability, such as through financial instruments that lower the cost of adopting green technologies. This national support then enables cities to leverage their unique municipal competencies, acting as powerful drivers for local implementation and accelerating the rate of emissions reduction.

Local Action contributing to the Global Stocktake (GST)

City-level mitigation efforts are essential delivery mechanisms for the goals of the Global Stocktake (GST). Cities in CHAMP countries reported 4,723 mitigation actions in 2024, addressing all emissions sectors. While comprehensive, impact is concentrated in Stationary Energy, Transportation, and Waste (see Figure 3). Transportation emerged as the sector with the highest impact potential, with actions capable of reducing emissions by one-third, a critical intervention given the 18% rise in transport emissions identified earlier in this analysis. These priority sectors directly align with the GST's calls to action, specifically:

- Tripling renewable energy capacity and doubling energy efficiency improvements by 2030.
- Accelerating the substantial reduction of non-CO2 emissions, particularly methane.
- Accelerating the reduction of emissions from road transport.

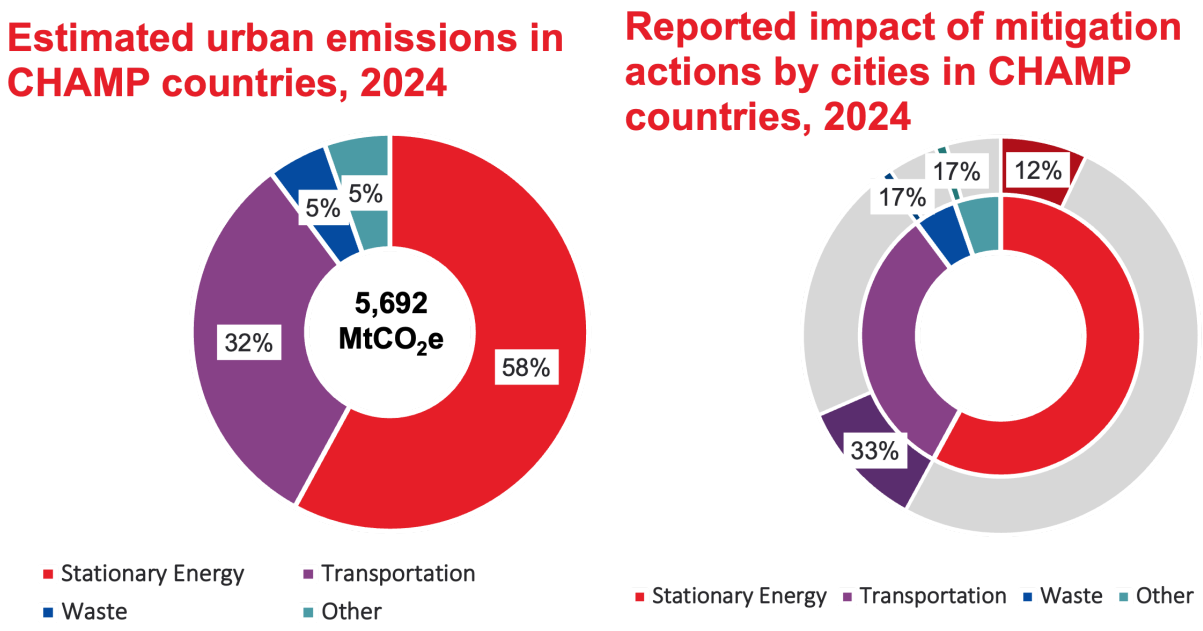

Figure 3

Data show a direct contribution to these GST goals: 15 % of all reported mitigation actions are energy efficiency measures in existing buildings, directly addressing the GST's call for energy efficiency. Likewise, city actions in the waste sector are critical for tackling methane emissions. This alignment demonstrates that cities are already implementing the solutions the GST calls for. The primary challenge as mentioned before is in the transport sector.

Most importantly, local action is the key to closing the ambition gap. Analysis of CHAMP endorsing countries shows that the emissions reductions delivered by city commitments are substantial. Crucially, cities deliver reductions beyond the scope of current NDCs, directly contributing to Paris Agreement (see Figure 4). If cities meet their commitments, they could close the gap between current NDCs and the Paris Agreement goal by 37% in 2030, 15% in 2040, and 22% in 2050. However, it is clear that while current local commitments are vital, reaching the additional emission reductions needed to achieve the Paris-aligned goal will require cities to increase their ambition and extend their planning horizons beyond 2030.

