

ARISE
CITIES
FORUM 2025

CONFERENCE
REPORT

8 - 9 OCTOBER 2025 | NEW DELHI, INDIA





Prepared Under: ARISE Cities Forum 2025

Year of Publishing: 2025

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8 - 9 OCTOBER 2025

NEW DELHI, INDIA

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INTRODUCTION TO **ARISE**

The ARISE Cities Forum is envisioned as a premier regional platform to advance urban resilience, innovation and climate action among local governments in South Asia, led by ICLEI South Asia, with India at its centre.

ARISE stands for **A**daptive, **R**esilient, **I**nnovative, **S**ustainable, and **E**quitable—values that underpin its vision and objectives.

The inaugural ARISE Cities Forum, held on 8–9 October 2025, brought together representatives of governments, thought leaders, urban practitioners and stakeholders from the Asia-Pacific region for two days of dialogue, innovation, and collaboration through nine thematic sessions.

As the host city, Delhi showcased Indian sub-national and local leadership on a regional and global stage. The Forum also amplified diverse voices from the Global South, reinforcing the importance of inclusive, multi-level climate action.

The deliberations culminated in the 'Delhi Declaration', a joint statement of urban ambition and commitment. The collaboratively developed document, shaped by global mayors and leaders, was formally released at the Forum's conclusion and submitted for consideration to the COP30 Presidency in Belém, Brazil. The National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA), the think tank of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India (GoI), was the official partner for the ARISE Cities Forum.



NINE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The ARISE Cities Forum 2025 was guided by nine principles that formed the basis of all discussions. They were as follows:



1. AMBITION, ACTION, IMPACT: THE 'VIKSIT' REVOLUTION

As the momentum builds toward COP30, **India's urban journey shows that economic growth and emissions reduction can co-exist**. This track showcases its **blueprint for green development, aligned with the IPCC's 1.5°C pathway**, offering climate-resilient models for the Global South.

Focus:

- Sustainable Reforms
- Urban Innovation
- Policy to Practice



2. THE GLOBAL SOUTH MOMENT: NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTION (NDC) 3.0

With strong political will and **whole-of-society engagement**, **NDC 3.0 can unlock green transitions**. This track explores how a **systems-change approach**, anchored in cities can **align national targets with local action** for transformative climate impact.

Focus:

- Transitions 2.0 to 3.0
- Sectoral Strategies
- International Cooperation



3. FUEL THE FUTURE: CAPITAL FOR CLIMATE

As the COP30 Presidency advances the \$1.3 trillion Baku to Belém Roadmap, scaling up climate finance remains urgent. This track focuses on **de-risking and improving access to investments, reform multilateral finance, and strengthen domestic capacities**.

Focus:

- Adaptation Funding
- Loss and Damage
- Financing Growth Hubs



4. ADAPT NOW: LOCAL ACTION FOR RESILIENCE

This track spotlights solutions— **reimagining resilient-future infrastructure, restoring biodiversity, and securing food systems**. Implementation-ready solutions take centre stage and define what nature-aligned development looks like in practice.

Focus:

- Biodiversity and Forest Cover
- Ecosystem-based Adaptation
- Circular Economies



5. LET'S REWIRE: DECARBONISING TODAY, SUSTAINING TOMORROW

Cities are at the forefront of both climate impacts and solutions, **guided by reset, retrofit and re-new**. Focused on **decarbonising city systems through integrated planning**, this track champions **advancing greener buildings, clean energy, low-carbon mobility and supply chains**.

Focus:

- Built Environment
- Energy and Clean Fuels
- Heat and Health
- Mobility and Air Quality



6. BEYOND CARBON: RESILIENCE FOR WHOM?

Climate action must **prioritise equity**—this track asks who bears risks, **who's excluded, and what equity means in practice**, offering insights for inclusive urban futures **leaving no-one behind**.

Focus:

- Inclusivity
- Gender and Equity
- Informality and Livelihoods



7. DATA AND TECH: ENGINES FOR CLIMATE INNOVATION

With a sharp focus on **data gaps and tech innovations**, this track unpacks the **tools and solutions** for **building smarter, digitally-empowered and future-ready cities**.

Focus:

- Data-based Governance
- Tech Transfers
- Monitoring and Evaluation



8. COLLABORATE FOR IMPACT: THE 'MUTIRAO' WAY

Rooted in '**Mutirao**'—collective action for common goals—this track unlocks **collaborative governance structures, regional and shared frameworks through partnership models**.

Focus:

- Multi-level Governance
- Climate Cooperation
- Community and Youth
- Leadership



9. KNOWLEDGE IN ACTION: PREPARING FOR A WARMING WORLD

This track contextualises the **language of climate, building narratives and communication strategies** that **empower governments, private sector, communities and individuals** to drive resilient, effective climate action.

Focus:

- Climate Narratives
- Capacity Building
- Indigenous Practices



PROGRAMME

OVERVIEW

Day 1: Wednesday | 8 October 2025

08:00 onwards	Registration and Tea
09:30 – 11:00	Opening Ceremony (Venue: The Crystal Ballroom)
11:00 – 11:10	Interval
11:10 – 12:00	Plenary 1: High-level dialogue: Accelerating Climate Action in South Asia (Venue: The Crystal Ballroom)
12:00 – 12:30	Coffee/Tea break ☕
12:30 – 13:30	Parallel Session 1: Circularity at the core of Urban Futures: Zero Waste Approach for Water and Waste (Venue: Crystal Ballroom 1)
12:30 – 13:30	Parallel Session 2: Cities and Food Futures: Pathways for Inclusion and Sustainability (Venue: Crystal Ballroom 2)
12:30 – 13:30	Parallel Session 3: A Nature First Approach: Harnessing Ecosystems for Resilience (Venue: Regency IV & V)
13:30 – 14:30	Networking Lunch organised by UTM/UTM - The Crystal Ballroom 🍷
14:30 – 16:00	Parallel Session 4: Heat, Health and Urban Planning: A systems approach to tackling urban heat risk in cities (Venue: Crystal Ballroom 1)
14:30 – 16:00	Parallel Session 5: Net-zero, Climate Resilient Cities: From Planning to Implementation (Venue: Crystal Ballroom 2)
14:30 – 16:00	Parallel Session 6: Strengthening Global South Leadership in Locally-led Adaptation for Climate Resilience (Venue: Regency IV & V)
16:00 – 16:30	Coffee/Tea break ☕
16:30 – 17:30	Plenary 2: From Disaster Risk to Readiness: Cities as First Responders (Venue: The Crystal Ballroom)
19:30 onwards	Celebratory Dinner - 20 Years of ICLEI South Asia - The Regal 🍷

Day 2: Thursday | 9 October 2025

08:00 onwards	Registration and Tea
09:30 – 11:30	Plenary 3: Financing Climate Action: Shaping Instruments, Policies, and Institutions for Urban Transitions in India (Venue: The Crystal Ballroom)
11:30 – 12:00	Coffee/Tea break ☕
12:00 – 13:30	Parallel Session 7: Building Sustainable Urban Mobility Ecosystems for a Low-Carbon Future - E-mobility and Eco-logistics (Venue: Crystal Ballroom 1)
12:00 – 13:30	Parallel Session 8: Climate Financing for Cities: Bridging Plans and Investments (Venue: Crystal Ballroom 2)
12:00 – 13:30	Parallel Session 9: National Local Dialogue on Transitioning Towards Innovative Cities - Session I (Venue: Regency IV and V)
13:30 – 14:30	Networking Lunch - The Crystal Ballroom 🍷
14:30 – 16:00	Parallel Session 10: Digital Solutions for Sustainable Energy Planning (Venue: Crystal Ballroom 1)
14:30 – 16:00	Parallel Session 11: Shaping Urban Climate Futures: Media Narratives, Citizen Participation, and the Youth Perspective (Venue: Crystal Ballroom 2)
14:30 – 16:30	Parallel Session 12: National Local Dialogue on Transit Oriented Development in Indian Cities - Session II (Venue: Regency IV and V)
16:00 – 16:30	Coffee/Tea break ☕
16:30 – 17:30	Closing Plenary (Venue: The Crystal Ballroom)

ARISE AT A GLANCE

Global Reach



20+
Countries

60+
Cities

Organisational Support



91 Participating Organisations

Diverse Representation



200+

Participants: Government representatives, thought leaders, academicians and youth

25+

Partners of global and national repute endorsed the Forum

Engaging Content



120+ Speakers

3

Plenaries

12

Parallel Sessions

5

Book Launches

A two-day training workshop on climate resilience and disaster risk reduction held under the CDKN programme

- (ICLEI South Asia@20: Commemorative Book,
- Building Climate Resilience in Indian Cities Compendium of Case Studies,
- Local Power, Global Change: A City Leader's Handbook for Climate Action,
- Promoting Electric Vehicles in Hilly Regions Awareness Guide
- Youth Hackathon Booklet

DAY 1: WEDNESDAY

8 OCTOBER 2025



OPENING CEREMONY



The ARISE Cities Forum 2025 opened with an address by Hon'ble Minister of State Tokhan Sahu, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India. Distinguished speakers included Gino Van Begin, Secretary General, ICLEI; Dr. Debolina Kundu, Director, NIUA; Norio Saito, Director, Urban Development and Water Division, Asian Development Bank; Shombi Sharp, UN Resident Coordinator in India; and Emani Kumar, Deputy Secretary General, ICLEI, and Executive Director, ICLEI South Asia.

SESSION DETAILS

- **Welcome Speech:** Emani Kumar, Deputy Secretary General, ICLEI, and Executive Director, ICLEI South Asia
- **Introductory Remarks:** Gino Van Begin, Secretary General, ICLEI
- **Special Remarks:** Dr. Debolina Kundu, Director, National Institute of Urban Affairs, India
- **Special Remarks:** Norio Saito, Senior Director, Water and Urban Development Sector Office, Asian Development Bank
- **Special Address:** Shombi Sharp, UN Resident Coordinator in India

Launch: ICLEI South Asia@20: Commemorative Book

- **Inaugural Address:** Honourable Minister of State Tokhan Sahu, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India
- **Special Guest on Dais:** Hansa Patel, Chairperson, ICLEI South Asia
- **Vote of Thanks:** Soumya Chaturvedula, Director, ICLEI South Asia
- **Master of Ceremony:** Sayli Mankikar, Associate Director - Knowledge Management and Advocacy, ICLEI South Asia



From Left to Right: Hon'ble Tokhan Sahu, Emani Kumar, Gino Van Begin, Dr. Debolina Kundu, Shombi Sharp, Norio Saito, Hansa Patel

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Countries, cities, and communities need to work together not only to fulfil their Nationally Determined Contributions, but also to make locally determined contributions.
- Financing lies at the core of the conversation. The private sector will play the most significant role in driving job creation and investment.
- Protecting the most vulnerable in the battle against climate change calls for equitable policies that prioritise communities at greatest risk—those with limited resources, fragile livelihoods, or exposure to climate-related hazards.
- Enhancing urban service efficiency calls for integrating climate action into core urban planning and governance, ensuring that resources such as water, energy, and waste systems are managed through data-driven, circular, and resilient approaches.
- The visible impacts of climate change underscore the urgent need for systemic and inclusive transitions. Climate action represents not only an environmental priority but also a social and economic transformation agenda.
- The session underscored a unified call to move from dialogue to implementation, translating ambition into impact. Through collaboration, localisation, and innovation, the Forum reaffirmed cities' central role in driving a just, resilient, and sustainable urban future.

SPEAKER QUOTES

“Cities are important as they are centres of economic development, but they are under pressure from rising population, and water and air pollution. But where there are challenges, there are also solutions. ARISE is important as solutions can be sought, despite the challenges.”

Honourable Minister of State Tokhan Sahu, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India



“There is significant climate ambition in India. We see a whole-of-society approach being adopted by India's leadership on various platforms to enhance city and climate resilience.”

Shombi Sharp, UN Resident Coordinator in India

“ARISE is an excellent platform to share ideas, collaborate and share new partnerships.”

Norio Saito, Senior Director, Water and Urban Development Sector Office, Asian Development Bank



“The Delhi Declaration will carry the voices of Global South cities, as cities are at the forefront in ensuring that no one is left behind in the transition.”

Dr. Debolina Kundu, Director, National Institute of Urban Affairs, India

“As the world surpasses the 1.5 degree threshold, climate impacts are becoming more urgent. Yet, global unity seems to be fragmenting. Still, my message is one of hope: leaders are stepping up to face new challenges.”

Gino Van Begin, Secretary General, ICLEI





“ARISE is about the collective ownership of a resilient future and the determination to act together. It is a collective effort to carry Bharat to Belem, ideas to innovation.”

Emani Kumar, Deputy Secretary General, ICLEI, and Executive Director, ICLEI South Asia



From Left to Right: Emani Kumar, Gino Van Begin, Dr. Debolina Kundu, Hon'ble Tokhan Sahu, Shombi Sharp, Norio Saito, Hansa Patel



From Left to Right: Shombi Sharp, Emani Kumar, Gino Van Begin, Dr. Debolina Kundu, Hon'ble Tokhan Sahu, Norio Saito, Hansa Patel

PLENARY 1: HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE: ACCELERATING CLIMATE ACTION IN SOUTH ASIA



SESSION DETAILS

Moderator: Gino Van Begin, Secretary General, ICLEI

Panelists:

- Ravi Shankar Prasad, IAS (Retd.), Distinguished Fellow, CEEW, Former Additional Secretary at the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India
- Hemanthi Goonasekera, Chief Executive Officer of the Federation of Sri Lankan Local Government Authorities
- Tijs van Balen, Deputy Economic Counsellor, Embassy of the Netherlands in India
- Andreas B. Schei, Counsellor, Climate and Environment, Royal Norwegian Embassy in New Delhi
- Philippe Sas, Head of International Cooperation and Counsellor, Embassy of Switzerland in India and Bhutan
- Takashi Ariyoshi, Minister and Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of Japan in India

Master of Ceremony: Soumya Chaturvedula, Director, ICLEI South Asia

Launch of 'Building Climate Resilience in Indian Cities: A Compendium of Case Studies' by dignitaries



From Left to Right: Gino Van Begin, Philippe Sas, Takashi Ariyoshi, Ravi Shankar Prasad, IAS ret'd., Hemanthi Goonasekera, Tijs van Balen, Andreas B. Schei

Today, more than half of the world's population, amounting to 4.4 billion people, lives in cities. Asia is home to 54% of the world's urban population, projected to reach 66% by 2050. Due to rapid urbanisation, Asian cities have become hubs of economic growth, generating more than 80% of gross domestic product (GDP) in most countries. Although these cities drive development, this progress comes with significant challenges, as they consume 80% of the region's energy and generate 75% of its carbon emissions.

As a result, Asia suffered the highest number of reported casualties and economic losses from floods and storms in 2023, making it the world's most disaster-prone region. Moreover, the global mean temperature exceeded the critical 1.5°C milestone in 2024, calling for urgent and more ambitious climate action through NDCs.

This high-level dialogue convened leaders, international partners, and sub-national representatives to share experiences and spotlight collaborative approaches to accelerate climate ambition. Delegates reflected on national contributions, shared lessons and explored pathways to deepen partnerships with South Asian cities and governments. The discussion underscored international cooperation, city-to-city learning, and innovative approaches, and spotlighted cities as co-creators of national climate ambition, rather than mere implementation sites.

Urban areas generate most emissions and climate vulnerabilities in South Asia, but remain marginal in national climate planning and financing. This session examined the operational gaps between national ambition and local delivery, identified policy and institutional levers for sub-national integration, and examined how multi-level governance can mainstream urban action. Drawing on practical examples, the discussion challenged structural silos, and highlighted pathways and innovations for durable city-climate alignment.



