



# THE URBAN ADVANTAGE

CITIES' GLOBAL CLIMATE ACTION

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

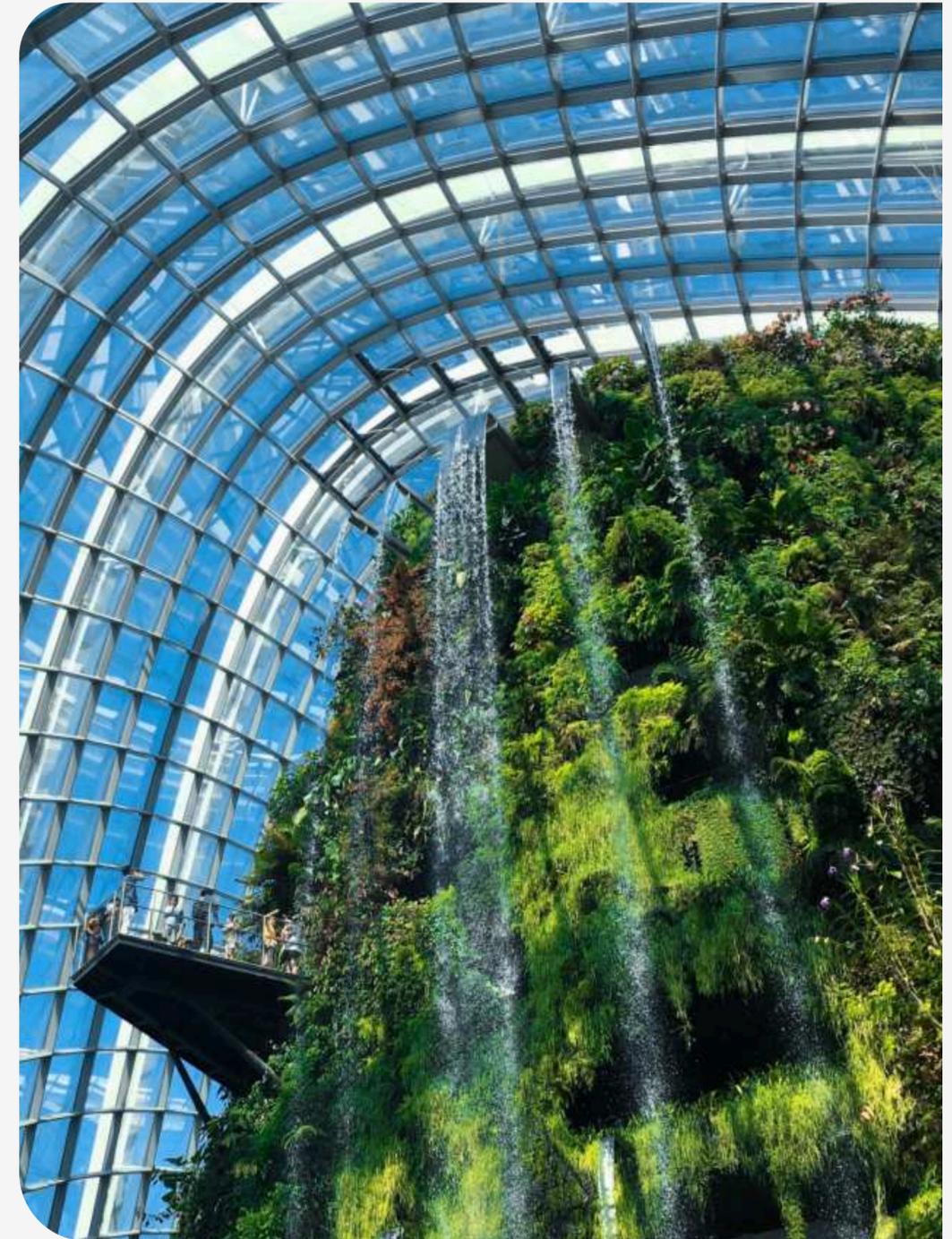
Cities are at the forefront of global climate action. Uniting more than 13,800 cities and local governments across 148 countries, and covering 1.2 billion people, one in every seven people worldwide, the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy (GCoM) is accelerating local solutions that deliver the goals of the Paris Agreement.

As countries prepare enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions for COP30, cities are advancing Self-Determined Contributions (SDCs), locally led and often more ambitious than national targets. Together, they form the “global mutirão” of collective action called for by the COP30 Presidency.

GCoM data show that cities could deliver up to 4.5 GtCO<sub>2</sub> in annual reductions by 2050, closing much of the gap between current NDCs and a 1.5°C pathway. Yet while 66% of NDCs now include urban content, only 14% specify the finance and capacity cities need to act.