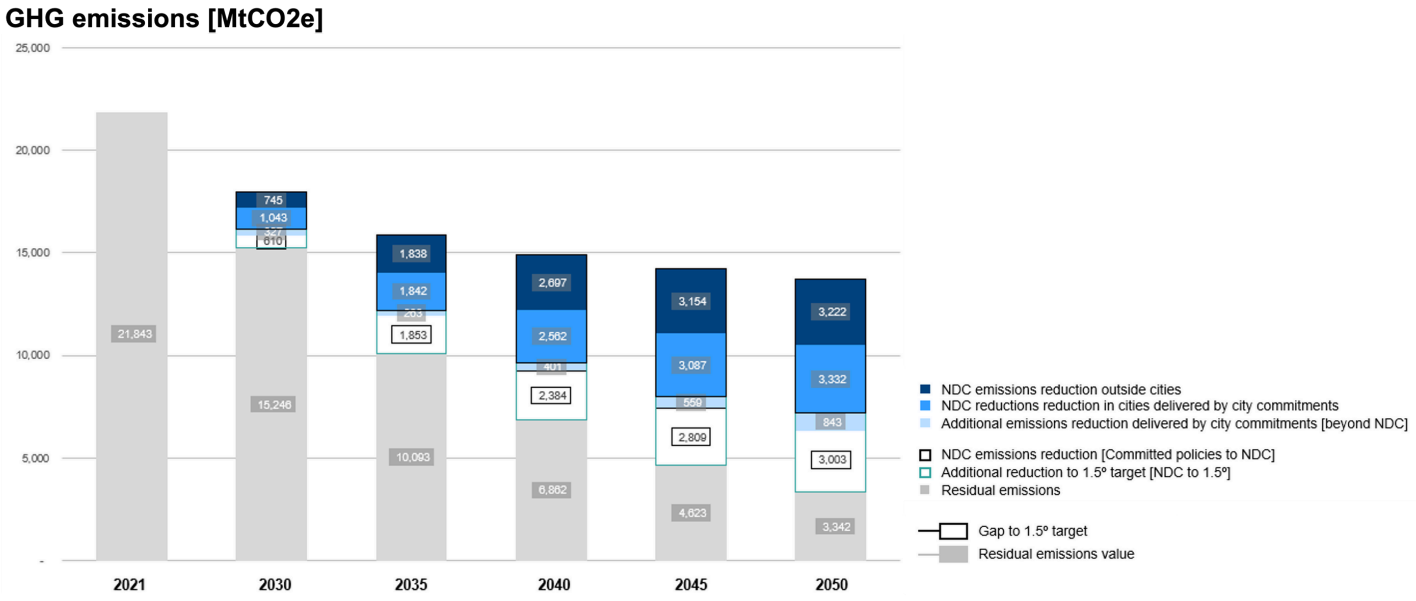

Figure 4

Adaptation: Local actions responding to increasing hazards

All over the world, cities are facing a rapid escalation of high-risk hazards. In 2024, 59% of all reported high-risk hazards in cities were extreme heat and flooding, a significant increase from 42% in 2019. As climate hazards intensify, local governments are accelerating their efforts to build resilience, demonstrating a clear model for implementing the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA).

Today, cities have actions underway to address nearly 85% of their high-risk climate hazards, a notable jump from 69% in 2019 (see Figure 5). The hazards with the highest number of reported actions are coastal flooding, fire weather, extreme precipitation, and heat—reflecting the most critical threats that urban areas are currently facing.

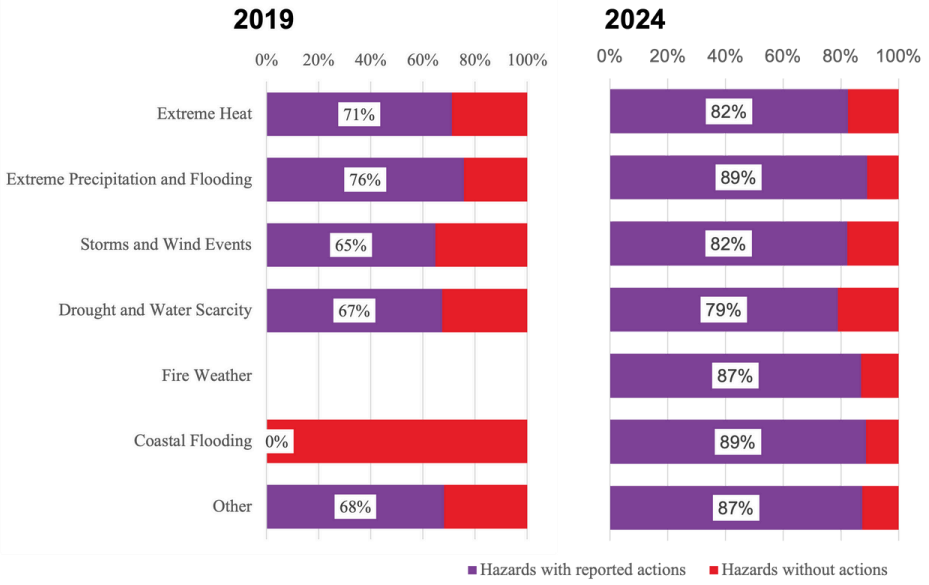

Figure 5

	Pre-feasibility and scoping		Feasibility		Implementation		Action in operation	
	2019	2024	2019	2024	2019	2024	2019	2024
Africa	2	7	5	7	11	12	5	10
East Asia	0	0	0	7	2	75	25	85
Europe	94	113	46	87	174	486	133	507
Latin America	65	86	27	62	177	213	136	255
Middle East	2	1	3	1	2	4	1	3
North America	103	125	100	102	361	439	269	458
South and West Asia	0	21	0	9	1	59	2	42
Southeast Asia and Oceania	8	2	9	0	61	13	55	55
Total	↓ 274	↑ 355	↓ 190	↑ 275	↓ 789	↑1301	↓ 626	↑1415