From Left to Right: Gino Van Begin, Philippe Sas, Takashi Ariyoshi, Ravi Shankar Prasad, IAS ret'd., Hemanthi Goonasekera, Tijs van Balen, Andreas B. Schei, Emani Kumar

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Cities are among the largest consumers of energy and significant contributors to GHG emissions. Aligning NDC goals with urban development targets is therefore essential. Conventional top-down planning approaches need rethinking to make implementation more localised and context-specific.
- Emerging cities present a critical opportunity to learn from the shortcomings of metro cities and adopt low-carbon, resilient growth pathways.
- Capacity and finance gaps limit the ability of cities to adopt and apply new technologies, which hinders climate-resilient urban development.
- Working with the national government to strengthen waste management systems and build city-to-city partnerships is fundamental.
- Going forward, mainstreaming nature-based solutions to build ecologically balanced urban systems and enhance long-term resilience will be key to accelerating climate action.
- The Norwegian partnership with India (under the Norway-India 2030 cooperation strategy) supports NDC goals, focusing on climate-resilient infrastructure for Himalayan states like Sikkim and Uttarakhand.
- Promotion of climate-friendly procurement should be mandatory as part of sustainable development practices.
- Collaboration on e-mobility, including knowledge sharing through the Delhi-Oslo Sustainable Transport Initiative (DOSTI), is advancing the development of EV charging infrastructure and sustainable mobility solutions.
- The overall support for the India Cooling Action Plan reflects ongoing cross-sectoral efforts to address growing cooling demands and mitigate emissions from refrigerant gases.
- Long-term climate action programmes supported by the Swiss Embassy in the region underscore the scale and urgency of addressing risks such as floods, heat waves, and other climate impacts. The Swiss approach is practical and grounded, and aligns closely with India's net zero by 2030 ambition, supporting low-carbon solutions.
- Collaboration across governments, citizens, and markets is essential to achieve climate targets. Access to finance and capacity building are critical enablers for implementation. The Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM) continues to promote city-to-city collaboration with 25 Japanese entities collaborating with 67 cities across 14 countries to incentivize investments in low-carbon solutions.

SPEAKER QUOTES

“Japan aims to cut its emissions by 60% by strengthening cooperation between the national and local governments and promoting city-to-city partnerships to advance decarbonisation.”

Takashi Ariyoshi, Minister and Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of Japan in India



“Switzerland brings deep experience in low-carbon urban development, for implementing climate-resilient solutions at scale and bringing innovative solutions for cities of different sizes and capacities.”

Philippe Sas, Head of International Cooperation and Counsellor, Embassy of Switzerland in India and Bhutan

“Local climate action is essential, with local governments playing a pivotal role. At the same time, adaptation must be at the core of efforts to build truly resilient cities.”

Andreas B. Schei, Counsellor, Climate and Environment, Royal Norwegian Embassy in New Delhi



“India is driving climate leadership through its efforts, such as Mission LiFe, Solar Alliance, and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) networks with sustainable urban development at its core. They focus on green and resilient infrastructure, circular economy, water security, and building local government capacities.”



Tijs van Balen, Deputy Economic Counsellor, Embassy of the Netherlands in India



“It is imperative to take into account existing local resources when planning to address climate challenges at the national level. Laws and policies need to be updated and integrated into the systems and initiatives for enhanced and inclusive development.”

Hemanthi Goonasekera, Chief Executive Officer, Federation of Sri Lankan Local Government Authorities

“Urban solar rooftops and decentralised solutions are becoming the route to achieving accelerated Climate Action in South Asia. We should be focusing more on emerging cities and implementing such solutions for them.”



Ravi Shankar Prasad, IAS retd., Distinguished Fellow, CEEW, ex-Additional Secretary at the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India



From Left to Right: Gino Van Begin, Philippe Sas, Takashi Ariyoshi, Ravi Shankar Prasad, IAS retd., Hemanthi Goonasekera, Tijs van Balen, Andreas B. Schei, Emani Kumar

PARALLEL SESSION 1: CIRCULARITY AT THE CORE OF URBAN FUTURES: ZERO WASTE APPROACH FOR WATER AND WASTE



SESSION DETAILS

Panel Discussion: Waste and water circularity – towards circular cities

Panelists:

- Jai Kumar Gaurav, Senior Advisor, Climate Change and Circular Economy, GIZ India
- Dr. Sunil Kumar, Senior Principal Scientist, CSIR-National Environmental Engineering Research Institute
- Chandana Abeyratne, Public Health Inspector, Kandy Municipal Council, Sri Lanka
- Dr. Nupur Bahadur, Director, NMCG-TERI Centre of Excellence on Water Reuse
- Montgomery Simus, Global Director of Public Affairs, Policy, and Blue Finance, The Ocean Cleanup
- Rohit Sissoniya, IAS, Additional Commissioner, Indore Municipal Corporation
- Manisha Khatri, IAS, Commissioner, Nashik Municipal Corporation



From Left to Right: Soumya Chaturvedula, Dr. Sunil Kumar, Rohit Sissoniya, IAS, Dr. Nupur Bahadur, Montgomery Simus, Chandana Abeyratne, Jai Kumar Gaurav

This session explored circular economy approaches in the materials, waste and water sectors. It highlighted the shift from the linear “take, make, waste” model, which is responsible for rising carbon emissions, biodiversity loss and mounting waste management challenges, to circular systems that extend resource life, promote reuse and recycling, and create socio-economic co-benefits. Global municipal solid waste, estimated at 2.1 billion tonnes in 2020, is projected to increase to 3.8 billion tonnes by 2050, with Asia Pacific’s output expected to rise by 71% from 2016 to 2050.¹ Replacing, reducing, recovering and recycling of materials in the textile, electronics, plastics and municipal waste stream would significantly reduce the waste burden and related environmental impacts.

Urbanisation will also intensify water challenges: global water demand is expected to rise 30% by 2050, while 40% of the world’s population already faces water stress.² In India, nearly 72% of wastewater remains untreated. This reflects the prevailing linear “use-and-dispose” model of water management.³

Circular water management, focusing on reducing consumption, conserving resources, and reusing treated wastewater, will deliver major environmental and economic benefits.

ICLEI’s Circular City Actions Framework and ICLEI South Asia’s pilot initiatives such as AdoptIUWM and IAdapt show how integrated planning, strong policy, pricing, and financial incentives can help cities mainstream circularity.

This session built a shared vision of zero waste and regenerative water systems, and showcased how circular development can decouple economic growth from resource exploitation.



1. [World Bank](#), What a Waste 2.0: A Global Snapshot of Solid Waste Management to 2050, 2018
2. World Bank, Water In Circular Economy and Resilience (WICER), 2021
3. Centre for Science and Environment, Waste to worth: Managing India’s urban water crisis through wastewater reuse, 2024

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Incremental efforts in waste management require consistent policies, stakeholder participation, and a shared vision for circularity and resource management.
- Building institutional capacity and effective collaboration across different institutions and government agencies are necessary for scaling up waste and water recovery and reuse initiatives.
- Building trust between city authorities and citizens is essential for advancing circularity in waste and water management.
- Informality in the waste sector hinders monitoring and regulation, while limited awareness and behavioral change are key barriers to source segregation.
- Scaling up water reuse faces challenges due to inadequate infrastructure, weak interdepartmental coordination, and limited institutional capacity.
- All waste streams need to be treated or managed to realise the actual value of the 'waste-to-wealth' concept, a key driver of circularity.
- Recovery of waste is key to achieving circularity, making bio-mining and legacy waste remediation imperative. This requires technological innovation, private-sector engagement, and community participation.
- Leveraging the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) framework can strengthen plastic waste management by creating value from waste. Involving Urban Local Bodies in the EPR mechanism can enable them to access financial opportunities linked to effective waste management, especially plastics.

SPEAKER QUOTES



“Circularity approach for waste management opens up a lot of avenues for monetisation of waste at the city level, making waste an asset.”

Manisha Khatri, IAS, Commissioner, Nashik Municipal Corporation

“The circularity approach resonates with the ‘Waste to Wealth’ concept, where every element of waste needs to be treated or managed. Indore is monetising Compressed Biogas and is looking to monetise textile and electronic waste generated in the city.”

Rohit Sissoniya, IAS, Additional Commissioner, Indore Municipal Corporation



“It is important to prioritise scheduled collection of different types of waste and segregation at source in order to ensure that circularity of water and waste can be maintained.”

Chandana Abeyratne, Public Health Inspector, Kandy Municipal Council, Sri Lanka

“Adoption of innovative technologies, development of infrastructure, and institutional capacity building are key to scaling up water reuse in cities.”

Dr. Nupur Bahadur, Director, NMCG-TERI Centre of Excellence on Water Reuse



“The Global Plastic Treaty will give cities the opportunity to access financial resources and have the responsibility to implement measures to reduce the amount of plastic in water bodies and to monitor waste reaching the oceans.”



Montgomery Simus, Global Director of Public Affairs, Policy, and Blue Finance, The Ocean Cleanup



“Bio-mining and legacy waste remediation transform waste management into a pathway for resource recovery.”

Dr. Sunil Kumar, Senior Principal Scientist, CSIR-National Environmental Engineering Research Institute

“The Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) policy in India is a great opportunity for waste sector entrepreneurs. However, the challenge lies in the lack of capacity and the informal nature of the waste sector value chain.”



Jai Kumar Gaurav, Senior Advisor, Climate Change and Circular Economy, GIZ India



PARALLEL SESSION 2: CITIES AND FOOD FUTURES: PATHWAYS FOR INCLUSION AND SUSTAINABILITY



SESSION DETAILS

Keynote Address

- Meeta Punjabi, Senior Food Systems Officer, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Bangkok

Moderated panel discussion

Moderator: Bedoshruti Sadhukhan, Associate Director, ICLEI South Asia

Panellists

- Nivedita Varshneya, Regional Advisor, Welthungerhilfe (WHH)
- Jyoti Awasthi, CEO and Co-Founder, Satat Sampada
- Kalanidhi Devkota, Executive Director, Municipal Association of Nepal
- Pawan Agarwal, Chief Executive Officer, Food Future Foundation
- Dharmendra Kumar, Founding Secretary, Janpahal

City Presentations

- Sambhav Ayachi, Deputy Commissioner, Jabalpur Smart City Limited, Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh
- Azlan bin Abdullah, Senior Deputy Director (Planning), City Planning Department, Kuala Lumpur City Hall

Co-organised with GIZ India



From Left to Right: Bedoshruti Sadhukhan, Azlan bin Abdullah, Dharmendra Kumar, Sambhav Ayachi, Meeta Punjabi, Pawan Agarwal, Nivedita Varshneya, Jyoti Awasthi, Kalanidhi Devkota

With over half of the global population living in cities, and India's urban share projected to reach 50% by 2050, urban centres are at the heart of the food systems transition. Cities consume much of the world's food while remaining disconnected from farming realities, environmental sustainability, and nutrition needs. This disconnect threatens health, equity, and resilience in the face of climate change. Placing food at the centre of urban governance—alongside housing, water, mobility, and energy—is now critical for building equitable and sustainable cities.

This session explored how cities can strengthen public health through food security, by promoting healthy diets, improving access to fresh markets, reducing food loss and food waste, and encouraging local food production, by leveraging tools such as the CityFood Network's **Triple H Approach**. It brought together diverse perspectives to unpack these challenges and opportunities, highlighting how improving access to healthy food and strengthening local food economies can enhance both **resilience and food security**.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- A holistic approach that links production, consumption, and governance, is key to securing the future of urban food systems.
- Consumer awareness drives change. Safe and nutritious food requires informed demand from urban consumers.
- Urban food initiatives can reduce food waste, promote healthy eating, and support local economies.
- Obesogenic food environments pose growing challenges for urban nutrition, including the expectation of year-round availability of seasonal foods.
- Urban gardens, mapping of food environments in cities, rooftop farms, and green initiatives can be mechanisms for sustainable food production.
- Waste-to-energy systems, Triple H approach (Healthy People, Healthy Landscape, Healthy Climate), bio-CNG plants, and circular economy approaches can significantly help in managing food waste.
- Supportive policy frameworks, multi-sectoral collaboration, and digital platforms connecting producers and consumers, along with better street food regulation, can advance sustainability in urban food markets.

SPEAKER QUOTES



“Integrating food into city planning, Jabalpur promotes certified street vendors, reduces food waste, advances circular economy solutions, and fosters healthy eating, creating inclusive, sustainable, and resilient urban communities for all.”

Sambhav Ayachi, Deputy Commissioner, Jabalpur Smart City Limited, Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh

“Building green, healthier, and inclusive cities ensures sustainable food futures, where urban spaces support equitable access to nutritious food, strengthen communities, and foster environmental resilience for generations to come.”

Azlan bin Abdullah, Senior Deputy Director (Planning), City Planning Department, Kuala Lumpur City Hall



“Sustainable urban futures rely on integrating food system management to achieve circularity — rethinking how we produce, distribute, and consume food to minimize waste, recover value, and build resilient cities.”

Meeta Punjabi, Senior Food Systems Officer, Food and Agriculture Organization, Bangkok



“A major perception challenge in India is viewing food issues as solely rural, while urban populations overlook their role in consumption, waste, and sustainability within the broader food system.”

Pawan Agarwal, Chief Executive Officer, Food Future Foundation

“If consumers demand safe food, then farmers will produce safe food. Our mistake is that we consider food as unidimensional, but it is a multidimensional subject.”

Nivedita Varshneya, Regional Advisor, Welthungerhilfe



“In forested areas of Nepal, the co-existence of human and wildlife is a major challenge, as wild animals increasingly invade farmlands, destroying crops and threatening the balance between nature and human settlements.”

Kalanidhi Devkota, Executive Director, Municipal Association of Nepal

“Urban consumers have evolved from eating anything available to making mindful choices about what they eat — reflecting a growing awareness of health, sustainability, and the origins of their food.”

Jyoti Awasthi, CEO and Co-Founder, Satat Sampada Climate Foundation



“Between producers and consumers lie the co-producers - people like us and the street vendors who sustain daily life. It's time to redesign our cities and neighborhoods to ensure space for street vendors in every land use.”

Dharmendra Kumar, Founding Secretary, Janpahal

“With 6.5 billion people expected to live in urban areas by 2050, the future of food systems is in urban areas. Local governments will lead the way in strengthening urban food systems, engaging communities, private players, academia, civil society and key actors.”

Bedoshruti Sadhukhan, Associate Director, ICLEI South Asia



PARALLEL SESSION 3: A NATURE FIRST APPROACH: HARNESSING ECOSYSTEMS FOR RESILIENCE



SESSION DETAILS

Keynote Address:

- Dr. C. Achalender Reddy, IFS (retd), Former Chairperson, National Biodiversity Authority

Moderated panel discussion

Moderator: Dr. Monalisa Sen, Associate Director, ICLEI South Asia

Panelists

- V. Krishna, IFS, Conservator of Forests, Research & Development Circle, Hyderabad; Dean, Forest College and Research Institute, Mulugu, Hyderabad
- Palwe Girish Haribhau, IFS, Assistant Mission Director, Tamil Nadu Climate Change Mission
- Prof. S. Kanmani, Director, CCCDM, Anna University, Chennai
- Perna Mehta, Associate Director of Urban Development, World Resources Institute, India
- Vishwas Chitale, Fellow – Climate Resilience, Council on Energy, Environment and Water

City Presentations

- Uttar Kumar Rai, Hon'ble Mayor, Phuentsholing Thromde, Bhutan
- Dipin Dileep, Councillor, Kochi, India

Co-organised with WRI India



From Left to Right: Dipin Dileep, Dr. Radha Priya P, Dr. Monalisa Sen, Hon'ble Uttar Kumar Rai, V. Krishna, IFS, Dr. C. Achalender Reddy, IFS (Retd), Prof. S. Kanmani, Perna Mehta, Dr. Vishwas Chitale, Palwe Girish Haribhau, IFS

As cities and ecosystems face intensifying climate risks, nature-based solutions (NbS) are emerging as powerful tools to build resilience, restore ecological balance, and support community well-being. From urban forests and green infrastructure to watershed restoration and climate-adaptive landscapes, ecosystem-based approaches offer co-benefits that address mitigation, adaptation, and biodiversity conservation in one integrated approach.