Cities are moving from plans to implementation: This year, the running total of badges that were awarded to cities comes to over 9,300 in mitigation, 3,700 in adaptation, and 1,575 in energy access and poverty, reflecting steady progress and growing ambition. Through GCoM’s Invest4Cities platform, initiatives like the City Climate Finance Gap Fund and Bankable Cities are helping urban projects attract investment: €105 million in seed funding is expected to unlock more than €4 billion in climate finance.

To realize this potential, national governments must embed local action in updated NDCs and devolve local finance and authority. Development banks must expand city-tailored instruments and project-preparation support. When empowered, cities transform global commitments into real-world results, the most direct path to a livable, climate-safe future.



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An aerial photograph of a cityscape. On the left is a tall, curved glass skyscraper. To its right is a tall building with many green balconies, resembling a vertical forest. The foreground shows a mix of modern and older buildings, green spaces, and a clear blue sky.

# A GROWING COMMITMENT TO GLOBAL CLIMATE GOALS

# A GROWING COMMITMENT TO GLOBAL CLIMATE GOALS

The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCoM) unites cities around the world to accelerate local climate action. Each year, GCoM's Impact Report highlights the power of local level ambition to support and surpass national goals. This year's report centers on how cities are aligning with and enhancing Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) through multilevel governance and Self-Determined Contributions (SDCs), and what's needed to unlock their full potential.

Cities are answering the call of the Conference of the Parties (COP)30 Presidency for a "global mutirão" ('collective effort') of action. Their self-determined contributions, locally led, measurable, and in many cases more ambitious than national targets, are essential to achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement.