Figure 6

Cities are moving from ambition to action. Cities CHAMP countries reported more adaptation actions in any phase of implementation in 2024, including 789 more actions reported to be 'in operation' than in 2019. This demonstrates a clear acceleration of on-the-ground delivery. Nevertheless, disparity is also visible within the CHAMP coalition itself. While 77 countries and the EU have endorsed it, data shows that cities in CHAMP-endorsing countries in Africa and the Middle East have reported the lowest number of adaptation actions, as shown in Figure 6. This highlights significant opportunities to support local governments in these regions to strengthen their adaptation efforts.

Scope and Strategy of Local Adaptation

Sectors addressed: Action is concentrated in critical sectors, including conservation, human health, water supply and wastewater management, forestry, education, construction, and agriculture.

Resilience attributes improved: These actions are proven to enhance key resilience attributes, such as planning and strategy, anticipation and preparedness, community participation, and the integrity of natural resources and infrastructure assets.

Co-benefits: Cities report significant co-benefits, including protected biodiversity and ecosystems services, improved education and climate awareness, increased green space, improved mental wellbeing, greater protection for vulnerable populations, and reduced disaster-related health impacts.

Data on adaptation action reveal the use of distinct strategies for different hazards. When addressing flooding, cities rely heavily on structural solutions, with approximately 40% of actions classified as 'Engineered and Built Environment'. By contrast, responses to extreme heat frequently leverage nature, with ~25% of actions being 'Ecosystem-based'. Nevertheless, there are very few reported actions in the behavioural, economic, or technological categories, suggesting a current focus on physical interventions over social or financial resilience measures.

Conclusions

The data and findings presented above provide a clear message: cities are actively delivering and contributing to the GST goals, helping to bridge the implementation gap. By outperforming national grids on decarbonization and deploying targeted resilience measures against escalating hazards, they have proven themselves to be the Parties' most effective allies trying to limit global temperature rise and delivering on the Paris Agreement. Parties must do more than simply acknowledge local action, they must actively support and unlock it. The following recommendations outline how they can do it.

Policy recommendations

1. Endorse CHAMP: We call on all Parties that have not yet done so to endorse the Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships and use it to institutionalize multilevel governance. Expanding the coalition beyond the current 78 endorsers is essential to establishing multilevel governance as the global standard for climate implementation. By endorsing the coalition, national governments send a strong signal and recognise that they cannot meet their NDC 3.0 targets without coordination and cooperation with subnational levels of government. It acknowledges that the best way to deliver their national climate goals is through partnering with their subnational governments. Parties should consider the recommendations of the COP30 Presidency's 'Plan to Accelerate Solutions' (PAS) on multilevel governance, as the primary implementation tool for CHAMP. The PAS provides guidance on how to integrate local priorities into national climate plans (NDCs), and institutionalise multilevel governance as a foundation for achieving the Paris Agreement. It shifts the Coalition from high-level political commitment to on-the-ground delivery. It bridges policy, capacity building, and finance across all levels of government to ensure national ambition is matched by local implementation.

2.Increase finance flows to subnational governments: The Baku to Belém Roadmap must serve as the definitive mechanism to unlock the $1.3 trillion needed for developing countries, with a specific mandate to localize these flows. It must prioritize subnational access to climate finance to deliver a robust pipeline of over 2,500 transformative and bankable local projects. The Roadmap must explicitly recognize the investment needs of cities and regions, signaling the mobilization of public and private investment to subnational governments, especially for urban adaptation. Parties should use the specific data emerging from cities to direct the Baku to Belém Roadmap finance and technical support to the sectors and regions where the implementation gap is widening, e.g. targeting the transport sector—where urban emissions are showing a net increase—and regions such as Africa, where the data highlights a critical deficit of adaptation actions currently in operation.

3.Create a formal space for subnational governments in the UNFCCC: The contributions and potential of cities and regions to deliver climate solutions far exceed the recognition they were given in the preamble of the Paris Agreement, which is no longer sufficient to recognise their role. Cities and regions are more than delivery partners for nationally determined priorities, they can regulate, tax, and design incentives that drive climate action. Consequently, we request the COP Presidency, in collaboration with the LGMA constituency, to convene a Mandated Dialogue on Multilevel Governance and Urbanization through in-session workshops to accelerate implementation at the local level and to close the ambition gap, with a report produced by the UNFCCC Secretariat to serve as input to the Second Global Stocktake, to integrate the findings of the 2027 IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Cities, and to facilitate a more streamlined approach to multi-level and urban climate action in the COP process and among Parties.