

PRESS RELEASE

Invest in “green and just” recovery for cities, U20 urges G20 leaders

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- 27-point U20 Communiqué urges G20 to invest and collaborate with U20 in four critical areas crucial to support sustainable urbanisation in the years ahead.
- Communiqué calls on G20 to commit and act “immediately on the climate emergency”.
- U20 Chair HE Fahd Al-Rasheed: This is our chance to determine the role that cities play in the next phase of our civilization.
- U20 Summit welcomed more than 500 participants from around the world.

Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2 October 2020 – A record 39 mayors and city leaders today endorsed the official 27-point Urban 20 (U20) Communiqué which was officially handed over to the G20 the final day of the U20 Mayors Summit, held virtually from Riyadh. Endorsing cities included Barcelona, Berlin, Buenos Aires, London, Los Angeles, Madrid, Montreal, Osaka, Paris, Rome, Seoul and Tokyo.

As cities seek to recover from the disruption of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in a sustainable, inclusive way, the commitments, asks and policy recommendations presented to the world’s leaders in the Communiqué will play a central role in the revitalisation and reimagining of urban spaces.

With the context that more than 68 per cent of the world’s population is set to live in cities by 2050, the U20’s 27-point Communiqué emphasised a categorical imperative for G20 member states to ensure that national governments “must crucially invest directly in cities as the engines of the recovery,” according to the five-page official document.

The Communiqué also includes an impassioned call for the G20 to commit and respond “immediately to the climate emergency” by substantially reducing greenhouse gas emissions to deliver the 50 per cent global reduction required by 2030 and “reach carbon neutrality no later than 2050”. The official U20 Communiqué can be accessed in its entirety [here](#).

Further, the Communiqué calls on heads of state and governments of the G20 to work together in four main areas:

Partner by Investing in a Green and Just Post COVID-19 Recovery

- U20 cities call on the G20 to design green stimulus funding, corporate support, and other recovery funds to support the development of climate-resilient and inclusive societies and ensure this funding reaches the territorial levels and is reflected in International Financial Institutions (IFIs) lending.
- Investments should be made in cities’ social infrastructure, in particular health, education and public transport systems alongside sustainability priorities, specifically

by investing in 'shovel-ready' carbon-neutral projects to generate green jobs and increase equitable participation in the labour force.

- U20 cities further ask national leaders to cooperate with us towards guaranteeing access to vaccines for the COVID-19 virus without discrimination of any kind and that technology and innovation equitably serve people during and following the COVID-19 recovery.

Safeguard our Planet through National & Local Collaboration

- U20 cities call on the G20 leaders to work together with cities 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.
- U20 cities also call on the G20 leaders to mainstream and strengthen the role and active participation of cities in the local implementation of international biodiversity, climate and sustainability goals - such as by investing in nature based solutions and including cities in the post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).

Accelerate the Transition to a Circular, Carbon-neutral Economy

- U20 cities call upon the G20 to develop enabling environments to foster the circular economy and the implementation of the 4Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle, and recover), enhance the financial capacity of local governments in adopting circular economy initiatives as well as promote research and capacity building on resource use, and, with a specific focus on mobility, invest in carbon neutral, quality mobility systems to support sustainable and affordable zero-emission mass transit.
- U20 cities further call on G20 leaders to increase investment in renewables and adopt a universal right of access to urban sanitation and waste management and promote 'zero waste societies'.

Empower People to Deliver a More Equitable & Inclusive Future

- U20 cities call on G20 leaders to address equitable urban social safety nets and protection, growth of systems to ensure affordable and accessible housing, equal and quality education and employment opportunities for all, protection of all women from inequality and violence, and elimination of socioeconomic disparities between different ethnic groups.

The Communiqué is the culmination of more than 1,000 pages of seminal research, drafted by three U20 taskforces over more than nine months of research and collaboration. The 27 policy recommendations made to the G20 form the engine of a drive to achieve equitable, carbon-neutral, inclusive and healthy cities in the immediate future.