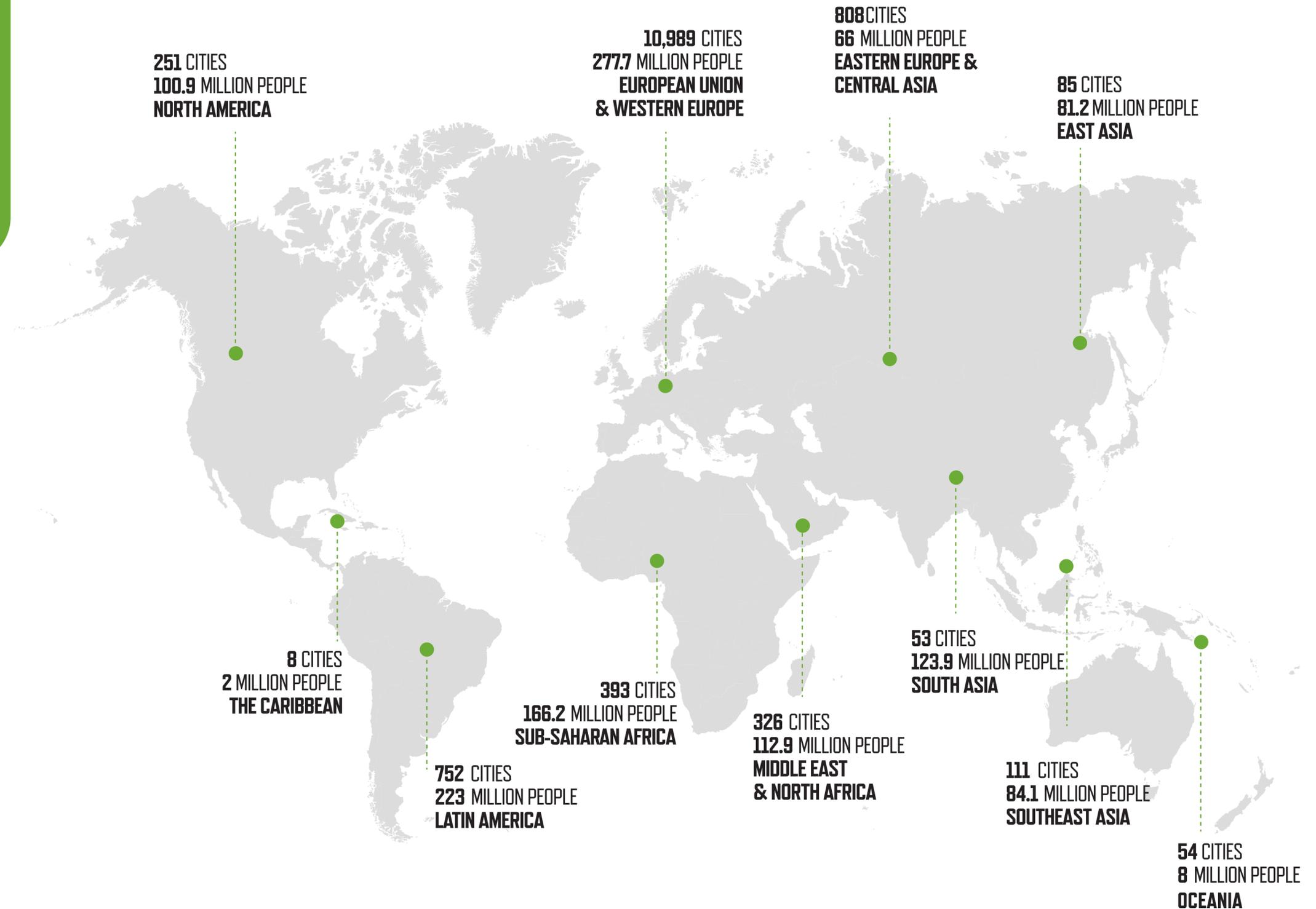
# EVERY DAY A NEW CITY JOINS GCOM

**ONE IN EVERY 7**  
PEOPLE ON EARTH  
IS PART OF A GCOM CITY

**13,830**  
CITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

**1.246**  
BILLION PEOPLE

**148**  
COUNTRIES





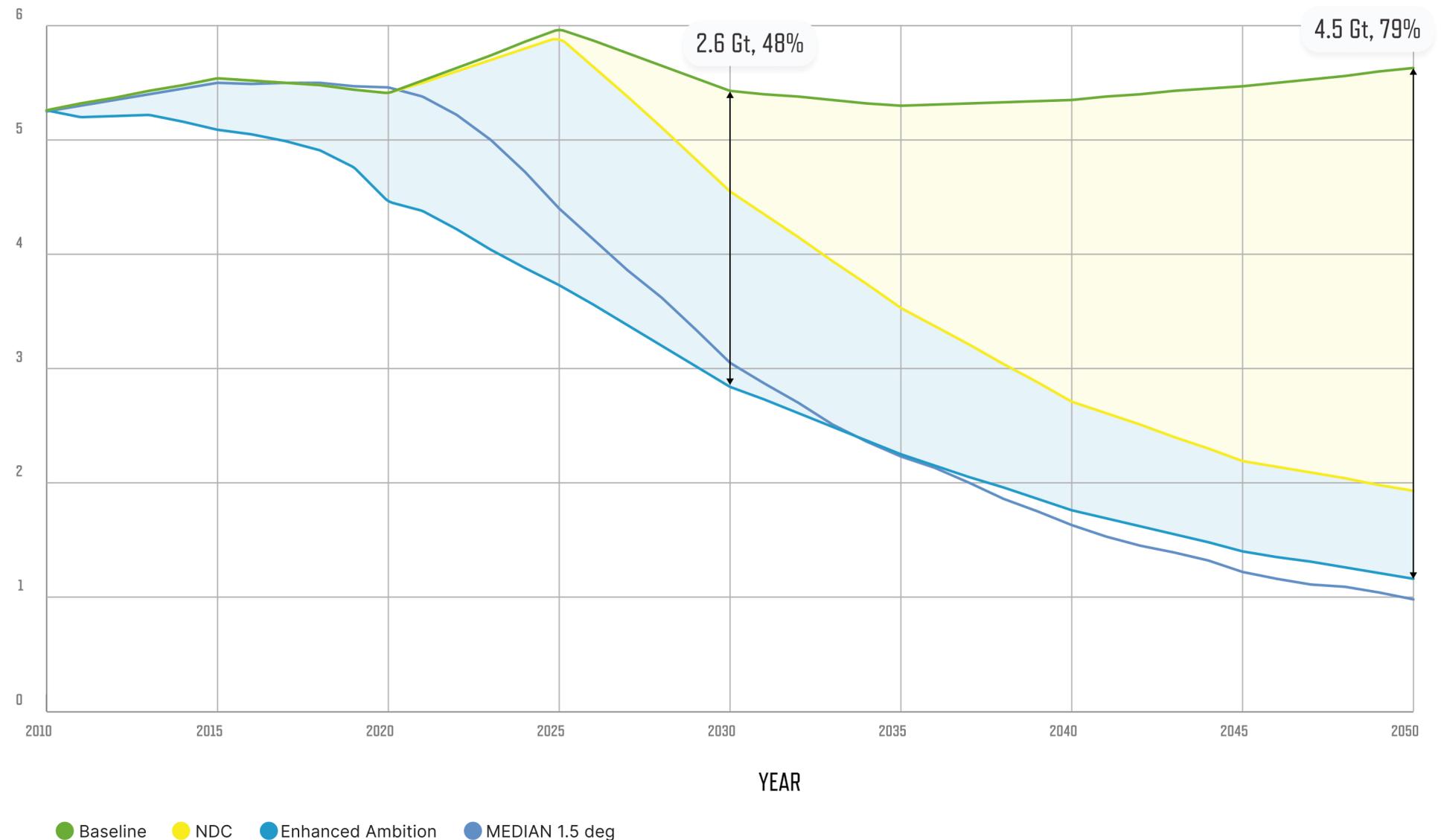
# CITIES POWERING DELIVERY OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT

# CITIES COULD REDUCE EMISSIONS BY 4.5 GtCO<sub>2</sub>e ANNUALLY BY 2050

Our data shows that GCoM signatories alone could deliver the equivalent of 4.5 GtCO<sub>2</sub> in annual reductions by 2050. Cities committed to climate action could make up the difference between NDCs and the emission reduction needed to keep the planet below 1.5°C of warming. These projections by GCoM are based upon current targets and NDCs.

