

# COP27 Presidency Sustainable Urban Resilience for the next Generation (SURGe)

in collaboration with UN-Habitat and facilitated by ICLEI

## INTRODUCTION

Cities are at the frontline of climate change. Climate change and growing urbanization are intertwined megatrends. Rising global temperatures have caused extreme weather events including flash floods, storms, droughts and heatwaves in cities. All of these have impacts on urban services, housing, infrastructure, livelihoods, urban ecosystems, cultural practices, and health and wellbeing of city residents. Rising food and energy prices exacerbate these impacts, with the most vulnerable being hit the hardest. Today, more than three billion people live in hotspots that are highly vulnerable to climate change<sup>4</sup> and more than one billion urban dwellers live in informal settlements<sup>5</sup>. Climate change impacts both increase urban populations due to climate-driven displacement and migration, and aggravate the underlying socio-economic challenges that come with urbanization. At the same time, cities are a key contributor to climate change, as urban activities are major sources of greenhouse gas emissions.

**Though cities are a big driver of planet-warming emissions, they are also engines of climate action and at the forefront of delivering solutions.** Many cities are committing to climate action, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, adapting to climate change and passing targets to reach net zero emissions.

**There is growing international awareness that the climate battle will be won or lost in cities.** The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report has highlighted the role of cities as critical. Their importance for climate action is mentioned in the Paris Agreement and the preamble of the COP26 Glasgow Climate Pact recognises the need for multilevel and cooperative action. By 2021, 84% of updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) had a strong or moderate urban content, compared to 69% of the initial NDCs. More than 60 nations raised their climate ambitions by engaging local and regional governments and more than 1,000 cities and regions committed to climate neutrality by 2050 with ambitious targets for 2030<sup>6</sup>. In 2022, the G7, G20, Commonwealth and Belt-Road Initiative have included unprecedented references to sustainable cities, urbanization and multilevel action through their Ministerial or Heads of States Communiqués.

### KEY FACTS



Cities are home to 55% of the global population<sup>1</sup>. This percentage is expected to grow by 2.5 billion people to 68% by 2050<sup>2</sup>.



Urban areas account for approximately three-quarters of energy-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions



70% of cities worldwide are already dealing with the effects of climate change<sup>3</sup>

**There are key barriers that limit urban emissions reductions, adapting urban systems to climate change, and building urban system resilience including:**

- ◆ **Multi-level governance:** There is an urgent need for multilevel and cooperative action. Current NDCs are not enough to respond to the climate emergency.
- ◆ **Finance:** In 2017/18, climate finance for cities reached an estimated USD 384 billion, less than 10% of the estimated need of USD 4.5 to 5.4 trillion annually<sup>7</sup>. Of the existing total climate finance, just 21% goes towards adaptation and resilience and only around 10% of these investments reach the local level<sup>8</sup>.
- ◆ **Local capacity:** Local governments are often understaffed, yet dealing with a wide range of agendas and priorities. Especially in the Global South, they have limited capacity for development planning and implementation, particularly with the integration of climate change.
- ◆ **Access to technology and innovation:** Greenhouse gas emissions in cities could be reduced by almost 90% by 2050 with technically feasible and available measures, potentially supporting 87 million jobs in 2030 and generating a global economic dividend of USD 24 trillion<sup>9</sup>. However, technological and process innovations do not reach all cities due to significant research and action gaps<sup>10</sup>.
- ◆ **Equity:** The impacts of climate change are unevenly distributed. Urban vulnerable groups are disproportionately and adversely affected by climate change while they contribute the least to urban emissions.

**To effectively address these challenges, the COP27 Presidency, in collaboration with UN-Habitat and with the facilitation of ICLEI, is developing the Sustainable Urban Resilience for the next Generation (SURGe) Initiative** [working title]: which builds on existing work in this space, on commitments of local and regional governments, adds momentum to existing initiatives, and provides a holistic framework to achieve sustainable and resilient urban systems.