This session explored the potential of natural ecosystems in strengthening local resilience, particularly in vulnerable regions. It examined how policymakers, planners, and communities can implement and scale nature-first approaches, drawing from science, traditional practices, and innovation. Key discussions focused on governance, financing, and the monitoring of ecosystem-based outcomes, while also acknowledging the role of indigenous and community knowledge as one strand in a broader systems approach to resilient development.

As the planet approaches critical ecological thresholds, safeguarding biodiversity is no longer solely a conservationist concern. It is central to climate resilience, human well-being, and sustainable urban development. Cities and regions must understand, protect, and integrate biodiversity through ecosystem service assessments, green infrastructure planning, and nature-positive policies.

The discussions highlighted the urgent need to map, monitor, and assign value to biodiversity, using tools like natural capital accounting and co-benefits frameworks. It examined how ecosystem degradation leads to irreversible tipping points, and how timely interventions can transform biodiversity from a passive asset into an active climate and development solution.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Nature-based solutions should be integrated into all aspects of urban planning.
- Allocating a dedicated budget for biodiversity enables the implementation of projects that prioritise nature-first solutions.
- Controlled implementation is a key to the success of NbS projects.
- Rapid urbanisation is a major challenge, leading to the degradation of existing green infrastructure.

SPEAKER QUOTES

“Nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches are a major aspect to manage urban growth.”

Dr. C. Achalender Reddy, IFS (retd), Former Chairperson, National Biodiversity Authority



“Green and grey infrastructure solutions are being integrated together, which is helping to make the city of Phuentsholing Thromde in Bhutan sustainable.”

Uttar Kumar Rai, Hon'ble Mayor, Phuentsholing Thromde, Bhutan



“Inclusion of a separate budget head for biodiversity in the municipal and Panchayati Raj budgets can help in mainstreaming of Nature-based solutions.”

V. Krishna, IFS, Conservator of Forests, Research & Development Circle, Hyderabad; Dean, Forest College and Research Institute, Mulugu, Hyderabad

“To support biodiversity, TNGCC has conceived four missions, which include, Green Tamil Nadu Mission for Plantation in Urban and Peri-urban Areas, Wetland Mission for wetland conservation, Coastal Restoration Mission for local participation, Tamil Nadu Climate Change Mission for implementation of environmental projects.”

Palwe Girish Haribhau, IFS, Assistant Mission Director, Tamil Nadu Climate Change Mission



“Community participation is a major tool for the successful implementation of NbS.”

Prof. S. Kanmani, Director, CCCDM, Anna University, Chennai

“Public participation in Kochi’s greening efforts is a key factor why the city has been able to take a green and nature-first approach in implementing climate solutions.”

Dipin Dileep, Councillor, Kochi, India



“Estimating the cost of NbS is a challenge and it cannot be determined in terms of economic cost. We need to consider the long-term impact of integrating and adopting nature-first approaches.”

Vishwas Chitale, Fellow – Climate Resilience, Council on Energy, Environment and Water

“NbS is a livelihood opportunity for communities. It helps in developing sustainable models for communities in becoming resilient.”

Perna Mehta, Associate Director of Urban Development, World Resources Institute India



PARALLEL SESSION 4:

HEAT, HEALTH AND URBAN PLANNING: A SYSTEMS APPROACH TO TACKLING URBAN HEAT RISK IN CITIES



SESSION DETAILS

Introduction and context setting

- Emani Kumar, Deputy Secretary General, ICLEI and Executive Director, ICLEI South Asia

Keynote Address

- Anshul Mishra, IAS, Additional Director, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi

Team Dhara: Youth Hackathon winner presentation on 'Mitigating Urban Heat Through Cooling Strategies in Neighbourhood of Vijayawada'

Moderated panel discussion: Driving inclusive urban heat resilience

Moderator: Emani Kumar, Deputy Secretary General, ICLEI, Executive Director, ICLEI South Asia

Panelists:

- Dr. C. Divakar Reddy, Chairman, Tirupati Urban Development Authority
- Ajit Kawade, Deputy Secretary and Mission Director PMAY-2, Housing Department, Government of Maharashtra
- Dr. Sivananda Damodara Pai, Program Head, Mission Mausam, Ministry of Earth Sciences and Additional Director General of Meteorology, Agromet Advisory Services Division, India Meteorological Department (IMD)
- Bijal Brahmbhatt, Director, Mahila Housing Trust
- Dr. Sunita Purushottam, Chairperson of the Board, Global Buildings Performance Network
- Dr. Ambarish Dutta, Additional Professor, Public Health Foundation of India
- Neha Awasthi, Expert – Heat Resilient Urban Planning, Cities Unit, Mitigation Branch, Climate Change Division, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)



From Left to Right: Emani Kumar, Anshul Mishra, IAS, C. Divakar Reddy, Bijal Brahmbhatt, Ajit Kawade, Dr. D. Sivananda Pai, Dr. Ambarish Dutta, Dr. Sunita Purushottam, Neha Awasthi

The session focused on advancing systemic and regionally coordinated approaches to strengthen urban heat resilience in South Asia.

With the increasing frequency and intensity of heatwaves across the Asia-Pacific, South Asia remains one of the most vulnerable regions to extreme heat, accounting for 45% of global heat-related deaths between 2000 and 2019. The number of people exposed to extreme heat is growing exponentially due to climate change in all world regions. Heat-related mortality among people over 65 years of age increased by approximately 85% between 2000–2004 and 2017–2021. Between 2000 and 2019, studies estimate an average of 489,000 heat-related deaths annually, with 45% occurring in Asia and 36% in Europe. Without urgent action, 1.5 billion people could face lethal heatwaves by 2100.

Climate-induced extreme heat has far-reaching socio-economic and health impacts such as fatigue, decreased productivity, crop losses, water scarcity, increased power demand for cooling and even loss of lives. In 2024, India alone recorded more than 44,000 heatstroke cases, further straining the country's overburdened healthcare systems. Heat-induced productivity losses were estimated at around USD 100 billion, particularly impacting construction workers and micro, small and medium enterprises.

While national, state and local governments have initiated measures such as early warnings and Heat Action Plans, most responses remain reactive and relief-focused. A shift towards pre-emptive, long-term strategies, embedding mitigating strategies into urban planning, infrastructure, greening, housing, health, transport and water resource management, is urgently needed. Urban cooling strategies are also an essential part of this approach.

A regionally coordinated, multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral approach, bridging science, policy and action across national, state and local governments, is required to effectively address and mitigate extreme heat impacts. Simultaneously, hyper-local solutions can help limit urban heat island (UHI) effects.

This session brought together policy makers, NGOs, researchers, finance institutions, development organisations and intergovernmental organisations to identify gaps in policy, governance, finance, technology and data and explore opportunities for the systemic integration of heat resilience within urban systems and governance.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The unprecedented increase in extreme heat events is increasingly affecting public health, livelihood, productivity, social equity and vulnerable populations.
- Conducting robust UHI assessments is essential for identifying hotspots and populations that are more susceptible to extreme heat.
- Grey, green and blue infrastructure initiatives can help to mitigate UHIs at the local level.
- Heat governance frameworks should be adopted at all levels for developing a resilience roadmap that can prevent the adverse effects of heat on health.
- Financing, implementation, and monitoring of green infrastructure initiatives remain key challenges and often limit effective heat mitigation in urban areas.
- Leveraging improved observation networks, forecasting systems, and dissemination of extreme weather information to last-mile users can significantly improve heat management in South Asia and prevent heat-related health impacts.
- Mainstreaming technical and financial convergence of mechanisms, along with strengthening knowledge networks across all levels is crucial to mitigating the adverse effects of heat on health.
- It is important to assess the impact of extreme heat on urban populations and account for risk differentials and heterogeneity of the vulnerable population.

SPEAKER QUOTES



“It is important to adopt Heat Governance and develop a systemic approach through multi-level coordination by linking data, health outcomes, policy, livelihoods, and social equity action to shape cooler and healthier cities. This can shape a collaborative pathway to unlock climate finance to scale up the resilience roadmap.”

Anshul Mishra, IAS, Additional Director, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) New Delhi

“Tailor-made actions for local context are essential as global temperatures are projected to exceed the 1.5°C threshold set by the Paris Agreement within the next five years. The Government of India is supporting IMD with funding to improve all observation networks and forecasting systems for extreme events across the country.”

Dr. Sivananda Damodara Pai, Program Head, Mission Mausam, Ministry of Earth Sciences & Additional Director General of Meteorology, Agromet Advisory Services Division, India Meteorological Department (IMD)



“Maharashtra is one of the first states to have a climate-responsive housing policy and its own Green Fund to unlock finance for making housing more equitable. The state is developing projects to include solar, green building certification, while also catering to vulnerable sections.”

Ajit Kawade, Deputy Secretary and Mission Director PMAY-2, Housing Department, Government of Maharashtra

“Andhra Pradesh aims to make Tirupati a global religious attraction by 2047. To mitigate heat impacts, the planning authority in Tirupati aims to embed heat actions and sustainability measures into all planning projects and enhance heat resilience.”

Dr. C. Divakar Reddy, Chairman, Tirupati Urban Development Authority



“Heat is not just a season, it’s a systemic threat that demands local action and global urgency. Gamification of microclimatic data, driven by women, builds their capacities and trains them to become ecosystem catalysers for institutionalising heat action plans at the local level.”

Bijal Brahmbhatt, Director, Mahila Housing Trust

“A holistic approach is needed to develop comprehensive guidelines for ensuring human health in buildings, which need to be deployed at all levels so that homes are designed to be nature-centric and healthy spaces.”

Dr. Sunita Purushottam, Chairperson of the Board, Global Buildings Performance Network



“ICLEI South Asia’s approach of developing Climate City Action Plans helps in integrating heat and health into urban planning and presents a methodology for heat risk assessment.”

Emani Kumar, Deputy Secretary General, ICLEI, Executive Director, ICLEI South Asia



“To understand the impact on health due to extreme heat sensitivity, it is important to assess a population’s attributable risk fraction and the heterogeneity of vulnerable populations, including pregnant women, children, and the elderly, under different conditions.”

Dr. Ambarish Dutta, Additional Professor, Public Health Foundation of India

“Declaring heat as a state disaster can help in unlocking funds, prioritise heat mitigation, strengthen heat governance, and ensure community leadership and ownership.”

Neha Awasthi, Expert – Heat Resilient Urban Planning, Cities Unit, Mitigation Branch, Climate Change Division, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)



From Left to Right: Emani Kumar, Anshul Mishra, IAS, C. Divakar Reddy, Bijal Brahmbhatt, Ajit Kawade, Dr. D. Sivananda Pai, Dr. Ambarish Dutta, Dr. Sunita Purushottam, Neha Awasthi

PARALLEL SESSION 5:

NET-ZERO, CLIMATE RESILIENT CITIES: FROM PLANNING TO IMPLEMENTATION



SESSION DETAILS

Panel discussion: Dialogue on Urban Climate Action

Moderator: Gino Van Begin, Secretary General, ICLEI

Panelists

- Mirant Parikh, IAS, Deputy Municipal Commissioner, Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation
- Ridhima Sud, Senior Advisor for Climate Change, Embassy of Switzerland in India and Bhutan
- Sebastian Markart, Project Head - Urban Act India, GIZ

Showcasing Climate Action in the Asia-Pacific - Presentations

Mainstreaming Climate-Resilient Urban Planning and Implementation in South Asia and Southeast Asia

- Nikhil Kolsepatil, Programme Coordinator (Energy & Climate), ICLEI South Asia

Advancing Climate-Resilient Urban Planning and Action in Penang, Malaysia through the Penang 2030 Agenda

- Dr. Vishanthini Kanasan, Penang2030 Advisory Panel to the Chief Minister, and Under Secretary, Penang, Malaysia

Panel Discussion: Unlocking Climate Action: Governance, Finance, and Innovation for Urban Implementation (40 min)

Panelists:

- Hemanthi Goonasekera, CEO, Federation of Sri Lankan Local Government Authorities
- Swapnil Shukla, Executive Engineer, Vadodara Municipal Corporation
- Naim Keruwala, Regional Director, South and West Asia, C40
- Nicola Iezza, Finance & Funding Helpdesk Manager, Urban Transitions Mission
- Venkat Jayagopi, Senior Manager (Cities), Shakti Sustainable Energy Foundation
- Karthik Ram, Head of India Portfolio, Clean Air Fund
- Dr. Vishanthini Kanasan, Penang2030 Advisory Panel to the Chief Minister, and Under Secretary, Penang, Malaysia

Co-organised by SDC and UTMIC



From Left to Right: Gino Van Begin, Mirant Parikh, IAS, Ridhima Sud, Sebastian Markart

Cities, home to more than half of the global population today, are vibrant centres of rapid growth and innovation. Yet they face dual crises. They are major energy guzzlers, contributing to 75% of global CO₂ emissions, while also being highly vulnerable to climate change impacts such as heat waves, flooding, extreme and variable precipitation and droughts. While urban areas concentrate activities that contribute to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, they also present unique opportunities for inclusive and innovative climate action. Recognising this, several countries are embedding city-level climate action planning within national policies and frameworks. In India, for instance, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs' Climate Smart Cities Assessment Framework evaluates cities on indicators including the preparation of a Climate Action Plan. This national-level impetus, supported by technical assistance from non-governmental organisations, has catalysed over 40 Indian cities to develop City Climate Action Plans (CCAPs), integrating emissions inventories, mitigation and adaptation targets, and sectoral strategies—laying the foundation for climate-resilient urban development.

Similar national-level initiatives are emerging across South and Southeast Asia. In Malaysia, the 12th and 13th Development Plans explicitly prioritise Green City Action Plans (GCAPs) as central instruments to foster climate resilience and sustainable urban growth.

Accelerating the transition from planning to implementation is critical to realising climate targets and delivering benefits. Mainstreaming climate resilience within urban development requires a multi-pronged approach, supported by political commitment, robust institutional and governance structures, access to climate finance, technical capacity building of government officials and cohesive cross-sectoral integration.

In this context, the session brought together policymakers, financing agencies, academia, think tanks, and NGOs to deliberate on policy tools, governance and budgetary frameworks, and innovative solutions needed to accelerate the implementation of people-centric, inclusive climate action in cities.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Embedding climate action within city governance is essential to ensure long-term implementation and continuity that extends beyond planning phases.
- National, state, and international support can unlock financial resources and the means to hire technical expertise.
- A key challenge to achieving net-zero, climate-resilient cities is the transition from planning to execution, particularly where institutional mechanisms are weak.
- Staff shortages and limited technical expertise within municipal systems often hinder consistent climate action.
- Cities often face challenges in accessing and mobilising adequate funding to sustain climate initiatives and ensure steady progress towards net-zero, climate resilient cities.