This ambition can only become a reality if local governments are empowered to deliver on the projects that they have planned. This graph compares projected global emissions under four scenarios: a business-as-usual trajectory (baseline), current Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), GCoM signatories' collective targets, and the pathway needed to limit warming to 1.5°C.

ANNUAL EMISSIONS (GtCO<sub>2</sub>e)





A growing number of countries, such as CHAMP supporters UK and Brazil, are integrating urban priorities into their climate strategies. According to the 2023 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) global analysis, 66% of submitted NDCs now include urban content, up from 60% in the previous review. NDCs with strong urban content have nearly doubled, rising from 14% to 27% between 2016/2017 and 2023.

Despite this progress, major gaps remain. Only 44% of NDCs address both urban adaptation and mitigation, and urban-level finance, technology, and capacity-building needs are rarely specified, appearing in just 14% of NDCs. Aligning NDCs more closely with the needs and actions of cities will be critical for accelerating implementation and achieving global climate targets.

# CITIES' BADGES OVERVIEW

GCoM signatories receive pillar badges for progress in their climate action planning journey, with each badge consisting of three steps: Completion of an assessment/inventory, setting of a target/goal, and development of a plan.

That means cities that achieve all the badges in each category know where they stand, where they're going, and how they're getting there. But that essential step – getting there – will require more engagement from national governments and international organizations to empower cities to succeed.





## MITIGATION

# CITIES ARE DRIVING CLIMATE ACTION

Across the GCoM alliance, over 9,314 mitigation badges have been awarded. Representing 67.3% of GCoM signatories, this growing number reflects strong local commitment to reducing emissions and transitioning to net-zero.

A 2% increase this year shows continued progress in embedding mitigation in local climate plans.



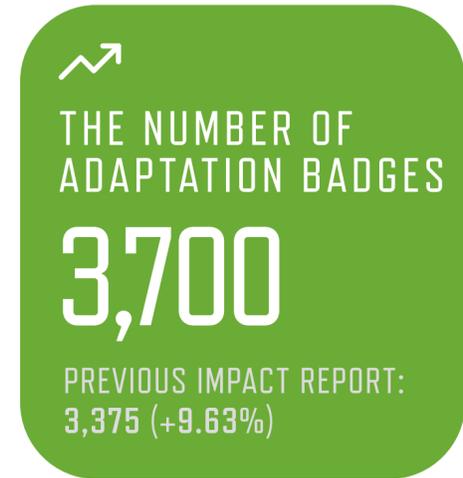
	INVENTORY	TARGET	PLAN
	<p><b>8,150</b> PREVIOUS IMPACT REPORT: 7,963</p>	<p><b>9,082</b> PREVIOUS IMPACT REPORT: 8,946</p>	<p><b>7,098</b> PREVIOUS IMPACT REPORT: 6,882</p>
<b>GROWTH</b>	<b>+ 2.35%</b>	<b>+ 1.52%</b>	<b>+ 3.14%</b>



## ADAPTATION

# CITY-LEVEL DATA IS SHAPING HOW PROGRESS IS MEASURED

Adaptation continues to be a priority across cities, with 3,700 badges awarded, representing nearly 27% of GCoM signatories and a 9% increase this year. As COP30 advances the United Arab Emirates–Belém work program to define global adaptation indicators, city-level data is already helping shape how progress is measured, through targets that build resilience, reduce vulnerability, and enhance adaptive capacity in line with the Paris Agreement’s Global Goal on Adaptation.



	ASSESSMENT	GOAL	PLAN
	<p><b>2,878</b> PREVIOUS IMPACT REPORT: 2,518</p>	<p><b>3,541</b> PREVIOUS IMPACT REPORT: 3,209</p>	<p><b>2,310</b> PREVIOUS IMPACT REPORT: 2,005</p>
<b>GROWTH</b>	<b>+ 14.30%</b>	<b>+ 10.35%</b>	<b>+ 15.21%</b>

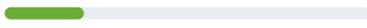
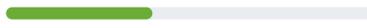


## ENERGY ACCESS & POVERTY

# ENERGY ACCESS AND EQUITY ARE CENTRAL TO A JUST TRANSITION

With over 1,575 badges awarded, more than 11% of GCoM signatories are now taking targeted action to address energy access and/or energy poverty. The 15% growth this year demonstrates a surge in local initiatives to ensure clean, affordable, and sustainable energy reaches the most vulnerable.


