

In June 2023, at our inaugural gathering in Paris, Mayor Anne Hidalgo, Mayor Eduardo Paes, and Prof. Jeffrey Sachs announced the formation of the SDSN Global Commission for Urban SDG Finance and its co-chairs. In a year we have grown to a diverse network of more than 85 leaders and experts who explored and diligently developed a set of actionable initiatives to advance urban climate finance. The following updates and recommendations are jointly put forth by the Commission to guide its ongoing work and advocacy. We welcome all Commissioners' notes and ideas and will integrate feedback in the weeks following our meeting in Paris on July 25, 2024.

The Commission is working at a critical juncture for urban climate finance. Cities continue to face record-breaking heat and devastating disasters. As the cost of our underpreparedness mounts, cities continue to receive only 7-8% of climate funds despite housing nearly 60% of the global population. A third of NDCs still do not include any urban content. There are signs that enabling conditions are being strengthened and cities are gaining the attention they desperately need. Country platforms that coordinate national climate finance, for example, are being reassessed to include urban content. However, cities need to be ready for the spotlight. Urban climate finance is constrained by meager project pipelines. Cities need to work across sectors to develop project portfolios that are science-backed and locally-based as promoted by initiatives like the CHAMP pledge, a new commitment taken by national governments to work in partnership with their subnational governments on NDCs in time for COP30 in 2025.

"Instead of leaving no one behind, we risk leaving the SDGs behind. This can be a game changer... [we] need to reform the international financial architecture that I consider outdated, dysfunctional, and unfair."

- UN Secretary-General António Guterres at the launch of CHAMP

As the cost of weather-related catastrophes continues to increase at a faster rate than global GDP, the Bridgetown Initiative and other advocacy efforts highlight the dearth of affordable finance flows to meet the needs for SDGs, climate mitigation, and adaptation without compromising debt sustainability. Equitable distribution of climate resilience dividends will require all hands on deck. Over the last year, Commission members have engaged in dozens of global meetings that highlight ongoing progress, such as the U20 Co-Chairs' Statement endorsing the Green Cities Guarantee Fund concept, C40's Open Letter calling for increased subnational climate funding to Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) signed by over 40 mayors, Local 2030's efforts supporting on-the-ground SDG implementation, the Resilient Cities Network's New Agenda for Urban Resilience Action promoting project portfolios, CCFLA's engagement in MDB reform, and overall assistance for the IPCC Special Report on Cities.

While sub-national governments (SNGs) are in principle well positioned to support local economic and infrastructure development, their governance, geography, and technical capacities vary considerably across regions. In 2022, G20 governments spent only 1% of GDP on infrastructure investment and 71% of tracked private climate investment funding went to projects in high-income countries. This is why we will continue to work collectively to forge and implement inclusive approaches.

Today, our Commission will carry this momentum to advocate across all levels of government. We will engage G20 leaders gathering this year in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil, and push for effective urban mitigation and adaptation strategies, substantially higher sums of directly accessible urban climate finance, and swift MDB reforms to reverse the "socially regressive implications" of orthodox financial standards on cities and their billions of residents.

- Secretariat, SDSN Global Commission for Urban SDG Finance

## COMMISSION MANDATE

The Commission's mandate is to harness the insights of mayors, city networks leaders, climate and finance experts, leaders from civil society, the private sector, and academia to develop and champion innovative ideas and solutions for increasing urban SDG finance, ensuring pathways that will engage all sectors, regions, and leaders committed to a sustainable future.

# COMMISSION MILESTONES

In the past year, the Commission, co-chaired by Jeff Sachs, President and Founder of SDSN, Anne Hidalgo, Mayor of Paris, France, and Eduardo Paes, Mayor of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, held dozens of meetings, including the inaugural meeting in Paris during the Summit for the New Global Financing Pact, and plenary gatherings in New York City on the sidelines of the U.N. Climate Ambition Summit and during COP28 in December 2023 in Dubai.