SPEAKER QUOTES

“In Indian cities, Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) are in charge of multiple urban services. It is therefore important to adopt a multi-dimensional approach that encompasses all services to ensure the successful adoption of net-zero initiatives in cities.”

Mirant Parikh IAS, Deputy Municipal Commissioner, Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation





“When city actions align with state and national goals, funding and implementation become easier. The Climate Resilient City Action Plans prepared under the SDC-funded CapaCITIES project were aligned with the Tamil Nadu State Action Plan on Climate Change and national targets, and hence influenced the implementation and preparation of frameworks.”

Ridhima Sud, Senior Advisor for Climate Change, Embassy of Switzerland in India and Bhutan

“A climate-safe Penang benefits everyone — from residents enjoying cleaner air and safer homes, to businesses thriving on sustainable growth, and future generations inheriting a resilient city.”

Dr. Vishanthini Kanasan, Penang2030 Advisory Panel to the Chief Minister, and Under Secretary, Penang, Malaysia



“Rethinking and revisiting existing policies and processes and tailoring them to climate priorities of communities are essential for ensuring that our climate policies remain relevant and inclusive.”

Hemanthi Goonasekera, CEO, Federation of Sri Lankan Local Government Authorities

“The Vadodara Municipal Corporation has launched green bonds to fund a sewerage project in the city. Partners like ICLEI South Asia have been essential in our journey to mitigate GHG emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change.”

Swapnil Shukla, Executive Engineer, Vadodara Municipal Corporation



“Developing bankable projects that analyse and integrate the financial aspects for such undertakings is key to availing climate finance from multilateral development banks.”

Sebastian Markart, Project Head - Urban Act India, GIZ

“Clean Air Fund believes in four strategic enablers for planning and implementation of Net-zero, Climate Resilient Cities. They are: 1. Right partnership and right vision, 2. Engaging with cross-departments and stakeholders, 3. Capacity building, and 4. Co-creation.”

Karthik Ram, Head of India Portfolio, Clean Air Fund



“We envision C40 member cities becoming support centres in the region, driving hyper-localised peer learning networks.”

Naim Keruwala, Regional Director, South and West Asia, C40

“Digitalisation and acquiring climate finance are some of the key challenges in cities. We at UTM are conducting pilot projects, capacity building and training from Global North to Global South on these fronts.”

Nicola Iezza, Finance & Funding Helpdesk Manager, Urban Transitions Mission



“Having a relevant and good data set is the start to building net-zero climate-resilient cities, and contextualising and structuring them to meet the existing statutory requirements enables wider application.”

Venkat Jayagopi, Senior Manager (Cities), Shakti Sustainable Energy Foundation

“Looking into global discourse and the needs of a city, it is important to develop tools for preparing climate action plans such as ICLEI’s Net-Zero Climate Resilient Cities methodology, tested successfully in more than 25 + cities across South Asia and South East Asia.”

Nikhil Kolsepatil, Programme Coordinator (Energy & Climate), ICLEI South Asia



From Left to Right: Gino Van Begin, Dr. Vishanthini Kanasan, Venkat Jayagopi, Swapnil Shukla, Hemanthi Goonasekera, Naim Keruwala, Karthik Ram, Nicola Iezza

PARALLEL SESSION 6: STRENGTHENING GLOBAL SOUTH LEADERSHIP IN LOCALLY-LED ADAPTATION FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE



SESSION DETAILS

Keynote Address

- Vishwanath S, Founder and Director, Biome Environmental Solutions

Moderated Panel Discussion: Localising Adaptation for Urban Resilience

Panelists

- Nivedita Mani, Secretary, Research and Communications, Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group
- Dulari Parmar, Project Lead - Climate Justice, YUVA
- Saikat Pal, Executive Director, Prasari
- Adam Azim, Hon'ble Mayor, Male City, Maldives
- Ganesh Paudel, Member Secretary, President Chure Terai-Madhesh Conservation Development Board

Launch of "Local Power, Global Change: A City Leader's Handbook for Climate Action"

- Shreya Samant, Manager, ClimateRISE, Dasra
- Anuja Sirohi, Senior Manager, Councillor Leadership Development Program, Janaagraha (context setting for the report)

Councillor Presentations:

- Laxmi Karhadkar, President, Panchgani Hill Station Municipal Council
- P.M. Brindhhaa Shrri, Councillor for Alandur, Chennai, Ward 160

Closing of the session: Bedoshruti Sadhukhan, Associate Director, ICLEI South Asia

Co-organised by CDKN and DASRA



From Left to Right: Nivedita Mani, Saikat Pal, Hon'ble Adam Azim, Laxmi Karhadkar, P.M. Brindhhaa Shrri, Dulari Parmar, Ganesh Paudel, Vishwanath S

The session showcased the leadership of Global South countries in advancing locally-led adaptation (LLA) approaches to enhance local climate resilience.

The Global Commission on Adaptation had introduced eight guiding principles for LLA during the Climate Adaptation Summit (2021). The idea was to strengthen effective and inclusive resilience by granting resources and decision-making power to local actors. Despite their proven effectiveness, cities and communities often face barriers in recognising, financing, and sustaining local initiatives. Moreover, communities and local adaptation leaders also struggle to find the necessary support and resources to enable them to scale and/or replicate their work. Their perspectives and knowledge are generally overlooked and undervalued by authorities and decision-makers when shaping city resilience and disaster risk reduction strategies.

The session explored how cities can create enabling policy and regulatory environments for locally-led governance and planning, ensuring the voices of women and marginalised communities are embedded in formal decision-making structures. It focused particularly on locally-led practices in vulnerable or underserved neighbourhoods to understand the role of local communities in sustaining these practices. It also explored financial instruments that can support LLA for climate resilience, considering that most adaptation actions are not bankable.

The session showcased how cities and communities in Asia are designing, implementing, and scaling inclusive and equitable adaptation actions, while also navigating the challenges of embedding LLA principles into the design and implementation of climate actions. City officials, planners, practitioners, and experts discussed practical pathways, barriers, enabling conditions, and opportunities to scale adaptation solutions that empower local actors and strengthen their adaptive capacity. The discussion also underscored the need for enabling environments and accelerators that channel funding to community-led adaptation initiatives, while highlighting evidence-based examples of resilience-building in urban areas.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Community participation and local leadership are the foundation of effective adaptation. Women, youth, and community voices must lead bottom-up processes.
- Locally led, nature-based solutions, such as tree planting, rainwater harvesting, decentralised water management, terrace gardening, and urban greening, are practical and impactful climate resilience actions.
- Sustainable financing, equitable governance, and genuine partnerships are essential to scaling adaptation efforts, integrating informal communities, and ensuring long-term resilience.
- Community-led innovations, such as tree planting, terrace gardening, rooftop rainwater harvesting, recharge ponds, and coral reef preservation, are tools to build urban resilience.
- Tools for localised planning and leadership can include community geotagging for service access, shared learning on hydrogeological resource management, and city handbooks to strengthen local governance.
- Collaborative models and financing mechanisms such as genuine partnerships, bottom-up planning, and scaling local leadership (especially women and youth) to accessing resources and sustaining adaptation efforts.

SPEAKER QUOTES



“The Maldives has mitigated the effects of coastal flooding by collaborating with local communities in the area, bringing down the number of flood-affected houses to virtually nil.”

Adam Azim, Hon'ble Mayor, Male City, Maldives

“While financing is the key to sustaining climate adaptation efforts, strengthening local capacity is equally important to build climate resilience.”

Ganesh Paudel, Member Secretary, President, Chure Terai-Madhes Conservation Development Board



“Collecting garbage is an everyday job that requires regularity. Therefore, people's participation in this is very important to maintain a clean environment.”

Laxmi Karhadkar, President, Panchgani Hill Station Municipal Council

“Creating a better, greener, and safer environment is not a single person's job. It should be a collaborative effort between the governments and their people to build a better nation.”

P.M. Brindhaa Shrri, Councillor for Alandur, Chennai, Ward 160



“The vulnerable and the poorest are the ones indiscriminately impacted by climate change, as they occupy marginal lands and services. Equity, access and justice should, therefore, be the fulcrum of leadership brought into locally led adaptation.”

Vishwanath S, Founder & Director, Biome Environmental Solutions

“The Global South is home to some of the most innovative, community-driven practices. From local water conservation systems, indigenous seed conservation to urban resilience initiatives, and climate-smart livelihoods, the Global South has been continuously leading adaptation in practice long before it was actually framed in the global discourse.”

Nivedita Mani, Secretary, Research and Communications, Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group



“Local leadership, community participation and collective expertise come together for a city to become cleaner, greener and climate resilient.”

Anuja Sirohi, Senior Manager, Councillor Leadership Development Program, Janaagraha



“Building climate resilience has to be a strategic bottom-up approach that starts from community participation and alignment with climate goals.”

Shreya Samant, Manager, ClimateRISE, Dasra

“Reinforcing and strengthening inherent knowledge of communities about locally- available resources and their interconnectivity and interaction can create a shared learning relationship that translates into building climate resilience.”

Saikat Pal, Executive Director, Prasari



“Youth are often the receivers or direct consumers of climate change. Instead of being at the receiving end of the climate narrative, they should be included in the process of building it, as they can shape the discourse meaningfully.”

Dulari Parmar, Project Lead - Climate Justice, YUVA



From Left to Right: Unnati Sharad, Anuja Sirohi, Shreya Samant, Laxmi Karhadkar, P.M. Brindhya Shri, Manjunatha Hampapura L, Vishwanath S

PLENARY 2: FROM DISASTER RISK TO READINESS: CITIES AS FIRST RESPONDERS



SESSION DETAILS

Keynote Address: Amit Prothi, Director General, Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure

Video Message: Marco Toscano-Rivalta, Chief, UNDRR Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

Moderated Panel Discussion: Localising Global Approaches to DRR in Urban Areas

Moderator: Dr. Anil Kumar Gupta, Principal Investigator, Integrated Centre for Adaptation to Climate Change, Disaster Risk Reduction and Sustainability; Professor, Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee

Panelists:

- Puja Karki, Head DRR Section, Lalitpur Metropolitan City, Nepal
- E. M. L. Udaya Kumara, Deputy Director, District Disaster Management Coordination Unit, Badulla, Sri Lanka
- Dr. Epaminondas Christophilopoulos, President of the Metropolitan Organization of Thessaloniki Museums of Fine Arts (MOMus) and Head of the UNESCO Chair for Future Research
- Karel Van Oordt, Project Coordinator, EUROCITIES, Belgium

Co-organised by CDRI, ICARS and UTMIC



From Left to Right: Hon'ble Sita Sahu, Emani Kumar, Dr. Anil Kumar Gupta, Hansa Patel, Puja Karki, Dr. Epaminondas Christophilopoulos, Amit Prothi, E.M.L Udaya Kumara, Karel Van Oodrt

South Asia is a geographically complex region that is highly prone to hydrometeorological disasters such as floods (including glacial lake outburst floods or GLOFs), landslides, droughts, tropical cyclones, heat waves, and avalanches. India ranked as the 6th most affected country globally due to climate change impacts in 1993–2022 period⁴, while Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka are also among the top 10 most climate-vulnerable countries.⁵ Disaster risks in South Asian urban areas are amplified by rapid and unplanned urbanisation, high population density, development within high-risk zones, environmental degradation and socio-economic disparities. Climate change is worsening the situation at scale. Over the past decade, large urban centres such as Mumbai, Dhaka, and Kathmandu have witnessed recurring climate-induced disasters, exposing systemic gaps in preparedness, infrastructure resilience, early warning dissemination, and response coordination.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) 2015–2030, the global framework for advancing disaster resilience, emphasises strengthening disaster risk governance at national and local levels. In line with SFDRR, country-specific policies, including the National Disaster Management Act (2005) and the National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP) for India, National Plan for Disaster Management (2021–2025) for Bangladesh, and the National Policy for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2018, for Nepal, recognise the critical role of local governments, calling for local level institutional structures and capacity building to drive DRR efforts. But significant gaps persist between policy and practice. Many ULBs still lack disaster management cells, updated city-specific risk assessments, or preparedness plans. Hence, it is imperative to adopt a risk-informed, readiness-oriented governance approach for tackling increasing climate extremes.

In this context, this session explored the unique challenges of managing disaster risk in urban settings, highlighting the need to mainstream disaster risk considerations into urban planning, project design and implementation, and institutional frameworks. It emphasised the importance of adopting an inclusive, mitigation and preparedness centric approach to disaster resilience, drawing from lessons learned across cities. The session showcased examples of interventions that have strengthened local resilience. Experts also shared practical insights into the barriers, enablers, and opportunities for implementing scalable and context-specific disaster resilience solutions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Building city resilience needs out-of-box thinking. Cities must rethink infrastructure and build future scenarios to effectively mitigate disaster risks.
- Collaboration between stakeholders, knowledge sharing and capacity building play a vital role in increasing local level resilience.
- Flexible infrastructure that serves everyday needs while integrating disaster preparedness can significantly reduce extreme-event impacts.
- Stronger links between research and decision-makers and translating learnings into action are needed to build disaster resilience.
- The disaster risk landscape is rapidly changing and highly complex, with cities facing even opposite extremes, such as floods in drought-prone areas.
- Readiness must be future-oriented. The world is beginning to realise that the past is not always key to the future.
- Cities in networks can benefit from shared knowledge sharing. For example: Greece can learn from India on urban heat management.
- Reducing emissions, advancing climate action, and strengthening adaptation and mitigation remain necessary core pillars.
- Empowering communities is critical. Cities should form community disaster management teams at the ward level, and ensure inclusive participation, involving women, youth and persons with disabilities, in risk mapping and risk planning.
- Resilience begins at the local level when communities are empowered, and institutions are coordinated. DRR must be treated as an essential function necessity across all levels of government.
- Existing infrastructure (built at an average of 15 years ago) did not consider present-day risks. Institutional, human capacity and technological capacities need to be strengthened significantly.
- Coordination gaps persist due to limited recognition of climate change as a real threat. Conflicting priorities of local and national governments combined with inadequate financing at the local level are major constraints for disaster risk response.
- Localised, accurate information along with insights on community behavioural patterns is essential anticipating impact and designing appropriate responses.
- Choosing indicators that cover multiple areas of impact can support integrating disaster risk considerations into decision-making.

4. <https://www.germanwatch.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/Climate%20Risk%20Index%202025.pdf>

5. <https://www.gfdrr.org/en/region/south-asia-sar>

SPEAKER QUOTES



“To effectively deal with extreme disaster risk situations, it is important to understand the pace, scale, and uncertainty of the problem, as well as how to address these challenges. Equally crucial are the ways in which we produce and share data with decision-makers, and how we exchange knowledge and innovation.”

Amit Prothi, Director General, Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure

“As we go from Bharat to Belém, we need to call for strong actions in four areas: 1) Reducing emissions to prevent further harm, as every point degree counts; 2) Anticipate and act for disaster risk reduction; 3) Adaptation ambitions remain a must.”



Marco Toscano-Rivalta, Chief, UNDRR Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific



“The landscape of risk is changing rapidly, bringing in greater diversity and increasing complexity. Cities once known for droughts are now having discussions on floods — a complete reversal of scenarios. Readiness means preparing for the future, as the past is not always a reliable guide for what lies ahead.”

Dr. Anil Kumar Gupta, Principal Investigator, Integrated Centre for Adaptation to Climate Change, Disaster Risk Reduction and Sustainability; Professor, IITRoorkee

“Following the 2015 earthquake, Lalitpur city has been prioritising building an integrated and localised disaster management system. The city has been using the three-pillars approach: Preparedness, Partnership, and Participation, to mitigate disaster-related risks.”