- ◆ **Strengthen the implementation of the climate agenda in and with cities:** thereby contributing significantly to achieving the targets of the Paris Agreement, and raising the ambition of NDCs with commitments of local governments
- ◆ **Unlock urban climate finance:** work with national governments to set up context-specific finance mechanisms, work with multi-lateral development banks to facilitate access to finance, work with city networks and other partners to implement global projects in cities and develop a pipeline of bankable projects
- ◆ **Build capacity:** build up local capacity by working with city networks and other partners
- ◆ **Accelerate technology and innovation in cities:** work with city networks and other partners to support context-specific innovative solutions
- ◆ **Ensure equity:** design projects that are targeted to benefit the most vulnerable

Urban resilience, climate-proof infrastructure and informal settlements must be turned into an economic, social and political opportunity for accelerating resilience to climate impacts and sustainable development. This is a critical opportunity for local, regional and national governments to work together and collaborate with key stakeholders and rightsholders to simultaneously advance decarbonization efforts while building resilient urban systems that allow residents to not simply survive but thrive.

## ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE

To ensure the success of the Initiative and alignment of all stakeholders, a transparent governance structure has been developed around four different bodies:

- ◆ **Global SURGe Alliance**, which is open to participation by interested stakeholders. This Alliance provides an advisory function and will convene biennially at the margins of the World Urban Forum and present annual progress at the UNFCCC COPs with a view to providing inputs to outcomes of COPs. A current list of organizations committed to the initiative can be found in the table below, with a call for further interested stakeholders to join.
- ◆ **Steering Committee**, consisting of co-chairs and co-leads of each Track Working Group, the COP Presidencies, High-level Champions [tbc] and the Global Secretariat.
- ◆ **Global Secretariat**, which is co-hosted by UN-Habitat and ICLEI. It oversees the day-to-day operations of the Initiative, ensures alignment of work programmes between tracks in close collaboration with working group leads, upholds the overarching principles, keeps abreast of implementation progress including monitoring, reports (once per year to the proposed Housing and Urban Development Ministerial Meeting on

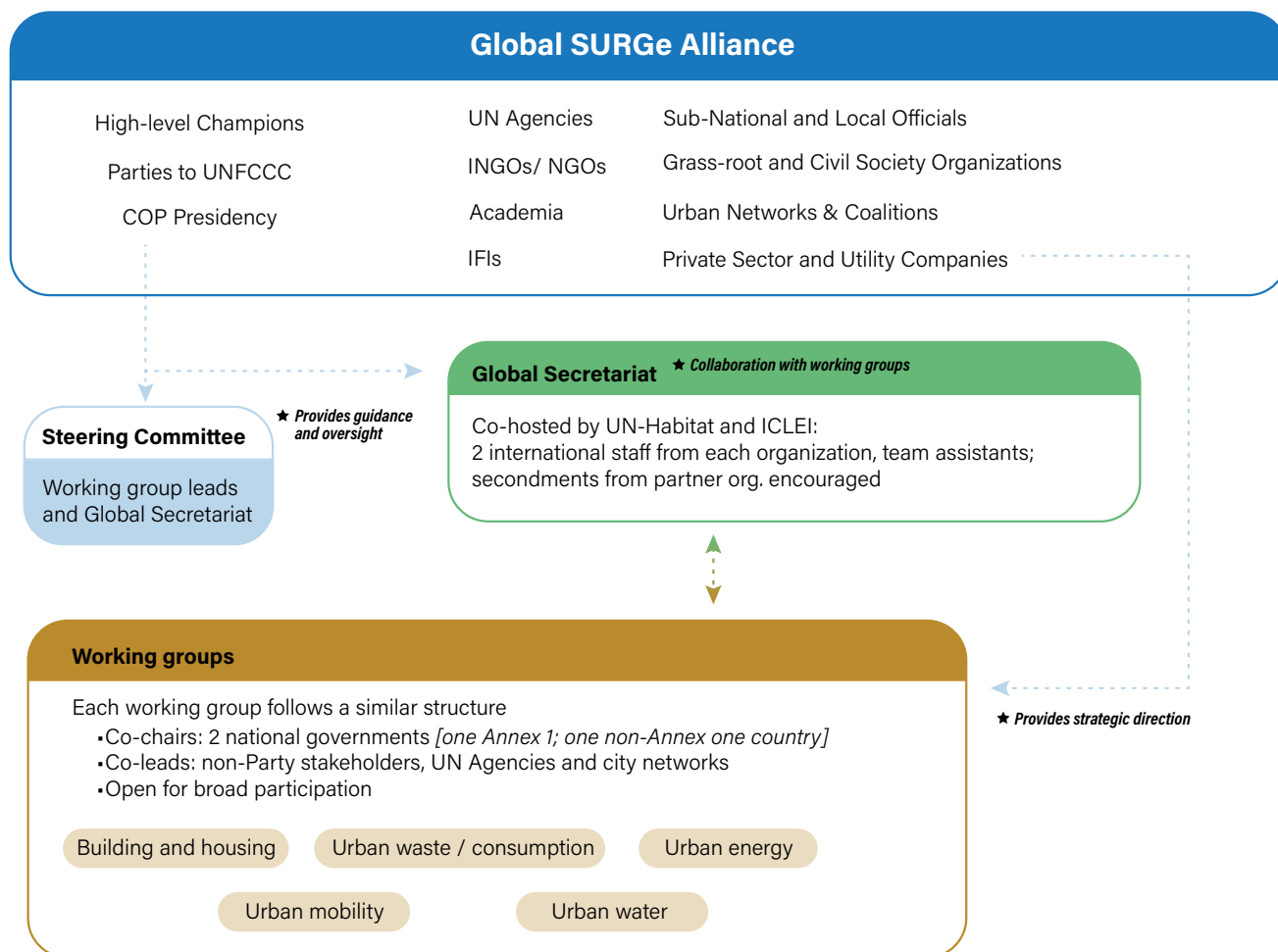
Cities and Climate Change at UNFCCC COPs), verifies and secures high-level commitment to the Initiative from Members to the Global SURGe Alliance and external partners. The Secretariat is also tasked with ensuring close collaboration with existing programmes, partnerships, initiatives and campaigns by seeking synergy and avoiding duplication. The secretariat may be complemented with national secretariats to facilitate country-specific implementation.