  
 THE NUMBER OF ENERGY ACCESS & POVERTY BADGES
   
**1,575**
  
 PREVIOUS IMPACT REPORT: 1,373 (+14.71%)

	ASSESSMENT	TARGET	PLAN
	 <b>296</b> PREVIOUS IMPACT REPORT: 140	 <b>597</b> PREVIOUS IMPACT REPORT: 393	 <b>1,383</b> PREVIOUS IMPACT REPORT: 1,249
<b>GROWTH</b>	<b>+ 111.43%</b>	<b>+ 51.91%</b>	<b>+ 10.73%</b>

# LOCAL TARGETS FOR NATIONAL PROGRESS

Brazil's latest Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) exemplifies how cities can be meaningfully integrated into national climate frameworks through multilevel governance. As one of the earliest endorsers of the Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships (CHAMP), Brazil has now translated that commitment into action by embedding "climate federalism" directly into its NDC.

The submission targets 59–67% emissions reduction by 2035. And how will this be achieved? The NDC explicitly commits all levels of government, federal, state, and municipal, to coordinated climate action planning, implementation, and adaptation. With direct engagement from mayors, state authorities, and city networks, Brazil's approach provides a compelling model for CHAMP implementation.



A hand in a blue suit sleeve is shown from the top, holding a miniature architectural model of a city. The model features a prominent tall, cylindrical skyscraper with a grid-like facade, surrounded by various other buildings and lush green trees. The background is a blurred office interior with a window showing a view of a city.

# TOWARDS NDC-READY URBAN INVESTMENT

To achieve local climate ambition, cities need investment. GCoM's Invest4Cities initiative is home to the City Climate Finance Gap Fund partnership as well as the Bankable Cities and Business Matchmaking programs, through which a growing pipeline of urban climate projects are gaining technical and financial traction. Out of 650 expressions of interest, the Gap Fund has approved support for more than 300 cities, providing technical assistance to at least 110. With an overall capitalisation of €105 million, the Gap Fund aims to unlock over €4 billion in climate finance.

Invest4Cities helps cities translate their ambitions into investment-ready portfolios, while Bankable Cities provides bespoke project development support. Business Matchmaking connects city leaders with private sector partners to accelerate implementation. Together, these initiatives are building a scalable global pipeline for urban climate investment, grounded in multilevel cooperation.





Cities face key barriers to climate investment, including fragmented project pipelines, limited technical capacity, and weak enabling frameworks. Without aggregation mechanisms, individual projects are often too small to attract finance, while a lack of expertise and supportive national policies further hinders progress.