Puja Karki, Head, DRR Section, Lalitpur Metropolitan City, Nepal



“The Disaster Management Centre in Badulla, Sri Lanka, has prepared national and provincial-level disaster risk reduction plans and policies. However, a boost in funding and integrating the priorities of national and local authorities are needed to ensure effective implementation of the plans.”

E. M. L. Udaya Kumara, Deputy Director, District Disaster Management Coordination Unit, Badulla, Sri Lanka

“As a society, we are not prepared to recognise future scenarios. Borrowing from brain research, it is found that the part of our brain that imagines our future is the same part that thinks of someone else, which makes it difficult for a person to make long-term decisions and plan for any disasters for the future.”



Dr. Epaminondas Christophilopoulos, President of the Metropolitan Organization of Thessaloniki Museums of Fine Arts (MOMus) and Head of the UNESCO Chair for Future Research



“EUROCITIES provides services in three main topics, namely, learning, connecting, and assisting global cities in finance in order to equip and enhance their Disaster Risk Readiness.”

Karel Van Oordt, Project Coordinator, EUROCITIES, Belgium

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM DAY 1

- Making urban services more efficient requires integrating climate action into core urban planning and governance, ensuring resources such as water, energy, and waste systems are managed through data-driven, circular, and resilient approaches.
- Building institutional capacity and effective collaboration between different institutions and government agencies is necessary for scaling up recovery and reuse initiatives for waste and water.
- Allocating a separate budget for biodiversity enables implementation of nature-first solutions.
- Improved observation networks, forecasting systems, and last-mile dissemination of extreme weather information can help in managing heat in South Asian climatic conditions and prevent health problems.
- Collaborative models and financing mechanisms such as genuine partnerships, bottom-up planning approaches, and scaling local leadership (especially for women and the youth) can help access resources and sustain adaptation efforts.
- Resilience begins at the local level when communities are empowered, and institutions are coordinated. Cities must focus on adaptive resilience building. It would be effective if DRR is treated as a necessity at all levels of public and government institutions.

DAY 2: THURSDAY

9 OCTOBER 2025



PLENARY 3: FINANCING CLIMATE ACTION: SHAPING INSTRUMENTS, POLICIES, AND INSTITUTIONS FOR URBAN TRANSITIONS IN INDIA



SESSION DETAILS

Keynote Address: Ede Ijjasz-Vasquez, Sr. Advisor - Sustainable Development, Infrastructure and Climate. Non-Resident Sr. Fellow Brookings, Former World Bank Sr. Leader

Panel Discussion: Financing India's urban transition

Moderator: Emani Kumar, Deputy Secretary General, ICLEI & Executive Director, ICLEI South Asia

Panelists:

- H.E. Juan Antonio March Pujol, Ambassador of Spain to India, Embassy of Spain in New Delhi
- S. Suresh Kumar, Principal Secretary, Municipal Administration and Urban Development, Government of Andhra Pradesh
- Michael Steidl, Head of Regional Representation to South Asia, European Investment Bank
- Ulka Kalaskar, Joint Municipal Commissioner, Chief Accounts and Finance Officer, Pune Municipal Corporation
- Santosh Tiwari, Chief Finance Officer, Vadodara Municipal Corporation
- Kiran Kumar Avadhanula, Senior Urban Sector Specialist, KfW Development Bank
- Pratyush Kanth, Senior Project Officer, Project Development Unit, Asian Development Bank
- Sujatha Srikumar, Director, Powertec Infrastructure and Financial Advisory Services, Powertec Engineering Pvt Ltd
- Debal Mitra, Senior Manager, Climate Policy Initiative



From Left to Right: Emani Kumar, Kiran Kumar Avadhanula, Santosh Tiwari, Michael Steidl, Ulka Kalaskar, H.E. Juan Antonio March Pujol, S. Suresh Kumar, IAS, Debal Mitra, Sujatha Srikumar, Pratyush Kanth

As cities face escalating climate risks, access to climate finance has become a critical enabler for urban climate action. Developing countries alone require an estimated [USD 300 billion](#) annually for urban climate adaptation and USD 4.3 trillion annually for urban climate mitigation until 2030. In Asia and the Pacific, climate finance flows reached USD 519 billion in 2018–19—USD 225.6 billion in 2018 and USD 294.3 billion in 2019. Of this, [68%](#) was mobilised from the public sector (national development financial institutions, government budgets, and multilateral climate funds) and 32% from the private sector (commercial financial institutions, corporations, funds, philanthropies, and institutional investors). Despite a steady growth in annual investments, the urban climate finance gap stands at around USD 4 trillion annually with investments skewed towards mitigation, which comprised 99% of total investments.

Cities have a unique opportunity to invest in climate-resilient and low-carbon infrastructure, with a large share of the infrastructure for 2050 yet to be built. As per [World Bank estimates](#), public capital costs for resilient and low-carbon urban investments are estimated to be USD 256–821 billion annually, with operation and maintenance costs adding around USD 525 billion per year.

India alone will need around [USD 250 billion](#) each year to achieve its 2070 net zero goals, and a further USD 206 billion annually for adaptation. Meeting this scale of investment requires innovative financing mechanisms and stronger institutional collaboration between public and private stakeholders.

This session explored the instruments, policies and institutions shaping India's climate financing landscape and highlighted some of the key challenges that cities face in mobilising climate finance. It brought together representatives from multilateral development banks, national public banks, government departments, and the private sector to identify opportunities and pathways to bridge South Asia's urban climate finance gap and accelerate urban climate action.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Four mantras for financing emerged: proactive maintenance, strategic retrofitting, building climate-ready infrastructure, and prioritising disaster finance.
- Regular proactive maintenance and repairs of infrastructure, especially during seasonal changes, is one of the most cost-effective pathways for resilience in urban spaces.
- Retrofitting infrastructure is as important as building new infrastructure and requires special sources of finance.
- New infrastructure must be designed for new climate realities and should influence the development of instruments, policies, and institutions for urban transitions in India.
- In a climate crisis, cities are at the core of economic losses, making disaster finance and analysis of risks crucial.
- Effective urban development depends more on how well cities are organised and planned, than on the source of financing.
- It is easier to plan what is yet to be built than to fix what is already done; hence, foresight and vision must guide urban growth.
- Future cities should prioritise open spaces, mobility, and innovation, ensuring that all urban systems are interconnected.
- Government efforts to integrate funds, incentivise private investment, and offer concessions are helping to translate plans into sustainable development outcomes.
- ULBs have limited revenue sources, rising infrastructure and maintenance costs, and growing salary and pension burdens, leading to heavy dependence on government grants and schemes. Additionally, they lack in-house technical and financial expertise, rely heavily on external consultants, and struggle with poor-quality DPRs that hinder access to funding.

- Institutional continuity and proactive maintenance remain major gaps, even where funding and frameworks exist.
- Indian cities should build on global lessons and past experiences, rather than reinventing solutions, to avoid repeated mistakes and strengthen local ownership.
- Genuine progress requires cities to internalise plans, identify key challenges, and commit to implementing them—moving beyond greenwashing and short-term urgency.
- Engaging with bond markets increases pressure on cities to maintain transparency, improve financial management, and monitor outcomes continuously, strengthening overall governance.
- Although international climate finance is increasing, urban adaptation funding is only about one-seventh of what is required, particularly for rapidly growing cities.
- While pipelines exist for international climate funds, local systems (“vessels”) to absorb and channel these funds are weak or blocked by risks, underscoring the need for project preparation facilities, risk mitigation tools, and technical capacity building.
- Sustainable urban transformation requires empowering local financial bodies and communities as custodians of urban commons, ensuring inclusive governance and accountability for future infrastructure.



SPEAKER QUOTES



“The real cost of disasters is not the damage to infrastructure itself, but the loss to businesses, households, and communities when basic urban services fail. Resilience finance, thus, is not an expense, but an investment for our future.”

Ede Ijjasz-Vasquez, Sr. Advisor Sustainable Development, Infrastructure, and Climate. Nonresident Sr. Fellow Brookings. Former World Bank Sr. Leader

“The key to developing cities lies in how we plan and organise them. Thoughtful urban planning that encompasses building future-ready spaces driven by innovation, integration, and a clear vision for tomorrow, is imperative.”

H.E. Juan Antonio March Pujol, Ambassador of Spain to India, Embassy of Spain in New Delhi



“In Andhra Pradesh, we are building the new capital city of Amaravati, funded by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, which is inclusive, sustainable, climate resilient, and a model for the future.”

S. Suresh Kumar, IAS, Principal Secretary, Municipal Administration and Urban Development, Andhra Pradesh

“As a multilateral development bank, the European Investment Bank is active in the area of finance infrastructure. We follow the European Union’s priorities of mitigation, adaptation, and connectivity and are involved in seven Indian cities for financing metro and light rail systems.”

Michael Steidl, Head of Regional Representation to South Asia, European Investment Bank



“Urban local bodies need to build capacity and enhance stakeholder skill sets that enable development of detailed project reports through expertise, which can help in raising funds from financing institutions.”

Ulka Kalaskar, Joint Municipal Commissioner, Chief Accounts and Finance Officer, Pune Municipal Corporation

“Vadodara pioneered municipal bonds to raise climate finance in a very successful manner. In March 2024, we launched Asia’s first certified green bonds that followed international standards. Our main motive was to mobilise funds for the benefit of the people.”

Santosh Tiwari, Chief Finance Officer, Vadodara Municipal Corporation



“We’ve long supported large-scale projects aligned with COP goals and the SDGs, through both direct state financing and fund structures. But sustaining progress needs more than funding — it needs proactive maintenance and stronger institutional memory in our urban systems.”



Kiran Kumar Avadhanula, Senior Urban Sector Specialist, KfW Development Bank



“Asian Development Bank has been adopting a systemic approach to funding cities, which is holistic, integrated, and starts upstream. It is essential that appropriate risk allocation accounts for enhanced results.”

Pratyush Kanth, Senior Project Officer, Project Development Unit, Asian Development Bank

“Some cities may lack capacities, but it’s ultimately about willingness and priorities. When the need is clear, city and state governments come together and move with speed to make it happen.”



Sujatha Srikumar, Director, Powertec Infrastructure and Financial Advisory Services, Powertec Engineering Pvt. Ltd.



“We have seen some increase in international climate finance flows in recent years, thanks to the collective efforts and growing leadership in urban climate finance.”

Debal Mitra, Senior Manager, Climate Policy Initiative



PARALLEL SESSION 7: BUILDING SUSTAINABLE URBAN MOBILITY ECOSYSTEMS FOR A LOW-CARBON FUTURE - E-MOBILITY AND ECO-LOGISTICS



SESSION DETAILS

Welcome & Introduction: Divya Prakash Vyas, Associate Director, ICLEI South Asia

Presentation on Maharashtra EV Policy

- Bharat Kalaskar, Additional Transport Commissioner and Joint Transport Commissioner, Government of Maharashtra

Presentation on Himachal Pradesh EV Initiatives

- Manish Soni, Regional Transport Officer, Kangra, Directorate of Transport, Government of Himachal Pradesh

Panel Discussion on how Hilly and remote States Can Enable Inclusive E-Mobility Transitions

Moderator: Anirudhe Mukherjee, IAS, President, Board of Revenue, Government of Madhya Pradesh.

Panelists:

- Surinder Chauhan, Hon'ble Mayor, Shimla Municipal Corporation, Himachal Pradesh
- Ugyen Dorji, Hon'ble Mayor, Thimphu City Corporation, Bhutan
- RVS Kapur, IAS, Special Secretary, Sundarban Affairs, Government of West Bengal
- Gaurav Kumar Singhal, IAS, Additional Secretary/Director, Urban Development Department, Government of Uttarakhand
- Bharat Kalaskar, Additional Transport Commissioner and Joint Transport Commissioner, Government of Maharashtra
- Stanzin Rabgais, Executive Officer, Municipal Committee (MC) in Leh, Ladakh
- Peter Martin Premananth, Engineer, Nuwara Eliya Municipal Council, Sri Lanka
- Dr. Gajendra Singh, Assistant Professor, IIT Mandi, India
- Aswathy Dilip, Managing Director, ITDP India
- Priti Shukla, Programme Manager, Shakti Sustainable Energy Foundation



From Left to Right: Stanzin Rabgais, Aniruddhe Mukherjee, IAS, Hon'ble Surinder Chauhan, Hon'ble Ugyen Dorji, RVS Kapur, IAS, Gaurav Kumar Singhal, IAS, Bharat Kalaskar, Peter Martin Premananth, Dr. Gajendra Singh, Aswathy Dilip, Priti Shukla

Hilly and remote regions are often more vulnerable to climate impacts like flash floods, landslides, and glacial melt. E-mobility, especially when powered by renewables, helps reduce the local carbon footprint, supporting broader climate adaptation and mitigation strategies.

Session highlighted how policy innovation, infrastructure planning and community engagement can enable clean transport promotion and broader sustainable mobility transition. Drawing from Himachal Pradesh's pioneering policy innovation and on-ground initiatives, along with global examples, the discussion explored scalable solutions for EV integration in public transport, freight and tourism mobility. By showcasing advancements in technology, finance, and governance frameworks, the session showcased feasible and implementable pathways toward low-emission, equitable and accessible transport ecosystems for diverse geographies

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- EV adoption requires context-specific solutions tailored to local geography, urban density, and ecological sensitivity.
- Strengthening local governance and institutions is key to implementing e-mobility successfully.
- Capacity building, skilling, and public awareness initiatives are vital to create a strong and self-sustaining EV ecosystem.
- Developing multi-use, resilient charging infrastructure and supporting EV workshops and skilling programmes are important enablers for successful transition.
- To strengthen the EV ecosystem, a coordinated policy framework across the national, state, and city levels, along with financial incentives, and industry collaboration is vital to accelerate e-mobility adoption and ensure long-term sustainability.

SPEAKER QUOTES



“Himachal Pradesh is demonstrating how state-led initiatives, such as strengthening urban local bodies and promoting e-taxis can foster a robust EV ecosystem, advance environmental conservation, generate employment, and support sustainable development, setting a model for holistic climate action in the Himalayan region.”

Surinder Chauhan, Hon'ble Mayor, Shimla Municipal Corporation

“Thimphu is promoting a comprehensive e-mobility ecosystem in the fragile Himalayan region, recognising that successful clean transport requires not just infrastructure and electric buses, but also multistakeholder collaboration, inclusive dialogue, and careful planning to overcome challenges like limited land availability.”

Ugyen Dorji, Hon'ble Mayor, Thimphu City Corporation, Bhutan



“West Bengal is shaping e-mobility solutions that balance urban challenges and ecological sensitivity, using context-specific planning, resilient infrastructure, and EV initiatives to reduce emissions.”

RVS Kapur, IAS, Special Secretary, Sundarban Affairs, Government of West Bengal



“Maharashtra is driving the transition to cleaner transport through its 2025 EV policy by addressing past challenges, establishing an EV Cell for coordinated action, forming a state-level committee to electrify Mumbai’s transport fleet, revising sectoral acts, and offering financial incentives, laying the foundation for a sustainable and efficient urban mobility ecosystem.”

Bharat Kalaskar, Additional Transport Commissioner and Joint Transport Commissioner, Government of Maharashtra

“Our mountains deserve silence and not smoke. Each electric vehicle on Himachal’s roads is a step towards sustainable governance. Himachal’s EV journey is not just about technology, it is about people and sustainability.”

Manish Soni, Regional Transport Officer, Kangra, Directorate of Transport, Government of Himachal Pradesh



“While clean mobility is essential, we must also focus on creating conditions of sustainable mobility. In areas where vehicular congestion puts pressure on navigation, along the roads, enhancing sustainability needs to be the primary focus as opposed to adding new electric vehicles in the limited spaces.”