Over the last year, we have grown to over 85 Commissioners and research observers, who joined one of six (6) task forces to engage in timely and targeted conversations at least quarterly over the past year. Each Task Force put forth concrete recommendations that respond to calls for comprehensive whole-of-government finance strategies to address the absence of SNG and urban finance in global financial architecture reforms, combine and increase public and private sector financing, and improve the imbalances between mitigation and adaptation funding and regional investments around the world.

2023-2024 Organizational Chart



## YEAR IN REVIEW

#### June 2023

# FORMAL LAUNCH OF THE COMMISSION IN PARIS

Mayor Hidalgo hosted the kick off at the Hotel de Ville alongside the Summit for a New Global Financing Pact.

#### **Sept 2023**

# G20 LEADERS' SUMMIT IN NEW DELHI

Commission Communique provided strategic recommendations for new urban climate finance reforms.

#### **Sept 2023**

#### COMMISSION MEETING DURING UN CLIMATE WEEK IN NYC

Commissioner Marc Rosenberg hosted 50+ Commissioners.

#### **Dec 2023**

#### COMMISSION MEETING DURING COP28 IN DUBAI

In parallel with the Local Climate Action Summit (LCAS) and the formal launch of CHAMP, we met to engage on the critical role of local leaders.

#### Feb 2024

# FIRST CITY AND REGIONAL SUMMIT AT THE 6TH UNEA IN NAIROBI

Secretariat was invited to present on finance for sustainable cities and shared Commission updates.

#### March 2024

# RESILIENT CITIES NETWORK HOSTS CONVENING IN BELLAGIO

Secretariat and several Commissioners participated in and discussed national and city portfolios.

#### April 2024

# IPCC-AR7 SCOPING MEETING FOR SPECIAL REPORT ON CITIES

Commission contributed key messages and bibliography on urban climate finance.

#### April 2024

#### WORLD BANK GROUP SPRING MEETINGS IN WASHINGTON DC

Commissioners attended critical working meetings on infrastructure and key sectors.

#### May 2024

#### FINANCE IN COMMON SUMMIT IN RIO DE JANEIRO

Secretariat presented the Green Cities Guarantees Fund proposal and FICs recommended its creation to the G20 presidency.

#### June 2024

#### U20 CO-CHAIRS STATEMENT CALLS FOR CREATION OF GCGF

Culmination of Commission's advocacy advanced Green Cities Guarantee Fund proposal.

#### **July 2024**

# CROSS-SECTOR MEETINGS AT LONDON CLIMATE WEEK

Secretariat engaged public sector and private sector leaders in discussions on urban climate finance reform.

#### **July 2024**

#### PRESENTATION OF DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS STATEMENT IN PARIS

Commissioners meet in person and virtually to hone draft recommendations statement.





















## **OUR PRINCIPLES**

We made significant progress in one year, but there is a lot more to do. Throughout the year, we heard from Commission members about MDB reform progress, climate finance's evolutions, and cities finally finding their voice. Now is the time to advance decisive initiatives and continue to innovate together. This upcoming year presents an urgent window of opportunity to improve the enabling environments to scale local climate finance and resilience solutions. We can do this by integrating urban content informed by local project portfolios into national climate platforms.

**The Commission's diverse membership strengthens its unique cross-sector approach.** The Commission brings together city mayors, governors, civil society leaders, IFI representatives, private sector leaders, scientists, and academics. Our breadth of perspectives, expertise, and geographic references uniquely positions us to gather and consolidate cross-sector insights to champion robust, forward-looking solutions.

Our comprehensive approach yields recommendations that tackle different issues while complementing one another. There is no silver bullet to revolutionizing urban climate finance. We need to collectively pilot and pursue a suite of solutions. The Commission recognizes that fragmentation and projectization threaten sustainable financing for urban resilience efforts. Therefore we are focused on dynamic instruments that are vetted across our membership to ensure wide-scale value.

We aim to center endogenous climate resilience efforts which are too often underutilized and underestimated. The traditional paradigms of international development institutions and finance mechanisms must be challenged and localized approaches to urban climate finance must be adopted. Territorial approaches can better address acute climate stressors while forging and implementing longer-term climate policies designed for cities, by cities.