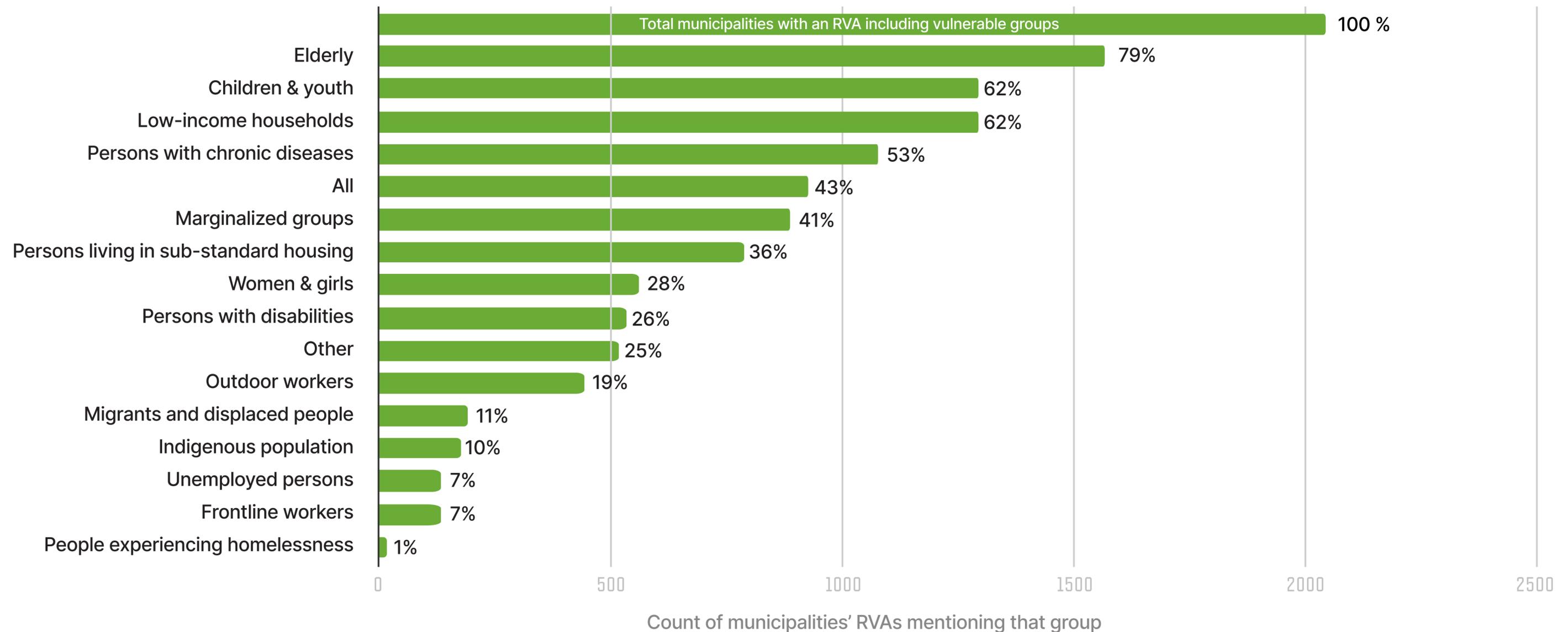


# PEOPLE, CITIES, STATES AND BEYOND

# VULNERABLE GROUPS HARMED BY CLIMATE HAZARDS

This graph<sup>1</sup> highlights the population groups most reported as vulnerable/impacted in municipalities' RVAs. Local governments are often the first responders to crises, yet their ability to protect and empower at-risk communities, such as the elderly, low-income households, or people with disabilities, depends on coordinated support.

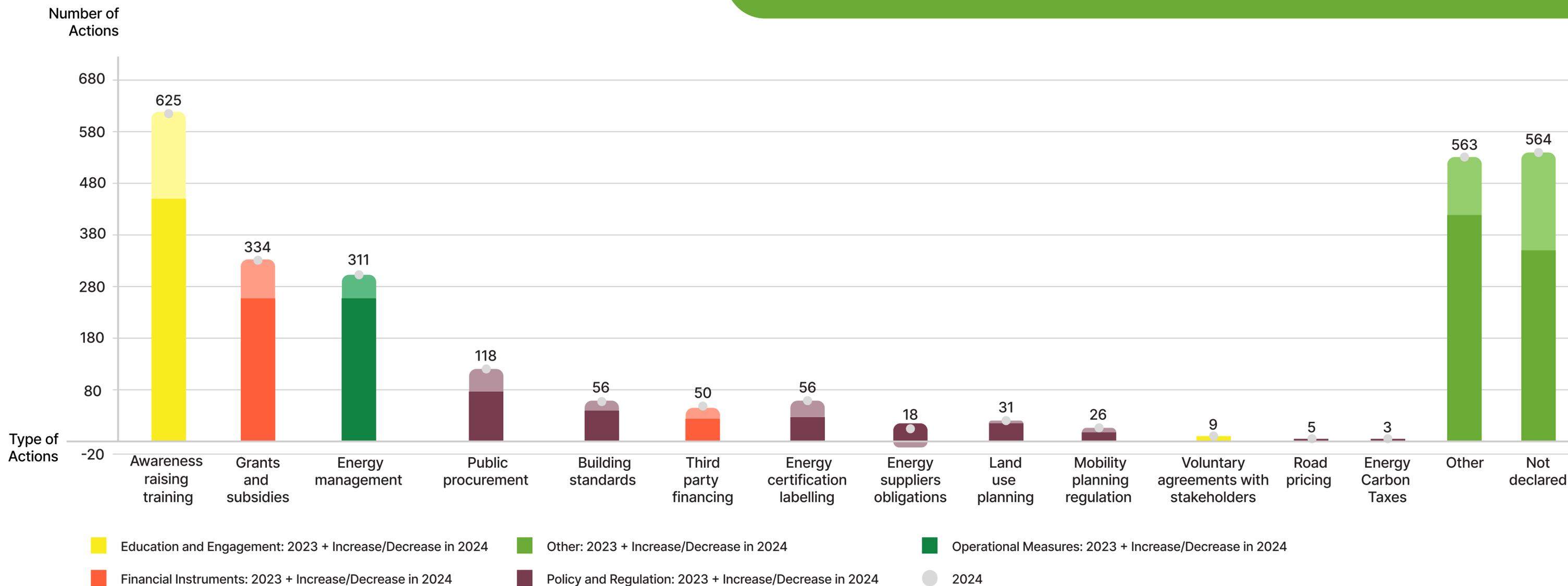
See GCoM's Gender & Inclusion Toolkit for frontrunning examples. Multilevel governance ensures that national policies and international funding frameworks align with the local realities cities face, enabling more targeted, inclusive, and life-saving adaptation efforts.