Aswathy Dilip, Managing Director, ITDP India

“Leh is charting a path toward sustainable mobility by developing a robust electric bus system to reduce reliance on private vehicles, ease traffic congestion, and lower emissions, supported by the Ladakh EV Policy’s incentives with technical assistance and collaboration with ICLEI South Asia. It demonstrates a commitment to cleaner, more efficient transport while protecting the fragile Himalayan environment.”

Stanzin Rabgais, Executive Officer, Municipal Committee in Leh, Ladakh



“Despite difficult terrain, Himachal Pradesh is advancing e-mobility with strategic partnerships, infrastructure development, and skill-building programmes, setting a model for sustainable and efficient transport in the Himalayan region.”

Priti Shukla, Programme Manager, Shakti Sustainable Energy Foundation

“Nuwara Eliya is addressing the growing transport demand driven by tourism by promoting electric vehicles within the city with a strong focus on improving infrastructure and policy frameworks to reduce emissions and protect the environment.”

Peter Martin Premananth, Engineer, Nuwara Eliya Municipal Council, Sri Lanka



PARALLEL SESSION 8: CLIMATE FINANCING FOR CITIES: BRIDGING PLANS AND INVESTMENTS



SESSION DETAILS

Moderated Panel Discussion: City insights-Experiences, Successes and Best practices from a practitioners' perspective

Moderator: Nikhil John, Head – Climate Finance, Sustainable Cities, World Resources Institute

Panelists:

- Anamika Ramesh, IAS, Joint Commissioner Municipal Administration, Directorate of Municipal Administration, Tamil Nadu
- Bhupender Kumar Attri, Municipal Commissioner, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh
- Arun Vyas, Project Director (UI), RUDSICO, Jaipur, Rajasthan
- Sayeed Rezaul Haque, Deputy Town Planner & Project Manager (CRGAP), Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (RAJUK), Dhaka, Bangladesh

Panel Discussion: Bridging the Gap: Overcoming Project Preparation Challenges to Unlock Urban Investment

Moderator: Hans-Peter Egler, Senior Director, Sustainable Infrastructure /Public Sector, South Pole

Panelists:

- Jazlyn Lee, Engagement Lead for Southeast Asia and South Asia - The City Climate Finance Gap Fund, Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy
- Soumya Chaturvedula, Director, ICLEI South Asia; GCoM South Asia Technical Coordinator
- Ruslan Zhechkov, Climate Finance Expert, Global Covenant of Mayors
- Anurita Bhatnagar, City Engagement and Planning Lead, Climate Project Preparation Facility (CPPF), National Institute of Urban Affairs, Delhi

Co-organised by GCoM South Asia and GCoM Gap Fund



From Left to Right: Nikhil John, Anamika Ramesh, IAS, Sayeed Rezaul Haque, Bhupender Kumar Attri, Arun Vyas

Nikhil John

Anamika Ramesh,
IAS

Sayeed Rezaul
Haque

Bhupender Kumar
Attri

Arun Vyas

Accessing finance for mitigation and adaptation projects can be complex and challenging for cities, often requiring a comprehensive understanding of funding opportunities, project preparation, application stages, and subsequent preparation for communication to attract financing and investment. Many cities still lack the capacity, technical knowledge, and financial resources to conduct a comprehensive project preparation. As highlighted in the CDP Global Snapshot 2024, investment needs reported by over 1000 cities through the CDP-ICLEI track in 2024 rose by 23% in 2024, with nearly half (48%) of the reported projects still in early stages of development, highlighting the need for project preparation assistance.

Cities need about USD 4.3 trillion per year by 2030 for mitigation alone and over USD 6 trillion by 2050. One of the barriers to scaling urban climate finance is limited investment-ready project pipelines. Project Preparation Facilities (PPFs) are institutions providing support at different stages of the project preparation process to help translate concepts into bankable proposals capable of attracting investment.

However, many cities continue to struggle with capacity constraints, data gaps, and institutional barriers, all of which can undermine the quality of project preparation. Technical assistance facilities such as the Transformative Actions Program of ICLEI, the Climate Projects Preparatory Facility and the City Climate Finance Gap Fund play a vital role in strengthening Expressions of Interest (EOIs) and proposals to align them with PPF requirements. Cities Climate Finance Leadership Alliance (CCFLA) also serves as a multi-level and multi-stakeholder coalition aimed at closing the investment gap for urban and subnational climate projects and infrastructure worldwide. In India, initiatives such as the CapaCITIES program, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, support cities and states in preparing robust bankable projects.

The session brought together key stakeholders to discuss how cities can translate project ideas into actionable initiatives. It introduced CPPFs, reviewed the regional landscape of active PPFs, and showcased best practices and success stories in bridging gaps between project planning and financing. This support is especially valuable for smaller and secondary cities that often face greater difficulty in developing robust proposals and drawing investor interest.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Bridging the gap between climate planning and financing enables cities to move from plans to implementable, bankable projects.
- Enhancing city-level institutional and financial capacities for project preparation, blended finance, and private sector engagement is crucial for climate financing,
- Mainstreaming climate resilience and sustainability into urban infrastructure, governance, and service delivery is important.
- Comprehensive project preparation, including feasibility, structuring, and risk assessment, is critical for attracting investment.
- Collaboration and continuity among departments and governments are key to sustaining momentum and ensuring successful implementation.
- Cities are central actors in climate finance; empowering them through technical assistance, data systems, and innovative funding models can unlock scalable climate action.
- Cities face three key challenges in accessing climate finance — limited and non-diverse funding sources, inadequate strategic planning to utilise available funds, and weak project preparation capacity.
- Financial models for infrastructure projects must be context-specific; Public-Private Partnership (PPP) approaches, such as Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM), cannot be applied uniformly across cities.
- Community participation is critical for project success; involving citizens early ensures ownership and smooth implementation.
- Achieving climate goals requires multi-level coordination and global cooperation.
- Strong project preparation transforms ideas into bankable projects; cities must move systematically through scoping, feasibility, and risk analysis to attract financing.
- Financial management and technical analysis must work together; understanding emissions, vulnerabilities, and priorities ensures targeted investments and effective implementation.
- Blended finance is the way forward — combining own-source revenue, devolved state and national funds, and domestic market financing. Only then will city-level climate action truly move from planning to implementation.

SPEAKER QUOTES

“From Tamil Nadu’s experience, a few lessons stand out - creating strong financial intermediaries, standardising accounting systems, and ensuring that ULBs maintain a steady pipeline of bankable projects. These are essential steps to replicate success across India.”

Anamika Ramesh, IAS, Joint Commissioner-Municipal Administration, Directorate of Municipal Administration, Tamil Nadu



“Shimla, with the support of ICLEI, has successfully introduced a new financial model called “Municipal Transformation”, which uses CSR as a climate-finance tool, enabling the early adoption of clean technology and demonstrating the feasibility of scaling.”

Bhupender Kumar Attri, Municipal Commissioner, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh

“Not all cities are fortunate enough to get PPP partners; the same model will not be suitable for all cities. Cities need a tailor-made financial model for implementing municipal infrastructure development for waste management.”

Arun Vyas, Project Director (UI), RUDSICO, Jaipur, Rajasthan



“To enable the successful implementation of the projects, the lesson is simple: bring people into the process before getting the plan to them. Once the community is part of the planning, they will own it and drive it forward.”

Sayeed Rezaul Haque, Deputy Town Planner & Project Manager (CRGAP), Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (RAJUK), Dhaka, Bangladesh

“Achieving climate goals demands a holistic approach and strong coordination across all levels of government. While global political realities may not always favor large-scale investments, by joining hands and combining efforts, we can build livable, sustainable cities for the future.”

Hans-Peter Egler, Senior Director, Sustainable Infrastructure /Public Sector, South Pole



“In today’s age of information abundance and emerging AI, there remains a great deal of information asymmetry. For example, while some cities have successfully overcome challenges in areas such as solid waste management, others continue to struggle. Events like ARISE play a crucial role in highlighting these successful case studies and enabling others to learn from them.”

Nikhil John, Head – Climate Finance, Sustainable Cities, World Resources Institute



“Climate finance is not just about international money flowing in. It’s about leveraging all available sources: local budgets, national development banks, state-level subsidies, and private investment. Even small subsidy schemes can unlock significant private financing.”

Ruslan Zhechkov, Climate Finance Expert, Global Covenant of Mayors

“Project preparation requires cities to move systematically, right from defining project concepts and conducting scoping studies to developing feasibility analyses, each step addressing barriers to bankability.”

Jazlyn Lee, Engagement Lead for Southeast Asia and South Asia, The City Climate Finance Gap Fund, Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy



“The Climate Project Preparation Facility has been established to address a persistent challenge: many city projects never progress from DPRs to implementation because the initial financing step is limited by project development capacity and the lack of appropriate funding. CPPF fills that gap.”

Anurita Bhatnagar, City Engagement and Planning Lead, Climate Project Preparation Facility (CPPF), National Institute of Urban Affairs

“The entire finance story has to go hand in hand with the technical analysis — understanding where greenhouse gas emissions originate, identifying climate vulnerabilities, and prioritising the most affected communities, wards, and sectors. Only then can investments be directed where they are needed most.”

Soumya Chaturvedula, Director, ICLEI South Asia; GCoM South Asia Technical Coordinator



From Left to Right: Hans-Peter Egler, Jazlyn Lee, Soumya Chaturvedula, Ruslan Zhechkov, Anurita Bhatnagar

PARALLEL SESSION 9: NATIONAL LOCAL DIALOGUE ON TRANSITIONING TOWARDS INNOVATIVE CITIES - SESSION I



SESSION DETAILS

Welcome Address & Moderator: Gino Van Begin, Secretary General, ICLEI

Special Address: Dr. Debolina Kundu, Director, National Institute of Urban Affairs

Keynote Address (recorded message): Aloke Barnwal, Thematic Lead for Urban and Infrastructure, Global Environment Facility (GEF)

Presentation on Setting the Context (about UrbanShift GP activities and transitioning towards innovative solutions):

- Avantika Arjuna, Assistant Program Coordinator, ICLEI South Asia
- Rodrigo De Souza Corradi, Deputy Executive Secretary and Director, ICLEI South America

Panel Discussion: UrbanShift Executing, Implementing agencies and cities sharing insights about the innovative, scalable solutions

Moderator: Gino Van Begin, Secretary General, ICLEI

Panelists:

- Aarti Nain, Senior Advisor, UNEP
- Dr. Nand Pal Singh, Senior Technical Advisor, UNIDO
- Mohan Kumar, Regional Administrator, Mahe and Commissioner, Mahe Municipality, Puducherry
- Manish Chaube, Sr. Manager, Technical (Engineering), Bhopal City Link Limited/Bhopal Municipal Corporation, Madhya Pradesh
- Anil Kumar, Executive Engineer, Guntur Municipal Corporation, Andhra Pradesh



From Left to Right: Avantika Arjuna, Rodrigo De Souza Corradi, Gino Van Begin, Aarti Nain, Dr. Nand Pal Singh, Debolina Kundu, Manish Chaube, Anil Kumar, Mohan Kumar

Cities are engines of economic growth, offering huge potential for developing businesses, optimal resource utilisation, innovation, and investments, thus contributing effectively to national GDP. Efficient urban infrastructure improves accessibility and the quality of life of citizens. India, through its various flagship missions, has been constantly encouraging cities to adopt technology while developing infrastructure. The transitioning towards digitalisation is multi-faceted and is being advanced through initiatives such as the Smart Cities Mission, National Urban Innovation Stack, and National Urban Digital Mission.

Aligned with this national direction, the UrbanShift Global Platform, supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), is supporting five Indian cities through capacity development, technical trainings, and in-person and online academies, with a focus on innovation-based approaches that support integrated urban planning, low carbon infrastructure, waste management, nature-based solutions and climate action. Based on these capacity-building efforts, several cities have been able to develop tangible projects using innovative methods.

To sustain the momentum and further support the cities, this session focused on understanding the readiness of cities in adopting innovation while building infrastructure. It showcased successful pilot examples from the Indian context and drew learnings from innovative projects implemented in GEF 6 and GEF 7 cities to understand scalable solutions. The session included a panel discussion with the national government representatives, implementing agencies and GEF cities to offer insights on enabling innovative solutions in cities.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Innovative city planning should demonstrate commitment to transforming urban systems for the benefit of both people and the planet. While safeguarding the ecosystem has accelerated disaster resilience, amplifying the community voice is equally important for meaningful and sustainable innovation.
- Strong city leadership is essential to convert innovative ideas into scalable, sustainable solutions.
- Collaboration amongst key stakeholders, the state, cities, and communities is essential for adopting innovative solutions at scale.
- Limited access to finance remains a major barrier; achieving financial sustainability is key to staying on track with sustainable development.
- Management Information System (MIS) and data-driven governance are crucial for optimum decision-making to drive sustainability and resilience.
- Community engagement, particularly women's participation and empowerment, is increasingly being recognised as a powerful driver of green transformation in cities.
- Leveraging innovative financial mechanisms, such as green bonds, can support the execution of numerous innovative solutions.

SPEAKER QUOTES

“Building innovative cities is not just restricted to technology, but also active collaboration, where governments, experts, and communities come together to create sustainable, inclusive, and resilient urban futures.”

Dr. Debolina Kundu, Director, National Institute of Urban Affairs



“Cities are the frontlines of shaping a sustainable future. Through innovation, collaboration, and inclusion, cities can drive global transformation for both people and the planet.”

Aloke Barnwal, Thematic Lead for Urban and Infrastructure, Global Environment Facility (GEF)

“Mahe demonstrates a low-cost, replicable model where community engagement, strict enforcement, and financial sustainability transform municipal services, turning waste management into a participatory, circular economy.”

Mohan Kumar, Regional Administrator, Mahe and Commissioner, Mahé Municipality, Puducherry



“While innovative ideas are being adopted by the cities, financial problems exist. Cities are trying to explore financing mechanisms such as green bonds, which is a silver lining.”

Dr. Nand Pal Singh, Senior Technical Advisor, UNIDO

“While technology and infrastructure are critical, we recognised initially that without engaging communities, especially women, such a system won’t sustain. This approach offered dignity, safe working conditions, and social respect for women.”

Anil Kumar, Executive Engineer, Guntur Municipal Corporation, Andhra Pradesh



“Energy efficiency has been suitably complemented with a data-driven governance system in Bhopal. The Management Information System (MIS) helps us with bus scheduling, fleet management, enhancing fuel efficiency, and reducing air pollution.”

Manish Chaube, Sr. Manager, Technical (Engineering), Bhopal City Link Limited/Bhopal Municipal Corporation, Madhya Pradesh

“Innovation in cities succeeds when evidence, capacity, financing, and interdepartmental coordination come together. This helps in executing citizen-focused solutions that can be tested, scaled, and sustained over time.”

Aarti Nain, Senior Advisor, UNEP



“National Local Dialogues (NLDs) are a powerful mechanism for effective climate action and Paris Agreement implementation. This supports multi-level government collaboration and provides a platform for dialogues across genders and other aspects of intersectionalities.”

Gino Van Begin, Secretary General, ICLEI



“Our experience with UrbanShift proves that lasting urban change happens when cities, states, and communities work together to turn sustainability from an idea into everyday practice.”

Rodrigo De Souza Corradi, Deputy Executive Secretary and Director, ICLEI South America

“Cities become better when they learn and work together. With new ideas and teamwork, Indian cities are finding smart and sustainable ways to grow and face future challenges.”

