

## Communiqué from the Urban 20 (U20)

[Final Version for Endorsement– Under Embargo until 2 October, 6.45PM Saudi Arabia Time]

October 2, 2020, Riyadh

We, the Mayors of the undersigned cities, underscoring the interconnectedness of the world and our shared future, have gathered as the Urban 20 (U20) to call on the G20 Leaders to commit to our partnership in achieving equitable, carbon-neutral, inclusive and healthy societies. Under the U20 Riyadh's chairmanship, U20 cities built on the strong foundation of the U20 Buenos Aires and Tokyo legacies to issue this Communiqué linking to the G20 priorities under the Saudi presidency, and with contributions from evidence-based task forces and a special working group on COVID-19.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing social and economic crisis make this call even more urgent as cities and metropolitan areas, that lie at the heart of the G20's vitality, are the epicenter of the crisis.

Mayors, the principal champions of our communities' aspirations, are on the frontline to deliver on COVID-19 recovery action plans across the G20, backed by scientific knowledge, inclusively building on technological and digital breakthroughs, while acknowledging humanity's cultural and ethnic diversity.

The recovery should not be a return to business as usual. Instead, investments must improve the welfare and resilience of our cities and communities, by addressing solidarity, re-investing in public health, and mitigating future threats, like the climate crisis. Climate action and biodiversity preservation can help accelerate economic recovery and enhance equity through new technologies and the creation of green jobs. These efforts will also drive wider benefits for people and businesses.

Now is the time to devise visionary multilateral solutions and strengthen policy-making that fosters inclusive, sustainable, resilient and smart urbanization, protects the rights of citizens and the foundations of local democracy, in support of prosperity and well-being framed by key global agreements.

The global agendas such as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, and the New Urban Agenda along with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction require implementation, using tools and processes such as the Voluntary Local Review.

We call on the Heads of States and Governments of the G20 to build back better in cooperation with all levels of government, civil society, private sector, research, think tanks and academia and to work with us to:

- A. Partner by investing in a green and just COVID-19 recovery;
- B. Safeguard our Planet through national-local collaboration;
- C. Shape New Frontiers for development, by accelerating the transition to a circular, carbon-neutral economy;
- D. Empower People to deliver a more equitable and inclusive future.

## A. Partner by investing in a green and just post COVID-19 recovery

National governments must crucially invest directly in cities as the engines of the recovery by implementing global policy responses that address investments in physical and social infrastructure.

We call on the G20 to work with local governments to:

1. Design green stimulus funding, corporate support, and other recovery funds to support the development of net-zero carbon, climate-resilient and inclusive societies. Financial support should comply with science-based targets for emissions reductions and transition plans aligned with the goals of the Paris Agreement.
2. Invigorate the local and global economies by ensuring that cities' funding needs are duly reflected in International Financial Institutions (IFIs) lending, enabling cities' access to national and international capital markets, recognizing the need to combat the existing barriers they encounter.
3. Help cities enhance their creditworthiness, de-risk short term lending, and capacity building for project preparation, improving regulatory frameworks for cities to leverage private sector investments and partnerships while strengthening the role of green finance instruments.
4. Invest in cities' social infrastructure, in particular health, education and public transport systems alongside sustainability priorities, cognizant of the role of informal economic sectors in the global economy.
5. Invest in 'shovel-ready' carbon-neutral projects to rapidly generate green jobs and increase equitable participation and standards in the labour force through training and upskilling to support healthier and carbon-neutral livelihoods.
6. Ensure that technology and innovation equitably serve people during and following the COVID-19 recovery, enabling connectivity, distance learning, telework and all other universal public services, to be accessible to all communities in respect of citizens' human rights, including digital rights.
7. Commit to cooperate towards guaranteeing access to vaccines for the COVID-19 virus to all as a global public good, accessible without discrimination of any kind.
8. Work with local governments and coordinate with multilateral institutions, including the World Health Organization, to upgrade health crisis rapid responses, improve recovery policies and respond to future shocks in line with cities' needs.

## B. Safeguard our Planet through national-local collaboration

As ecosystems are deteriorating worldwide, investments in nature are a shared priority for cities and countries across the G20, conscious that living together in harmony with nature is a prerequisite for prosperous present and future generations.

We call on the G20 leaders to work with us to:

9. Commit to respond immediately to the climate emergency by substantially reducing GHG emissions with the aim to collectively deliver the 50% global reduction required by 2030 and reaching carbon neutrality no later than 2050 - in line with the objectives of the Paris Agreement and taking into account the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Special Report on 1.5 Degree of Global Warming - to hold the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels in full accordance with the principles of equity, while recognizing the common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

10. Recognize the economic valuation of natural ecosystems and include cities in the post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), in service to humanity's wellbeing, resilient and thriving livelihoods.
11. Invest in nature-based solutions with IFIs and the private sector to enable the provision of green and blue infrastructure and set minimum standards and guidelines ensuring access to nature and green space in cities to improve physical and mental wellbeing, while evaluating the potential and risks of biotechnology.
12. Work together with local governments in a complementary way and mainstream a strengthened role and the active participation of cities in the local implementation of the biodiversity, climate and sustainability goals.
13. Coordinate national and local efforts to reinforce the convergence among the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), the Paris Agreement's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and the Agenda 2030 Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) ahead of the COP15 Biodiversity and COP26 on Climate.