- ◆ **Five Working Groups with track partners**, each comprising two co-chairs (one Annex 1; one non-Annex one country) and two co-lead organisation(s) (one UN agency and one network of local and regional governments and/or other non-state actors) that build on/consider existing work, initiatives, and commitments in the respective field, convene key stakeholders and existing networks relevant to the track. While working groups are sector-specific, they should all work on cross-cutting issues. The responsible entities report back to the Global Secretariat and present their progress at upcoming COPs and will designate a focal point to coordinate with other relevant presidential initiatives.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Contributing to building sustainable, inclusive and resilient urban systems, the work of the SURGe Initiative is guided by the following overarching ten principles:

1. **Low-carbon:** reducing emissions and benefiting from cost savings from decreased energy use and improved energy and resource efficiency
2. **Resilient:** strengthening the capacity of city systems and their inhabitants to maintain continuity through shocks and stresses and recover faster, while positively adapting and transforming towards urban sustainability, taking into account the management of internal and international migration into cities
3. **Nature-positive:** Harnessing the potential of Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) to improve cities' socio-ecological resilience and wellbeing
4. **Fair, equitable, and inclusive:** needs to reach the most vulnerable communities to climate change impacts by establishing social dialogue and participatory processes for co-design and prioritized implementation
5. **Multi-level climate governance and climate planning:** recognizing the importance of collaboration between local, regional, and national governments and harnessing the cross-scale and cross-discipline relationships necessary for climate action to raise the ambitions of the NDCs
6. **Integrated:** Leveraging co-benefits of investment in adaptation and mitigation measures while building on existing support, initiatives, and partnerships to leverage their impact and lessons learned
7. **Locally-led and culture-positive:** Customise approaches depending on local contexts of new, rapidly developing cities, while recognising that culture and heritage represent both an asset to be protected from climate impacts and a resource to strengthen the ability of communities to pursue transformative change
8. **Circular:** promoting a circular value chain in buildings and constructions, but also in supply and disposal infrastructure systems, that aims at reducing both emissions and waste drastically while promoting innovation, affordability, ensuring food security, energy efficiency, and local development
9. **Financing-enabling:** centred on capacity building, technology transfer, enabling frameworks and delivering solutions to support and enhance existing and innovating finance channels and mobilising finance at scale while accelerating access for local and regional governments
10. **Health-promoting:** recognising the importance of health and wellbeing as an input to resilience, the power of health arguments to motivate change, and the significant economic and social co-benefits available from health-aware climate action



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