# PROGRESS IN ENERGY POVERTY ACTIONS AT EUROPEAN LEVEL

Energy poverty action is accelerating rapidly, with a 40% increase from 1,987 (2024) to 2,774 (2025) actions reported, demonstrating cities' growing commitment to the energy transition.

This expansion spans diverse approaches, from awareness-raising programs (625 actions, +191 compared to 2024) to grants and subsidies (334 actions, +96 compared to 2024) and innovative financing mechanisms, showing cities are deploying comprehensive strategies. The growth in building standards, third-party financing, and emergence of new tools like energy carbon taxes shows cities are willing to pioneer bold approaches.



The analysis<sup>2</sup> for 2024 considers 994 cities from the regions "European Union and Western Europe" and "Eastern Europe and Central Asia" for which action details were available. Actions are shown/categorized by typology and grouped by type of instrument used.



## EQUITY IN ACTION: BRISTOL ENERGY CO-OP, UK

In Bristol, the Bristol Energy Co-operative partnered with the local regeneration organization Ambition Lawrence Weston to deliver a community-owned solar project. Unlike earlier plans, this model ensured full involvement of the local community, from planning through execution, embodying procedural justice.

Residents were not merely consulted, but helped shape the project's goals and governance structure, fostering transparency and trust. The outcomes were equitable and tangible: €179,000 in upfront profits plus an additional €9,000 annually was reinvested directly into local community initiatives, supporting education, resilience, and wellbeing.<sup>3</sup>

This shows how NDC-aligned local policy, focused on clean energy, can deliver real equity benefits to citizens, especially in historically disadvantaged communities.



## JUST TRANSITION WITH COMMUNITY ENERGY – EL PACÍFICO, MEDELLÍN (COLOMBIA)

In informal settlements of Medellín, such as El Pacífico, residents led the design, installation, and management of decentralized clean energy systems, including a Do It Yourself hydraulic turbine and solar panels, despite limited technical training. This initiative has improved household energy access, provided new local livelihoods, and ensured participatory planning, with communities fully owning and benefiting from the infrastructure.

# CO-GENERATING KNOWLEDGE FOR ACTION

Cities and their networks are playing a vital role in co-producing the evidence base that informs the IPCC Special Reports on climate change. Through initiatives like GCoM's Innovate4Cities, in collaboration with UN-Habitat and IPCC, local actors have helped frame the global research and action agenda, ensuring urban perspectives and actionable insights guide international policy making. Exchanges between city practitioners and report authors have deepened this engagement, reinforcing the science-policy-practice interface and anchoring national and global assessment within lived urban realities.

This work demonstrates how research and multilevel governance intersect: cities seed evidence that shapes national commitments, IPCC assessments, and ultimately global guidance, co-generating knowledge that drives policy, investment, and local action.





# CALLS TO ACTION

## CALLS TO ACTION

To accelerate climate ambition and implementation, targeted action is needed from key partners. National governments and financial institutions play a vital role in enabling city-led solutions, including innovative ones, through supportive policies, resources, and finance.

**National governments** must fully integrate local and regional climate action into updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), recognizing the essential role of cities in delivering on global goals. This includes devolving financial and technical resources and co-creating policy frameworks with local authorities to ensure alignment, ownership, and faster implementation on the ground, as called for, for example, by African mayors in their [letter to finance ministers](#). Countries can advance these goals by endorsing the [Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships \(CHAMP\)](#), which commits governments to consult and collaborate with subnational authorities, embed local action in NDCs, and improve access to finance. Such national support, among other positive effects, will contribute to de-risking innovative climate actions.

**Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) and Development Finance Institutions (DFIs)** should tailor financial instruments to better suit urban contexts, particularly for small- and medium-sized cities. This means simplifying access to funding, removing unnecessary barriers, and significantly scaling up project preparation support. As outlined in GCoM's [letter to MDBs](#),<sup>4</sup> and reaffirmed in their response, enhanced collaboration with cities is essential to bridge the climate finance gap and translate ambition into action.





# BEST PRACTICES



## SPAIN – BUILDING A JUST TRANSITION FROM THE GROUND UP

Spain's Just Transition Institute (ITJ) offers a leading example of structured multilevel governance in climate transitions. As a dedicated national body under the Ministry for Ecological Transition, ITJ coordinates Just Transition Agreements across 197 municipalities, including Los Barrios, La Línea de la Concepción, and Algeciras in 8 autonomous communities. These agreements are co-developed through collaboration between national, regional, and local governments, alongside trade unions, businesses, and civil society.

Locally based Territorial Agents ensure place-based engagement, helping municipalities identify project ideas and access funding. This inclusive, bottom-up approach ensures that national strategies are rooted in local needs, empowering communities to shape and benefit from the transition.