As we fill knowledge gaps, we also take action. We recognize that publishing peer-reviewed, timely, and nuanced work on urban climate finance is challenging.

However, as an emerging field there is a poignant lack of empirical evidence that is too often a prerequisite to taking bold climate action. Today's climate emergencies demand a speed of change that requires stakeholders to leverage all available research and case studies, particularly those produced by international institutions, third-sector leaders, and practitioners from all regions of the globe.

## RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

Over the past year, Commission Task Forces discussed pertinent challenges and put forth a dynamic range of solutions. The following recommendations synthesize the Commission's insights and objectives and set forth a working agenda moving forward.

## RESEARCH

I. CONTRIBUTE TO THE IPCC SPECIAL REPORT ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND CITIES BY KNOWLEDGE-SHARING AND PROVIDING DEDICATED RESOURCES.

## REFORM

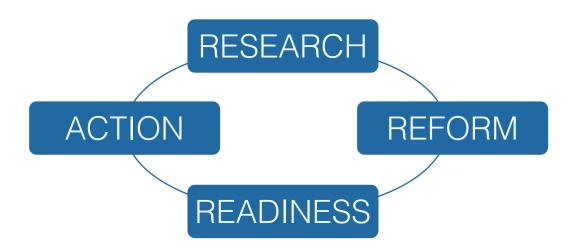
II. MAKE URBAN CLIMATE FINANCE A KEY COMPONENT OF MDB REFORM AGENDAS BY INTEGRATING URBAN CONTENT INTO COUNTRY PLATFORMS THROUGH MULTILEVEL COORDINATION. SUPPORT CITIES TO CREATE AND ATTRACT MORE FINANCE TO INTEGRATED PORTFOLIOS OF PROJECTS THAT DELIVER ON SDG GOALS ACROSS CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION.

## READINESS

III. ADDRESS MISALIGNMENTS THAT IMPEDE COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS AND PROMOTE ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS FOR CLIMATE ACTION INVESTMENTS.

## **ACTION**

IV. OPERATIONALIZE THE GREEN CITIES GUARANTEE FUND.



# CONTRIBUTE TO THE IPCC SPECIAL REPORT ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND CITIES BY KNOWLEDGE-SHARING AND PROVIDING DEDICATED RESOURCES.

As the only special report for the seventh IPCC cycle, this report is a momentous opportunity to build upon the sixth cycle's chapter on investment and finance and engage the scientific community around cutting-edge urban climate finance research. To heighten the report's impact, we head the recent call from Commission members to engage in in-reach and out-reach strategies with a wider community of practitioners and policymakers. There is a need to deepen systemic collaboration among all stakeholders to embed evidence-based methodologies in the development of urban climate finance proposals and solutions. Collectively we can influence how scientific assessments tackle climate action, regional disparities, and decision making in the upcoming special report and beyond.

# The Commission will leverage its network to strengthen pathways for its members and communities of practice to enrich a growing body of evidence for urban climate finance.

The Commission will continue to work to ensure that its members' expertise and innovations are considered for the IPCC Special Report on Cities. Furthermore, public peer review is crucial to the IPCC's process. The Commission and its collaborators can help ensure the best-fit experts can offer their insights on the Special Report. It is expected to be published in March 2027.



## **NEXT STEPS**

The Special Report's Table of Contents was set in April and was approved by the IPCC by early August. To capture this momentum, we recommend the following next steps:

- Promote the development of special editions of peer-reviewed journals to publish dedicated literature on urban climate finance:
- Advocate for a greater appreciation of gray literature by leading urban climate finance organizations and institutions as robust and reliable sources of timely information that formally evidence cities' desperate need for urgent and decisive action;
- Address identified knowledge gaps and biases in urban climate finance research, such as accurate cost estimations of adaptation in cities and urban areas, clearly defined city typologies and more reliable quantifications of net GHG emissions, the economic and social costs of inaction, the nuances between different regions within the Global South, and the growing relevance of urban climate challenges in developed countries;
- Highlight authors working on the knowledge gaps, particularly those from the Global South, and support efforts to address disparities in access to journals.

# STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE IMPACT OF THE IPCC SPECIAL REPORT ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND CITIES

Solecki, W., Roberts, D. & Seto, K.C. | Nature | 03 July 2024

"The planned Special Report on Climate Change and Cities represents a key opportunity to connect the IPCC assessment process to the topics of cities and global urbanization, which are both critical elements of climate adaptation and mitigation during the current 'decade of action'. To help seize this opportunity, we recommend the development of inreach and outreach strategies that can help the report to have greater impact. The new strategies could allow interest groups, including practitioners and policymakers, along with researchers and IPCC representatives to be more coordinated and enhance the utilization of the assessment results. These advances would be useful not only for the upcoming Special Report but also for future IPCC reports and other comparable scientific assessments."

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MITIGATION.

It is imperative that urbanization and climate finance are regarded as two sides of the same coin. Between 2015 and 2022, 21% of tracked climate-related MDB finance to Low-Middle Income Countries went to urban projects. This ratio is relatively unchanged even though urban areas in less developed regions are expected to account for 90% of all population growth by 2050. This disparity must be disrupted. City platforms offer one such pathway. The concept is based on country platforms which are generally defined as government-led coordination bodies that establish a center of gravity for governments, funding partners, civil societies, and implementing partners. City-focused platforms could streamline the integration of cities' unique climate challenges into county-level planning and negotiations.

#### We can no longer afford fragmented planning and

**implementation.** Moving forward, the integration of urban content into country strategy must be systematic. Persistent shortcomings in subnational fiscal governance impede subnational finance and investment in local climate action. While MDB reform progresses, project-by-project efforts to date have been insufficient to bridge the widening urban climate finance gap.

# ACCELERATING URBAN CLIMATE FINANCE IN L&MICs

"To meet the goals of the Paris Agreement, an unprecedented surge in climate finance is needed, with an annual increase of at least 590% (and) to address the climate emergency, MDBs must work more closely and effectively with cities, which are at the forefront of the battle against the climate crisis."



# The Commission seconds open calls for MDBs to scale urban climate finance through more strategic and programmatic

**frameworks.** Our public and private members suggest that a coordinated sector-based approach can most effectively consider unique urban dimensions in a coordinated manner to unlock which fundamental economic transformations to prioritize. Additionally, IFIs and intergovernmental organizations should support the development of pragmatic diagnostics to assist in identifying appropriate policy options for enhancing subnational finance given the institutional and contextual characteristics of a particular country.

# The Commission recommends that SNGs and their partners systematically build capacity to develop portfolios of projects.

As recently championed by the Resilient Cities Network, portfolios of projects that respond to science, meet community needs, and attract investment can set forth a new agenda for urban resilience action. Portfolios that align with private sector paradigms, such as sector-based thinking, can further enhance cities' readiness to leverage emerging urban climate finance funds and instruments.

# NEW AGENDA FOR URBAN RESILIENCE ACTION

"Systematically build cities' abilities to develop portfolios of projects that respond to science, meet community needs and attract investment."



## **NEXT STEPS**

For the next steps to promote dialogue on meaningful MDB reform on urban issues and local project readiness, we intend to:

- Curate and launch a Commission-based working group on City Platforms and Project Portfolios to deepen engagement in MDB and country-level reform processes;
  - Develop strategies that promote policy, finance, and capacity-building activities at the city level in country platforms;
- Promote frameworks developed by organizations like CCFLA, C40, Resilient Cities Network, UNEP, and many others to address these gaps and scale up urban climate action including:
  - Adoption of a programmatic approach that integrates planning, project preparation support, finance, and capacity building;
  - Collaboration across banks to support transformational programs;
  - Development of portfolios that integrate mitigation and adaptation projects;
  - Adoption of additional urban finance instruments;
  - Assessment and management of risks related to factors such as climate change, political cycles, corruption, lack of data, and supply chains and project implementation;
  - Expansion of MDBs' and private sector finance for urban projects.

# ADDRESS MISALIGNMENTS THAT IMPEDE COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS AND PROMOTE ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS FOR CLIMATE ACTION INVESTMENTS.