### C. Shape New Frontiers for development by accelerating the transition to a circular, carbon-neutral economy

The COVID-19 pandemic offers the opportunity for a decisive shift to a circular, carbon-neutral economy worldwide, ushering in a new era of resource efficiency.

We call on the G20 to work with us to:

14. Advance the regulation of circular economy systems aimed at accelerating the implementation of the 4Rs - reduce, reuse, recycle, and recover- by developing enabling legal environments, harmonizing standards, and developing risk sharing and financial assistance instruments and incentives.
15. Enhance local governments' ability to finance and adopt circular economy initiatives in the building and construction sector, including construction materials, with a focus on the deployment of readily available retrofit technologies and on the development of new industries, promoting research, capacity-building and the monitoring of resource use.
16. Regulate, invest and redirect national budgets to carbon-neutral, quality mobility systems to support sustainable affordable zero-emission mass transit and incentivise the procurement of electric vehicles and associated electrification infrastructure, in particular for marginalized and vulnerable communities.
17. Accelerate the transition towards a clean and efficient energy mix through major investment increases in renewables to support healthier, carbon-neutral cities.
18. Adopt a universal right of access to urban sanitation and waste management for all while promoting 'zero waste societies', in recognition that waste rarely pays for itself and progress towards circular economy is slow but critical, in particular in rapidly urbanizing regions.

### D. Empower People to deliver a more equitable and inclusive future

A just global COVID-19 recovery includes all urban citizens, residents, migrants, and especially vulnerable communities, and ensures their safety and wellbeing, alongside the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and creation of more complete communities.

We call on the G20 to work with us to:

19. Prepare G20 principles to address critical and persistent global challenges in the delivery system of affordable, accessible, and quality housing by the public and private sector in cities; integrate housing with sustainable public transportation and healthy and safe

public space; and promote innovative financial mechanisms and develop sustainable real estate market regulations.

20. Guarantee food security for all by strengthening urban-rural linkages and investing in physical and social infrastructure that fosters resilient and sustainable food consumption and production systems, along with revising the *G20 Principles on Habitat and Regional Planning* to balance agriculture development with natural habitat protection, by reinforcing capacity building in rural environments and protecting the rights of food workers, and by generating city-level data in order to monitor world supply and price developments reliably during food and health crises.
21. Invest in employment opportunities for young people, in particular young women, focusing on the development of soft and digital skills, scaling-up entrepreneurship programs and incentivizing micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in line with the Youth 20 priorities, cognizant that cities are catalysts of innovation and of the role of sectors such as tourism and culture in these efforts.
22. Prepare for the future of work by guaranteeing equal access to effective quality education for all, supporting cooperation in higher education, global and lifelong learning and valuing the opportunities offered by the United Nations' designation of 2021 as the *Year of the Creative Economy for Sustainable Development* to increase and coordinate investments in creative industries.
23. Commit to strengthening the urban cultural and social fabric, empowering local governments to promote it as a core component of local identity and as a vector for peace and human rights and preserving world cultural and natural heritage.
24. Collect, analyse and disseminate quantitative and qualitative data on gender equality and women's empowerment, in support of equal access to social, political and economic opportunities, including leadership positions, gender-responsive budgeting, access to capital, adoption of a gender perspective in decision-making across all financial and social sectors, in line with the Women 20 priorities.
25. Prioritize the protection of women and girls suffering from inequality and violence by promoting access to such support services as shelters, public transportation options, counselling, medical and legal assistance.
26. Expand urban social safety nets and strengthen social protection for low-income care workers providing frontline services. Also, ensure that the recovery and the world we rebuild post COVID-19 is centred on people and provides equal economic, civic and decision-making opportunities for all, especially for vulnerable communities, without any discrimination.
27. Advance racial equity and justice in tandem with equal economic opportunities to promote policies which eliminate disparities between people of different ethnic groups, especially in light of the racial inequalities amplified by COVID-19 and commit to improving outcomes for minority ethnic groups across a range of issues including health, employment and housing.

We, city leaders from around the world, look forward to contributing to the G20 outcomes and appreciate the G20 leadership under the Saudi Presidency in its timely addressing of the pandemic-induced global health and economic crises. The Riyadh U20, together with the undersigned U20 cities, anticipate the attention of the G20 to the U20 policy recommendations. We seek to strengthen our partnership with our national governments, the international community and the private sector to construct a more equitable, sustainable and inclusive, shared future for all.

**Signatures:**

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