Avantika Arjuna, Assistant Program Coordinator, ICLEI South Asia



PARALLEL SESSION 10: DIGITAL SOLUTIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE ENERGY PLANNING



SESSION DETAILS

Welcome by chair: Karel Van Oort, EUROCITIES, UTM Project

Welcome Message: Giorgia Rambelli, Director, Urban Transitions Mission

Opening remarks: Dr. Anita Gupta, Head of CEST Division, Dept. of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India

Panel Discussion: How to look at reliance in Energy Systems - The Way Ahead

Moderator: Rohit Sen, Head of Sustainable Energy, ICLEI

Panelists

- Stanzin Rabgais, Executive Officer, Leh Municipality, India
- Ashish Verma, Professor, Transportation Systems Engineering at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, and Convenor of the IISc Sustainable Transportation Lab
- Soohyung Kim, Economic Affairs Officer, Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (APCTT), UNESCO
- Nikhil Kolsepatil, Program Coordinator (Energy & Climate), ICLEI South Asia

Deep-dive Discussion “how digitalisation can help the urban energy transition”

During this 30 minute “world cafe” session, participants were split into three discussion groups during this session.

Table 1 - Science and Technology

Moderation: Elli Stepanovic, Senior Project Manager, FFG

Table 2 - AI solutions

Moderation: Nicola Iezza, UTM F&F Helpdesk Manager, GCoM

Table 3 - Digitalisation and resilience

Moderation: Kanak Gokarn, Officer Sustainable Energy, ICLEI

Organised by UTM and Co-organised by ICLEI SA



From Left to Right: Karel Van Oort, Rohit Sen, Stanzin Rabgais, Prof. Ashish Verma, Soohyung Kim, Nikhil Kolsepatil

As cities across Emerging and Developing Economies (EDMEs) expand rapidly, the demand for reliable, clean, and resilient energy systems is intensifying. Cities are the largest consumers of energy, while also becoming increasingly vulnerable to climate risks, supply disruptions, and infrastructure stresses.

To address these challenges, the Urban Transitions Mission Center (UTMC), the Urban Transitions Mission (UTM) and ICLEI South Asia convened the session on “Digital solutions for Resilient Energy Planning”. The session highlighted how digital solutions, artificial intelligence, advanced analytics, and digital platforms can help reshape urban energy planning—enabling cities to increase efficiency, anticipate risks, optimize resources, and accelerate transitions toward sustainable energy systems. It explored how these technologies can facilitate equitable access to energy and strengthen community participation in the energy transition, in India and globally.

Panelists shared practical perspectives, global insights, and city-level experiences and discussed pathways to harness digital solutions tools for climate-smart decision-making, enhance interoperability across infrastructure systems, and integrate DRR in the energy sector.

The discussion inspired city leaders, practitioners, and partners to see digital innovation as an immediate and practical enabler for achieving resilient, low-carbon urban energy futures.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Digitisation is the first step before AI and simulation-based systems can be explored. A structured approach is the key to achieving sustainable energy planning.
- Developing pilot technologies that can adapt to specific use cases and situations is beneficial for energy planning for the future.
- Digitalisation can strengthen governance processes by reducing administrative burden, improving efficiency and ensuring that systems are in working condition.
- It takes time for government entities and network service providers to understand and adopt technologies. Therefore, regular training and capacity building are essential.
- The real value of leveraging digital solutions lies in how tools are implemented and adapted in local contexts and backed by right skills and partnerships.
- Digital solutions can support insights into how active mobility can contribute to energy efficiency in cities, reducing politics over fuel crises so that cities can remain engines of growth.
- Since several of the major solution providers now operate in the private sector, there's a real opportunity to bring in new need to be more open to new players, partnerships and private sector collaboration.

SPEAKER QUOTES



“Where technology meets inclusivity, digital innovation aligns with environmental stewardship.”

Dr. Anita Gupta, Head of CEST Division, Dept. of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India

“UTM brings together a cohort of 114 countries and 40 cities, working with a global alliance of partners and diverse sectors to help identify challenges of implementation.”

Giorgia Rambelli, Director, Urban Transitions Mission



“AI and digitization can be used to make cities cleaner and sustainable. Digitization means using IOT, smart systems and sensors to monitor how much energy is produced and how much energy is consumed in cities.”

Stanzin Rabgais, Executive Officer, Leh Municipality, India

“Active mobility acts as a lever for accelerating energy efficiency, increasing resilience and offsetting global energy prices in cities.”

Prof. Ashish Verma, Professor, Transportation Systems Engineering at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, and Convenor of the IISc Sustainable Transportation Lab



“Most households in the cities of the Asia-Pacific now have access to electricity. As we move towards greater access to green energy and energy efficiency, this is where digital solutions can be leveraged.”

Soohyung Kim, Economic Affairs Officer, Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (APCTT), UNESCAP

“Digital solutions can strengthen resilience and cities with complex energy challenges. The real power lies in how these digital tools are applied and adapted in a local context and backed by the right skills and partnerships.”

Rohit Sen, Head of Sustainable Energy, ICLEI



“Delivering clean and reliable sustainable energy through digital solutions is the need of the hour and data-driven innovation and tools are the real enablers.”

Karel Van Oort, EUROCITIES, UTM Project

“Geospatial and drone imaging technologies were employed in Rajkot, India to identify thermal profiles for different materials to propose localised strategies and cooling solutions for the city.”

Nikhil Kolsepatil, Program Coordinator (Energy & Climate), ICLEI South Asia



From Left to Right: Rohit Sen, Stanzin Rabgais, Dr. Anita Gupta, Hansa Patel, Prof. Ashish Verma, Soohyung Kim, Nikhil Kolsepatil



Deep-dive Discussion on “How Digitalisation can Help the Urban Energy Transition”

PARALLEL SESSION 11: SHAPING URBAN CLIMATE FUTURES: MEDIA NARRATIVES, CITIZEN PARTICIPATION, AND THE YOUTH PERSPECTIVE



SESSION DETAILS

Moderated Panel discussion: Narrative-building as a tool for climate resilience

Moderator: Sayli Mankikar, Associate Director, ICLEI South Asia

Panelists:

- Aditi Agrawal, Lead, Narrative Building, DASRA
- Meenakshi Ramesh, Founder, Oorvani Foundation
- Lovlesh Sharma, Head - Urban Youth Unit, National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA)
- Shivani Singh, National Urban Editor, Hindustan Times
- Rohit Kumar, Co-founder, Young Leaders for Active Citizenship
- Sampada Tewari, UNICEF Youth Foresight Fellow

Group Activity: Kaivalya Plays and DASRA

Co-organised by DASRA



From Left to Right: Sayli Mankikar, Meenakshi Ramesh, Aditi Agrawal, Lovlesh Sharma, Shivani Singh, Sampada Tewari, Rohit Kumar

As cities confront the dual crisis of climate stress and growing inequality, it is increasingly clear that urban futures can no longer be shaped by policy alone. Media narratives, youth activism, and citizen engagement are critical levers for change. This session explored how storytelling, digital platforms, and participatory culture can reimagine governance, reshape public imagination, and civic engagement. By investing in narrative-building as a tool for climate resilience, cities can not only improve response strategies, but also catalyze meaningful action.

Cities are living stories of resilience, inequality, imagination, and possibility. The session explored how youth voices, media narratives, and citizen participation can reshape public imagination of urban futures. Through stories, performances, and conversations, participants examined how urban narratives can influence climate resilience and drive civic action.

This interactive session explored how integrating storytelling with strategy can spark ideas for climate action, empowering citizens to lead that transformation.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- i. Empowering Young Leadership
 - a) Create space for youth voices
 - b) Use foresight techniques
 - c) Encourage self-expression
- ii. Changing Media Story telling perspectives
 - a) Evolving audience behavior
 - b) Concise, creative storytelling
 - c) From news to content
 - d) Narrative shift
- iii. Citizen Journalism and Accessibility
 - a) Inclusive storytelling
 - b) Simplified Communication
 - c) Climate Communications
- Fragmented and One-Dimensional Urban Narratives: Urban stories tend to highlight problems without reflecting community resilience, innovation, or inclusivity. Counter-narratives that celebrate local success stories, particularly from marginalised areas or youth-led actions, are limited.
- Limited Youth Participation: Young people are rarely given structured spaces to express their vision for the future or influence public discourse. Institutional processes often treat youth as beneficiaries rather than co-creators in city planning or climate action, contributing to civic apathy among urban youth and limited awareness of their role in urban sustainability.
- Media Challenges in Communicating Climate and Urban Issues: Traditional media coverage is often data-heavy, technical, or event-driven, making content less relatable. Short attention spans and digital consumption habits require new storytelling formats. Many outlets struggle to connect global climate concepts (e.g., resilience, 1.5°C) to local realities and lived experiences. There is a need to move from “awareness” to actionable narratives that motivate behavioral change and community engagement.
- Gaps in Collaboration and Ownership: Community stories often remain isolated; they do not feed into mainstream narratives or policy feedback loops. Lack of capacity-building platforms to help young storytellers and citizen journalists communicate urban resilience effectively.

- Representation and Inclusion Gaps: Narratives often exclude slum dwellers, informal workers, women, and vulnerable groups, despite them being most affected by urban and climate stresses. Failure to link climate justice to social equity within storytelling weakens both engagement and legitimacy. Inaccessible language and technical jargon in policy and media prevent wider public participation.

Opportunities for Action:

- Empowering youth as co-creators: Enable young people with foresight and storytelling tools to shape urban resilience narratives and influence future city planning.
- Transforming media communication: Shift to concise, visual, and solution-oriented storytelling formats that make climate and urban issues more accessible and engaging.
- Strengthening collaboration across sectors: Build joint platforms between youth, media, and government to co-create inclusive, human-centered narratives for climate-resilient cities.

SPEAKER QUOTES



“We see the role of narratives as a crucial way to explore storytelling, communication, and media, aiming to reshape how we imagine the future of our cities—especially focusing on youth, women, and vulnerable groups at the center of the narrative.”

Aditi Agrawal, Lead, Narrative Building, DASRA

“We need to create pathways for stories about complex urban challenges affecting vulnerable populations to reach the wider public and inspire people to see themselves as part of the solution, not the problem.”

Meenakshi Ramesh, Founder, Oorvani Foundation



“In a country with a vast youth population and a dedicated Ministry for Youth Affairs, integrating youth perspectives should be a priority across all sectors, not an afterthought or a fringe aspect.”

Lovlesh Sharma, Head - Urban Youth Unit, National Institute of Urban Affairs, India

“To build meaningful climate narratives, we must go hyperlocal. People don’t connect with global targets; they care about their streets, their neighborhoods, and why floods or heatwaves happen where they live. Informing them locally is how engagement and action can truly begin.”

Shivani Singh, National Urban Editor, Hindustan Times





“A story can spark a thought, but a narrative builds momentum. Change begins when many voices echo the same message until it can no longer be ignored.”

Rohit Kumar, Co-founder, Young Leaders for Active Citizenship

“When young people are given space to imagine the future and be heard, their creativity turns into ownership. Narratives create a shared sense of responsibility, empowering them to see their ideas not just as responses to problems, but as tools to be part of the solution.”

Sampada Tewari, UNICEF Youth Foresight Fellow



“Narratives have the power to spark action. A single story can become a global nudge, inspire movements, showcasing how youth can turn creativity and conviction into real change.”

Sayli Mankikar, Associate Director, ICLEI South Asia



PARALLEL SESSION 12: NATIONAL LOCAL DIALOGUE ON TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT IN INDIAN CITIES - SESSION II



SESSION DETAILS

Welcome & Session Context: Karishma Asarpota, Senior Officer, Climate Action, ICLEI World

Learnings from the City- presenting their work on ToD

- Nikhil Mijar, Urban Transport Planner, Technical Consultant, Pune Municipal Corporation, India

Panel Discussion I

Moderator: Avantika Arjuna, Assistant Program Coordinator, ICLEI South Asia, India

Panelists:

- Dr. Rutul Joshi, Sr. Associate Professor, CEPT University, India
- R. Srinivas, Urban Planning Expert, ADB TOD Cell, Institute of Urban Transport, India
- Kanika Kalra, Assistant Vice President, Urban Mass Transit Company (UMTC), India
- Ritu Agarwal Sharma, Joint General Manager, Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC), India
- Nikhil Mijar, Urban Transport Planner, Technical Consultant, Pune Municipal Corporation, India
- Varsha Singh, Project Coordinator, UrbanShift - India, National Institute of Urban Affairs, India

Panel Discussion II - Building Inclusive Transport Systems: The Role of Data, Technology, and Governance (Supported by GIZ)

Welcome & Session Context: Krishna Desai, Gender Focal Point, Technical Advisor, SUM-ACA, GIZ India

Panelists:

- Krishna Desai, Gender Focal Point, Technical Advisor, SUM-ACA, GIZ India
- Manjunath Sekhar, Director – SUM-ACA, GIZ India
- Dr. Kalpana Viswanath, Chief Executive Officer and Co-founder, Safetipin, India
- Parul Sharma, Expert on Disability Inclusive Urban Development, Ex-Advisor at UNESCAP
- Veda Bharadwaja, Programme Lead, Safe and Inclusive Public Spaces, UN Women India

Co-organised by GIZ



From Left to Right: Avantika Arjuna, R. Srinivas, Nikhil Mijar, Ritu Agarwal Sharma, Varsha Singh, Kanika Kalra, Dr. Rutul Joshi

Owing to rapid urbanisation, expected to reach 814 million people by 2050, Tier I cities in India are currently experiencing a sharp rise in daily public transit commuters. Many cities cater to around one million commuters per day across different modes of public transport, and the number is expected to increase in the coming years. Though urbanisation contributes to the country's GDP, it is also leading to urban sprawl, longer trip lengths, rising private vehicle ownership, increased pressure on road infrastructure, higher traffic congestion and air pollution. Access to public transport remains a challenge for women and vulnerable groups due to unsafe first- and last-mile connectivity, inadequate services, lack of information, and poor integration across modes. It is, therefore, essential to mainstream the needs of all genders and vulnerable groups in public transport planning

To address such issues, many cities have begun strengthening their public transport systems. These efforts are supported by the GoI's Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) policy, which guides cities in managing urban growth through TOD with support from the state government, stakeholders and experts. Further, the Harmonized Guidelines for Standards of Accessibility and the Accessibility Guidelines for Bus Terminals and Bus Stops mandate inclusive infrastructure design to cater to the needs of all users, including women, children, elderly, and persons with disabilities.

In addition, the GoI, in July 2024, in the Union Budget 2024- 25, identified 14 large cities, including Chennai, Pune, Surat (GEF 7 cities), with populations of more than 30 lakhs for the development of TOD plans. Complementing these national initiatives, the UrbanShift Global Platform has been building city-level capacities through technical workshops and city academies, while GIZ India's Sustainable Urban Mobility – Air Quality, Climate Action and Accessibility (SUM-ACA) project has supported Indian cities in developing gender-sensitive and inclusive transport systems.

This session focused on understanding the TOD concept and principles in the Indian context, and the importance of developing walkable corridors in ensuring gender-friendly public transport access. It showcased examples from India and abroad, with a focus on policy development, area-level planning, and street design tailored for TOD in Indian cities. The discussion also emphasised the role of data, technology, and governance in ensuring equitable access, improving service delivery, enhancing safety, and supporting evidence-based decision-making. Experts from the sector guided cities in identifying tangible, practical solutions that respond to local realities.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- TOD must be contextual and inclusive – each city and station area requires tailored approaches based on their socio-economic realities.
- Effective Implementation needs strong institutional mechanisms, with dedicated TOD implementation cells and inter-departmental coordination. Safety, and accessibility must be core design principles for transit and urban planning, not secondary add-ons.
- Persistent land and planning constraints such as issues of land integration, irregular plots, and unaffordable housing near metro stations are major challenges for TOD.
- Policy-practice mismatch such as high FSI provisions without supportive infrastructure or clarity on value generation is a challenge.
- Closing safety and accessibility gaps, which include poor last-mile connectivity, lack of universal design, and weak institutional accountability, is essential before scaling TOD implementation.