An estimated USD 93 trillion of sustainable infrastructure needs to be built by 2030 - more than 70 percent of which will need to be built in urban areas. This is a tremendous investment opportunity. And yet, orthodox risk models and a persistent lack of mutual understanding between the private and public sectors constrain private climate finance. As reforms are realized, climate finance requires simultaneously robust regulatory standards that promote transparency and private sector innovation to be ready to invest.

Multilevel government collaboration must yield frameworks that comprehensively address financial, political, and regulatory risks in order to attract investment. The Commission encourages cities to play a key role in enabling privatesector climate investment. Developing project management capacity within cities can strengthen project intelligence so that project pipelines can be delivered on time and to high-quality specifications. Project intelligence can also be supported by investing in granular spatialized datasets to better identify and understand the extent of regional and local climate risks. Capacity-building and science-based data are cornerstones to aligning project finance and project management principles. Furthermore, it facilitates opportunities for meaningful private sector collaboration on the front end as well as on the back end of project development. Project co-development and robust reporting can enable robust portfolios of projects, including those that address adaptation and nature-based solutions. Through collaboration, transparency, and enforcement there are significant climate resilience dividends to realize and leverage to reduce risk, prevent loss and damage, create value, and promote prosperous futures for the world's 4.4 billion city dwellers.

#### **NEW REPORTS**

Institutions are delivering timely work on private sector involvement in urban climate finance.



World Bank Group and UNCDF's Joint Report 2024



International Finance Corporation's Annual Joint Report 2024



Sustainable Markets Initiative's Blended Finance Task Force Consultation Paper 2023 As the public sector strengthens its readiness, the private sector must innovate its models that currently constrain urban climate finance mobilization. In cities, climate mitigation and adaptation are increasingly intertwined. Limited space requires multi-pronged solutions. Underwriting practices must adapt to these realities with longer-term timelines, wholly assess the value of nature-based solutions across all sectors, and embrace a wider range of investment scales including neighborhoodlevel investments. It is widely recognized that this will require the private sector to reassess its risk metrics and risk mitigation tactics. It is imperative that the private sector share these new models with cities as they are being developed so as to maximize opportunities for alignment. This will also open pathways to coinvest in disaster relief funds and nature-based solutions which are key tenants to a robust urban climate finance ecosystem, and present upsides for all parties. The Commission welcomes further cross-sector collaboration to create blended financing solutions that mutually encourage research, reform, and readiness to deploy enhanced urban climate finance instruments.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Next steps to encourage systemic alignment between the public and private sectors as they develop processes and policies to strengthen enabling environments for urban climate finance include:

- Highlight the importance of fiscal sustainability and accountability at all government levels as a condition for success in climate action planning;
- Share research insights and data sets that address negative perceptions and bias against subnational lending and long-term urban climate action;
- Promote programmatic thinking across all sectors to scale up comprehensive climate action. This may involve:
  - Identifying and openly communicating priority areas across and within sectors,
  - Promoting opportunities for meaningful dialogue with stakeholders in the public and private sectors and IFIs, particularly on blended project finance;
- Raise awareness about emerging risk areas, including:
  - Stranded infrastructure assets and the role of the real estate sector,
  - New economic valuation models for nature-based solutions and the cost of inaction,
  - Development of insurance products and co-investment in upstream solutions.

# OPERATIONALIZE THE GREEN CITIES GUARANTEE FUND.

The Green Cities Guarantee Fund (GCGF) proposal explores one option to harness international demand to expand direct access to climate finance for local governments. First put forth by Task Force 2 at our plenary meeting during last year's NYC Climate Week, this recommendation responds to the Commission's call to address the financial, technical, and political challenges that a country-focused Global Financial Architecture poses for local governments who need to access more financing for mitigation and adaptation infrastructure projects.

The GCGF would be designed to de-risk lending to cities for mitigation and adaptation infrastructure by transferring the risk of repayment to the guarantor. The aim of this instrument would be to attract capital that would not ordinarily be available to cities and enable access to lending at more affordable terms for sustainable and resilient infrastructure projects while offering a critical alternative to sovereign guarantees.