## GEORGE TOWN, MALAYSIA LINKBIKE AND THE POWER OF SHARED MOBILITY

In 2014, the Penang state government awarded a €1.8 million contract to launch LinkBike, Malaysia's first public bicycle-sharing system in George Town, a city which participated in GCoM's Cities Meet Cities initiative.

The bicycle scheme was supported by both the Penang Island City Council and state authorities. Operating with 25 stations and around 250 bikes since 2016, LinkBike illustrates strong federal–state–municipal coordination, enabling infrastructure investment, urban traffic decongestion, and green transport alignment with national policies.

This integrated model is embedded in broader state frameworks, such as the Penang Bicycle Route Master Plan and the George Town Special Area Master Plan, developed in collaboration with local communities and regional agencies.



## COLUMBIA, USA FEDERAL FUNDS, STATE SUPPORT, LOCAL ACTION

Columbia's climate ambition operates across national, state, and municipal levels. Locally, the city established its Office of Sustainability in 2010 and adopted a Climate Action & Adaptation Plan in 2019 with deep community and commission-driven engagement.

At the national level, the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022 opened access to federal funding, most notably through the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG), enabling Columbia to pursue energy efficiency, clean energy installations, and heat reduction measures. Meanwhile, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources facilitated public input and guided the city's application to the EPA-backed program.

Together, this layered approach of federal funding, state facilitation and local planning, demonstrates how national legislation and state frameworks can empower city-led climate implementation.



## GDYNIA, POLAND URBANLAB AND TROLLEYBUSES FOR A GREEN FUTURE

Gdynia exemplifies multilevel governance by integrating national and EU sustainability goals with municipal innovation. The city has launched UrbanLab Gdynia, a living-lab platform co-designed by city officials, local experts, and residents, fostering public dialogue, thematic working groups, and collaborative urban solutions.

Parallel to this, Gdynia upgraded its trolleybus network via an EU-funded modernization project (2010–2013), including new substations and plans for solar power at depots, aligning with Polish national transport policies and EU climate objectives.

These efforts reflect structured cooperation across EU, national, and municipal levels, enabling sustainable mobility, citizen co-creation, and low-carbon infrastructure.



## NAGPUR, INDIA METRO GROWTH THROUGH TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

Nagpur is piloting a Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) pilot funded with €2.1 million in technical assistance from the Asian Development Bank, alongside a larger €171 million metro expansion loan.

This initiative bridges national urban development priorities (TOD policy mandates and metro financing via central/state governments), state-level reforms, and municipal implementation through Nagpur Municipal Corporation. A steering committee with multi-departmental representation ensures integrated planning across urban design, transport, housing, and utilities, enabling walkable hubs near metro stations like Sitabuldi.

The combined approach showcases strong multilevel governance, aligning city infrastructure, policy frameworks, and capacity-building for sustainable, transit-oriented growth.



## NAIROBI, KENYA MULTILEVEL CLIMATE GOVERNANCE IN ACTION

In Kenya, the 2016 Climate Change Act created a National Climate Change Council chaired by the President to oversee NDC delivery, while 47 local governments gained authority to plan and budget locally with climate priorities integrated.

Local-level climate units are now charged with aligning development plans with national NDC goals.

Despite funding and coordination challenges, the vertical integration catalysed by the V-LED (Vertical Integration and Learning for Low-Emission Development) project has strengthened county-national dialogue and helped counties develop climate projects and budgets, offering a promising template for devolved climate governance on the continent.

# ENDNOTES

1. Treville, A., Kuster, C., Palermo, V., Barbosa, P., Hernandez Moral, G. et al., Global Covenant of Mayors: A Comprehensive Assessment of Climate Adaptation Plans, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2025, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2760/3086954>, JRC144177.
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4. <https://www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/press/paving-the-way-to-cop30-multilateral-development-banks-advance-plans-to-scale-sustainable-investment-in-cities/>

# FUNDERS & REGIONAL COVENANTS

GCoM is the largest global alliance for city climate leadership, uniting a global coalition of over 13,800 cities and local governments and 100+ supporting partners. The cities and partners of GCoM share a long-term vision of supporting voluntary action to combat climate change and towards a resilient and low-emission society. GCoM serves cities and local governments by mobilizing and supporting ambitious, measurable, planned climate and energy action in their communities by working with city/regional networks, national governments, and other partners to achieve our vision. The coalition comprises cities across 6 continents and 148 countries, representing over 1.2 billion people or more than 14 percent of the global population.

To learn more about GCoM, please visit our [website](#), or follow us on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

You can also join our [Global Covenant Conversation](#).

## CO-FUNDERS

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## REGIONAL/NATIONAL COVENANTS



This report is created by the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy with the support of Arup and the Joint Research Centre - the European Commission's science and knowledge service.

SUPPORTING PARTNERS



This publication was co-funded by the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the Technical Assistance Support to the Secretariat of the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