SPEAKER QUOTES



“We talk about decentralisation of economic activities, but through TOD, we are centralising it.”

R. Srinivas, Urban Planning Expert, ADB TOD Cell, Institute of Urban Transport, India

“With better pedestrian infrastructure, thoughtful street vendor policies, and commitment to using data for inclusive planning, our cities can become places where every journey is safe, every street is vibrant, and every citizen feels seen and supported”

Manjunath Sekhar, Director – SUM-ACA, GIZ India



“For effective execution, a dedicated TOD implementation cell is required.”

Ritu Agarwal Sharma, Joint General Manager, Delhi Metro Rail Corporation

“TOD areas are the most accessible, which makes them the most unaffordable for common citizens.”

Nikhil Mijar, Urban Transport Planner, Technical Consultant, Pune Municipal Corporation, India



“Safety and mobility, when working together, can bring about real change.”

Veda Bharadwaja, Programme Lead, Safe and Inclusive Public Spaces, UN Women India

“Ensuring safe mobility is critical for gender equity. Studies show that over 52% of women have given up job opportunities or careers due to concerns about safety in transportation and public spaces.”

Dr. Kalpana Viswanath, CEO & Co-founder, Safetipin



“We talk about value capture without creating value - it is essential to first define strategies for value generation before attempting to capture it.”

Dr. Rutul Joshi, Sr. Associate Professor, CEPT University

“We have identified 600 km of TOD corridors — but the question is of supply and demand: do we really need them?”

Kanika Kalra, Assistant Vice President, Urban Mass Transit Company



“Diversity is the reality — embracing universal design helps everyone and ensures that cities become truly inclusive and accessible.”

Parul Sharma, Expert on Disability-Inclusive Urban Development, Ex-Advisor at UNESCAP



“TOD is not just a policy; it's a catalyst for increasing accessibility and inclusivity.”

Varsha Singh, Project Coordinator, UrbanShift, National Institute of Urban Affairs



CLOSING CEREMONY



SESSION DETAILS

Delhi Declaration – Read out, Discussion and Adoption

ARISE Cities Forum – Summary and Outlook

- Emani Kumar, Deputy Secretary General, ICLEI, Executive Director, ICLEI South Asia
- Gino Van Begin, Secretary General, ICLEI

Special Remarks: Dr. Debolina Kundu, Director, National Institute of Urban Affairs

Youth Hackathon - Adaptation to Climate Change: Evidence-based Innovative Solutions for South Asian Cities

- Introduction and Announcement of Ritu Thakur Memorial Awards 2025
- Felicitation of Youth for Climate Hackathon Winners
- Launch of Youth Hackathon Booklet

Delhi Declaration: Handover to Brazil contingent by

- Hon'ble Member of Parliament, Indore & Mentor, Climate Parliament India, Shri Shankar Lalwani

Special Address by Chief Guest: Honourable Member of Parliament, Indore & Mentor, Climate Parliament India, Shri Shankar Lalwani

Vote of Thanks: Bedoshruti Sadhukhan, Associate Director, ICLEI South Asia

Closing Remarks: Emani Kumar, Deputy Secretary General, ICLEI, Executive Director, ICLEI South Asia



From Left to Right: Bedoshruti Sadhukhan, Emani Kumar, Dr. Debolina Kundu, Gino Van Begin, Hon'ble Shankar Lalwani, Hansa Patel, Rodrigo De Souza Corradi

HIGHLIGHTS

The 'Delhi Declaration' on Local Action for Global Climate Goals emerged as the key outcome of the first ARISE Cities Forum 2025, co-hosted by ICLEI South Asia and the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA). The Delhi Declaration unites voices across the Global South in a shared call for stronger multilevel cooperation and accelerated urban climate action, setting the stage for the upcoming COP30 at Belém, Brazil.

Through the Declaration, more than 200 delegates from 60 cities and 25 countries representing local, subnational, and national governments, the private sector, and other key stakeholders pledged to amplify urban voices and strengthen collaboration across cities, sectors, and borders to ensure that priorities of resilience, equity, and sustainability are reflected in global climate outcomes.

At the Forum inaugural on 8 October, 2025, the Delhi Declaration was supported by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MOHUA), Government of India, and the United Nations Resident Coordinator. Sixteen organisations supported and 17 organisations endorsed the ARISE Cities Forum 2025 where the Declaration was adopted.

Hon'ble Minister of State, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), Shri Tokhan Sahu said: "I am confident that the Delhi Declaration emerging from this forum will stand as a milestone in the global climate agenda. It will carry the collective voice of South Asia and the Global South to COP30 in Brazil, reminding the world that our cities are not merely at the receiving end of climate impacts but are also at the forefront of driving solutions."

UN Resident Coordinator in India, Mr Shombi Sharp added: "The Delhi Declaration presents a very important collective voice for urban ambition, spotlighting the vital streams of climate resilient housing, inclusive and universal design, and financing for local governments, all vital contributions to COP30."

Adopted by the show of hands at the close of the two-day ARISE Cities Forum, the Delhi Declaration was handed over by Hon'ble Shankar Lalwani, Member of Parliament, Indore, and Mentor, Climate Parliament, India, to Rodrigo De Souza Corradi, Deputy Executive Secretary and Director, ICLEI South America. The Declaration will be handed over to the COP30 Presidency in Belém as a collective statement of urban ambition, underscoring the leadership of cities in driving resilient, equitable, and sustainable climate action. At the adoption of the Delhi Declaration, Hon'ble MP Shri Shankar Lalwani said: "With the Delhi Declaration, we send a clear message from Bharat to Belém: the future of climate action will be shaped in cities. This collective vision must inform global decisions at COP30 and beyond."

Dr. Debolina Kundu, Director, National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA), highlighted: "The Delhi Declaration is a strong testament that while cities face climate challenges, strong collaboration can lead to transformative change. Let's carry the spirit of ARISE into our cities, ensuring that climate solutions are practical, adaptive, and inclusive."

Mr Emani Kumar, Deputy Secretary General, ICLEI, Executive Director, ICLEI South Asia stated: "With the 'Delhi Declaration', we affirm our collective resolve to contribute on Local Action for Global Climate Goals at and beyond COP30 in Belém by amplifying urban voices and presenting concrete commitments from cities of the Global South."

At COP30 in Belém, ICLEI will represent the Local Governments and Municipal Authorities (LGMA) constituency and lead the sub-national/local governments pavilion in the Blue Zone, the area for urban governments and leaders to lead conversations and collaborate for larger climate goals.

The Declaration represents a landmark affirmation of the role of cities and local governments as indispensable actors in global climate governance. By aligning with COP30's Action Agenda and echoing the outcomes of the Global Stocktake, it signals that urban leadership is central to achieving the Paris Agreement's goals. It strengthens the LGMA's long-standing advocacy for recognising subnational contributions through enhanced NDCs 3.0, equitable access to climate finance, and systemic inclusion of local priorities in global policy.

As this Declaration travels from Delhi to Belém, it carries the unified call of cities — not just to be heard at COP, but to be recognised as partners shaping the decisions, resources, and resilience frameworks that define our shared climate future.

The Declaration outlines shared commitments to guide local and subnational governments across the Global South:

- Advance local climate action through enhanced, measurable, and resourced multilevel NDCs;
- Drive inclusive urban resilience integrating adaptation, circularity, and nature-based solutions;
- Promote just and participatory green transitions toward net-zero pathways;
- Empower citizens, women, youth, and communities in climate governance;
- Strengthen multilevel governance and transparent data systems;
- Mobilise climate finance and expand direct access for cities; and,
- Champion Global South urban leadership through South–South and triangular Cooperation.



Delegates adopt the Delhi Declaration by a show of hands



Handing over the Delhi Declaration by Hon'ble Shankar Lalwani, Member of Parliament, Indore, and Mentor, Climate Parliament, India, to Rodrigo De Souza Corradi, Deputy Executive Secretary and Director, ICLEI South America

SPEAKER QUOTES



“Community involvement is key to climate action and resilience efforts. Cleanliness, green projects, and local action are boosting our economy and environment together.”

Hon'ble Shankar Lalwani, Member of Parliament, Indore, and Mentor, Climate Parliament, India

“The Delhi Declaration is a strong testament that while cities face climate challenges, strong collaboration can lead to transformative change. Let's carry the spirit of ARISE into our cities, ensuring that climate solutions are practical, adaptive, and inclusive.”

Dr. Debolina Kundu, Director, National Institute of Urban Affairs, India



“We've seen incredible work and milestones across Asia. Through the climate crisis, Global South cities have the opportunity to rethink how we plan, design, and live in our cities.”

Gino Van Begin, Secretary General, ICLEI

“Local actions are louder and more powerful. What we do today and tomorrow directly impacts our communities and the global climate.”

Emani Kumar, Deputy Secretary General, ICLEI, and Executive Director, ICLEI South Asia



“The Delhi Declaration is crucial for amplifying the voices of local governments of the Global South and ensuring that they are meaningfully involved in climate implementation processes, both globally and on the ground.”

Rodrigo De Souza Corradi, Deputy Executive Secretary and Director, ICLEI South America



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM DAY 2

- Four mantras must be considered for financing climate :
 - Regular maintenance and timely repairs of infrastructure, especially during seasonal changes, is the most cost-effective interventions for resilient urban spaces.
 - Retrofitting existing infrastructure is as important as new infrastructure, and requires special sources of finance for enhanced results.
 - New infrastructure must be climate-compatible and aligned with for new climate realities is a crucial factor for shaping instruments, policies, and institutions for urban transitions in India.
 - Cities bear the largest economic impacts during climate shocks. Prioritising disaster finance and analysis of risks is crucial to mitigate losses.
- Developing multi-use, resilient charging infrastructure and supporting EV workshops and skilling programmes are important factors in the successful implementation of e-mobility.
- Cities are central actors in climate finance; empowering them through technical assistance, data systems, and innovative funding models can unlock scalable climate action. Collaboration and continuity across departments and governments are key to sustain momentum and ensure successful implementation.
- Management Information System (MIS) and data-driven governance are crucial for optimum decision-making to drive sustainability and resilience.
- Digitisation is the first step before AI and simulation based systems are explored. The effectiveness of digital solutions depends on their contextual implementation and the right skills and partnerships.
- Youth engagement through foresight and storytelling can shape urban resilience narratives. Platforms that bring youth, media, and government together can co-create inclusive, human-centered narratives for climate-resilient cities.
- TOD must be contextual and inclusive – each city and station area requires tailored approaches based on their socio-economic realities.





THE DELHI DECLARATION

ARISE Cities Forum 2025: From Bharat to Belém

Delhi Declaration on Local Action for Global Climate Goals

We, the Mayors, city leaders, and representatives of national, state, and subnational governments, together with partners from civil society, academia, youth, the private sector, and multilateral development organisations, as custodians of our collective future in the Global South, having convened in New Delhi, India, from 8 to 9 October 2025.

RECALL the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the New Urban Agenda, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the outcomes of previous UNFCCC Conferences of the Parties such as para161 of the COP28 UAE Consensus as a result of the Global Stocktake which urges Parties for multilevel collaboration, COP30 Action Agenda Axis-4 and other relevant outcomes on multilevel collaboration and urbanisation in the UNFCCC process.

AFFIRM our collective resolve to contribute beyond the success of COP30 in Belém by amplifying urban voices and presenting concrete commitments from cities of the Global South from the Indian subcontinent and beyond.

ENDORSE, the LGMA Constituency as the voice of subnationals in the UNFCCC process and its COP30 Vision¹ to enhance multilevel collaboration and urbanization in the climate action before, during and beyond COP30 in Belém, including mobilization through Town Hall COPs, and good practices such as the Kuala Lumpur Call to Action for COP30 announced by the President of the UN Habitat Assembly

STRIVE towards limiting global warming, as envisaged by the Paris Agreement, and protecting our environment and citizens from the impacts of climate change by accelerating local climate action in the cities of the Global South (the Indian Subcontinent and the Asia Pacific)

ACKNOWLEDGE and support India's proactive efforts to host COP-33, with a hope for its acknowledgement as the first COP to fully integrate urbanisation into the UNFCCC process, building on the expected outcomes of COP30 multilevel and urban legacy, together with the response of the UNFCCC to the IPCC Special Report on Cities expected by COP32 in 2027, creating a historic opportunity to place cities at the climate action forefront. ARISE will build a committed cohort to advance this opportunity of global importance.

RECOGNISE that the decisive decade for climate action demands accelerated ambition, scaled finance, and transformative governance, and that cities are indispensable partners in the achievement of the Paris Agreement.

PLEDGE to strengthen cooperation across cities, borders, sectors, and levels of government in the Global South, to ensure that the priorities of urban resilience, equity, and sustainability are integrated into global climate outcomes at COP30;

¹ LGMA* COP30 Vision Letter - as of 3 June 2025 Rallying for Local-to-Global-COP30 and beyond

We Hereby Declare Our Shared Commitments:

1. Advance Local Climate Action

Support the preparation and implementation of enhanced multilevel **NDCs 3.0**, ensuring that subnational contributions are fully recognised, measurable, and resourced, in alignment with the Global Stocktake.

2. Drive Inclusive and Equitable Urban Resilience

Integrate disaster risk reduction, climate adaptation measures, nature-based solutions, ecosystem restoration, and circularity into urban policy and planning, adopting a systemic and whole-of-economy approach, ensuring the resilience and continuity of critical infrastructure services, and addressing the urban-peri urban continuum.

3. Adopt Participatory Green Transitions

Advance just and inclusive net-zero pathways that include and are not limited to decarbonising the energy sector, promoting energy efficiency and clean mobility; adopting relevant multi-stakeholder and participatory approaches.

4. Citizen, Community, Women and Youth Leadership

Institutionalize platforms for citizen, youth, women and community participation in climate governance. Recognize and scale community led and driven innovations while building long-term capacities for local governments and civil society to sustain resilient climate action beyond individual projects and strengthen their partnership.

5. Enhance Multi-Level Governance and Innovative Data Systems

Commit to deepening collaboration between national, sub-national and local governments, underpinned by robust, transparent, and participatory data, reporting and monitoring systems, to accelerate implementation and accountability.

6. Mobilise Climate Finance for Cities

Commit to enhancing local government financing for integrated climate action and call upon national and international financial institutions to establish dedicated mechanisms for direct access to climate finance, close the adaptation finance gap, and expand accessible funding for loss and damage.

7. Champion Global South Climate Urban Leadership

Assert the leadership of Global South cities in shaping global climate policy, foster South-South and triangular cooperation, and present scalable, inclusive and just urban solutions that bridge local realities with global ambition.

Conclusion

From **Bharat to Belém**, we bring forward the collective voice of cities: a call for ambition, a demand for equity, and a pledge for local climate action. The **Delhi Declaration** embodies the spirit of solidarity, partnership and a whole of economy and society approach that must define COP30, offering cities' commitment to co-create a climate-safe, just, and sustainable future for all.

We present this declaration as our collective contribution to COP30, affirming that we, the people of the world, will build a future that is resilient, equitable, and low-carbon.

ADOPTED this Ninth Day of October in the Year Two Thousand and Twenty-Five, in New Delhi, India.







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