A dedicated GCGF could provide partial or full credit guarantees to cities, municipal utilities, public-private partnerships / SPVs, and the private sector for both local and hard currency debt. The lending instruments that the GCGF would provide credit guarantees for could include green bonds, commercial loans, syndicated project-based loans, project bonds, local revolving credit structures, and more. This financial instrument would be complementary to other national, regional, and global initiatives focused on assisting cities in developing portfolios of bankable projects, creating climate action and resilience plans, improving public financial management, and establishing creditworthiness with domestic and international rating agencies. Reflecting the global representation of the Commission, the goal is for the GCGF to take on a global mandate. However, in order to get a new guarantee fund off the ground, it will likely need to begin with a pilot phase focused on a specific geography. Latin America and the Caribbean have been identified as one potential region for the GCGF to begin its initial pilot phase given the region's relatively

#### U20 CO-CHAIRS STATEMENT

2.iv. Support the creation and operationalization of City Guarantee Funds or Facilities, at the global and regional levels such as a Green Cities Guarantee Fund (GCGF) or the EFSD+Guarantee Facility for Sustainable Cities, which could enable cities to access direct or pooled lending by tackling both credit and currency risk, and as an alternative to sovereign guarantees.

advanced subnational debt markets and favorable regulatory environment. However, this and other fundamental technical criteria remain to be discussed pending further research and market and feasibility analysis.

## **NEXT STEPS**

These next steps seek to deepen the Commission's technical knowledge and to establish key working partnerships in order to:

- Receive feedback from the Commission on the proposal for the GCGF to inform further research and analysis;
- Draft and adopt Guiding Principles for the GCGF;
- Further develop the GCGF's technical proposal, including determination of hosting institution, governance structure, capitalization model, fee structure, and project selection criteria;
- Risk assessment and review of critical factors via proof of concept to develop sound governance structures;
- Development and adoption of frameworks for the types of cities and projects that the GCGF proposal should support in light of the risk assessment;
- Address challenges posed by the lack of data on actual risk and potential solutions, such as those related to the role of credit ratings and insufficient insurance in urban climate finance in relation to the lack of investment in adaptation/resilience, including specific challenges and biases;
- Draft and set measures of success.

We look forward to continuing to foster our collective efforts to advance urban climate finance. We are confident in our Members' commitment to ingenuity, equity, and urgency to make a tremendous impact in the coming year, and beyond.

## **POST PARIS**

The Commission is committed to continuing its timely work to promote urban SDG finance. Looking into the future, we intend to refine our operating model. As we convene throughout 2024-2025, we will explore new ways to encourage steadfast participation by our growing membership to ensure that our collective work is always a meaningful extension of the Commission's mandate to strengthen urban climate impact.

# UPCOMING FVFNTS\*

For the remainder of 2024 and moving into 2025, the Commission reinforces in its commitment to championing urgent reforms and innovative instruments, as well as continuing to build an inclusive and productive forum of exchange and ideation.

#### **Sept 2024**

G-20 4TH SUSTAINABLE FINANCE WORKING GROUP MEETING

G-20 4TH TASK FORCE MOBILIZATION AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE

#### Sept 2024 •

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY, NYC CLIMATE WEEK, AND COMMISSION MEETING

#### **Sept 2024**

INNOVATE4CITIES CONFERENCE IN MONTRÉAL, CANADA

#### Oct 2024

FINANCE IN COMMON SUMMIT IN CHENGDU, CHINA

#### Nov 2024

WORLD URBAN FORUM IN CAIRO, EGYPT

#### Nov 2024

U20 AND G20 SUMMITS IN RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL

#### Nov 2024

COP29 IN BAKU, AZERBAIJAN

#### March 2025 •

VIRTUAL COMMISSION MEETING

#### June 2025 •

FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT IN SPAIN

#### Nov 2025 •

COP30 IN BELEM, BRAZIL

\*sample of events, this is not an exhaustive calendar

Commission Meetings

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