Commenting on the official presentation of the U20's Communiqué to the G20, U20 Chair His Excellency Fahd Al-Rasheed said, "Though we discussed and debated whether cities are as relevant today as they were prior to COVID-19, the answer, from all sides is a resounding yes.

"Handing over the Communiqué to the G20 today and reflecting on what we've achieved in the past year, I feel a great sense of hope and anticipation that the work we've put can make a real difference in the days ahead.

He added, "It is a testament to this diverse and inclusive global group of U20 leaders that through the crisis we came together, through adversity we rose to the challenge and together we committed to improving the state of the world around us, to create a brighter future for all of our citizens, for the benefit of all humankind."

Addressing participants, UN Habitat Executive Director Maimunah Sharif stated "I would like to thank the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and our generous host, the Royal Commission for Riyadh City for the huge efforts made to organize the U20 as part of the Chairmanship of Saudi Arabia to the G20 in 2020"

Houston Sherpa Christopher Olsen lauded "The amazing work of Riyadh has built on what was achieved in Tokyo and Buenos Aires and has carried it forward."

"It's the cities of the world that face the biggest challenges – such as climate change, human rights, and sustainable development. But the cities are also coming up with the solutions. That is where the opportunities lies"

Demonstrating agility and responsiveness, the Special Working Group on COVID-19 brought together 13 cities from nine G20 countries who collated 32 case studies on how their cities have dealt with the pandemic. A survey of cities representing more than 75 million residents was then conducted. The findings of these activities have resulted in a set of policy recommendations, which were announced by the co-chairing cities of Rome and Buenos Aires.

His Excellency Fahd Al-Rasheed called on the mayors and city representatives in virtual attendance, to help people "find a way to thrive despite the circumstances."

He added, "We must prepare them for a future being shaped by climate, contagion and connectivity. Finding the answers to these topics is why we are here. It is the reason the U20 comes together to form solutions for the urban world. The solutions we discuss, examine, explore and take forward will be the legacy we leave. It's our chance to determine the role that cities play in the next phase of our storied civilization."

Governor Yuriko Koike of Tokyo added; "We all must work together to win this harsh battle against COVID-19, and achieve equitable, sustainable, inclusive and healthy societies. While continuing to take up the challenge of forging the future Tokyo, we wish to move forward in partnership with the cities of the world for a sustainable recovery, namely the shared goal of realizing a resilient and sustainable society."

Mayor Horacio Rodríguez Larreta of Buenos Aires noted; "The COVID-19 pandemic has made clear the vital role cities play in protecting both our people and our planet. Buenos Aires, as the first ever chair of the U20, is convinced that dialogue with the G20 is crucial and that the cooperation needed to foster a sustainable transformation must include cities. Only then we will be able to safeguard the prosperity of our communities and reach the targets set forth in the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement."

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About U20

Urban20 (U20) is a city diplomacy initiative that brings together cities from G20 member states and observer cities from non-G20 states to discuss and form a common position on climate action, social inclusion and integration, and sustainable economic growth. The U20 issues recommendations for consideration by the G20. The initiative is co-convened by C40 Cities and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) under the leadership of a Chair city that rotates annually with the G20 presidency. The first U20 Mayors Summit took place in Buenos Aires in 2018, and the second in Tokyo in 2019. For 2020, Riyadh is the Chair city and host of the annual Mayors Summit.

City representatives are known as “Sherpas”, a Nepalese word describing someone who prepares a route to the summit for colleagues. In the U20 context, Sherpas are senior city officials preparing the ground for their mayors at the Riyadh U20 Summit.

About United Cities and Local Government (UCLG):

UCLG is the world organization of local and regional governments and their associations, representing and defending their interests on the world stage. UCLG’s membership serves 70% of the world’s population and is present in all world regions. UCLG’s key areas of political interest are: local democracy, the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, local finance, urban development and city diplomacy in peace building.