

Outcome Document UNEA-6 Cities and Regions Summit

Engaging cities and regions in effective multilateral actions to address the triple planetary crisis

Nairobi, 23 February 2024



Group picture of in-person participants of the UNEA-6 Cities and Regions Summit, UNEP Headquarters, Nairobi, Kenya, following the official opening of the event.

Useful links

[Recording of the UNEA-6 Cities and Regions Summit \(youtube.com\)](#)

[Recording of Mayor Joy Belmonte report back on the Summit at UNEA-6 Opening Plenary](#)

[UrbanShift Blog: local climate action at the forefront: how the UNEA-6 Cities & Regions Summit elevated the needs and potential of subnational governments](#)

[Technical Highlight on unep.org: Mayors and government leaders call for sustainable urban transformation](#)

[Pictures](#)

[Presentations](#)

[Collaborative Miro Board](#)

[Instagram Reel: Hear some insights from governors, mayors, and ministers](#)

Nairobi, Kenya, February 23, 2024 – The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and its partnersⁱ successfully held the Third UNEA Cities and Regions Summit as an associated event to the Sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6). Coming at a time when the world is called upon to accelerate the implementation of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), the UNEA-6 Cities and Regions Summit provided a unique meeting point to connect local, national, and global leaders on the environmental front, bringing together more than 80 attendees in person and almost 500 attendees online.

The Summit showcased concrete examples of cities and regions working together with their national governments to achieve global environmental and sustainability targets, thereby building on the outcomes of COP28 and responding to the supplementary theme of UNEA-6: “Effective, Inclusive, and Sustainable Multilateral Actions to Tackle Climate Change, Biodiversity Loss and Pollution,”. The discussion focused on two key objectives: **strengthening multi-level governance for achieving SDGs and the MEAs’ goals; and funding and financing to accelerate local climate and environmental actions.**

With commitments and recommendations towards increasing the visibility of cities and regions in the implementation of global environmental goals, the Summit laid the ground for the upcoming UN Summit of the Future, the Twelfth World Urban Forum (WUF12), the 2024 United Nations Biodiversity Conference (CBD COP16), and the 2024 Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC (COP29), along with other major events in 2024 with important implications for the environment and sustainable urban development.



Peter Anyang’ Nyong’o, Governor of Kisumu County, Kenya; **Gulnara Roll**, Head of Cities Unit, UNEP; **Michal Mlynar**, Acting Executive Director, UN-Habitat; **Inger Andersen**, Executive Director, UNEP, **Joy Belmonte**, Mayor of Quezon City, gave opening speeches along with **Adalberto Felício Maluf Filho**, National Secretary for Urban Environment and Environmental Quality of Brazil.

Cities and regions are crucial actors in bridging the environmental action gap and operationalizing global commitments set out in the SDGs and MEAs. In her high-level opening remarks, **Inger Andersen**, Executive Director, UNEP, making references to examples of circular economy, green infrastructure, and disaster management in cities worldwide, highlighted “What you do in your cities resonates across the world. When you make your cities green and sustainable, **you are not just local heroes, you are global heroes.**”

There is a pressing need to develop effective governance structures to support local and subnational efforts. **Michal Mlynár**, Acting Executive Director, UN-Habitat, invited stronger collaboration between all levels of governments and with financial institutions, the private sector, and academia to collectively shape a sustainable and resilient urban future. **Adalberto Felício Maluf Filho**, National Secretary for Urban Environment and Environmental Quality, Brazil, emphasized Brazil’s commitments to integrating its ecological transformation plan with cities while unifying the implementation of various environmental initiatives.

The Summit showed that as one of the closest levels of government to urban dwellers, local and subnational governments are in a key position to develop and implement responsive, context-sensitive solutions. Their proximity to environmental challenges and the people most affected by them positions local and subnational governments as key actors for translating global commitments into tangible actions and outcomes through effective mobilisation of technical and human resources, data collection, and adoption of innovation and technology.

Mayors and governors, including **Peter Anyang’ Nyong’o**, Governor of Kisumu County, Kenya, shared examples of how to develop climate action plans that respond to the local environmental and socio-economic contexts. Located on the eastern shore of Lake Victoria in Kenya, Kisumu County faces imminent threats from fluctuating water levels exacerbated by climate change, with profound consequences for the 50 per cent of its population residing in informal settlements. “In order to deal with the effects of climate change, we need to deal with where the problems are greatest [which is] in the informal sector,” he said. Similarly, **Patrícia Menezes**, Mayor’s Office Advisor for Global Agendas, Barcarena, Brazil, highlighted that conventional climate adaptation and mitigation strategies do not work in cities in the Amazonian areas given their unique environmental and social specificities.

Leading one of the fastest growing cities of a country already facing many climate-related disasters, **Joy Belmonte**, Mayor of Quezon City, Philippines, emphasized the city’s commitment to localizing the SDGs. Quezon City sets the goal to double the number of parks and expand green and permeable spaces by 30 per cent to 40 per cent by 2030 to promote walkability and active transport while accelerating the restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems, promoting health, and creating green jobs.

Following the opening session, **Thematic Session 1 “Multi-level governance, a key element of effective environmental governance”**, highlighted that cities and regions are well-positioned to navigate complex sustainability challenges. Cities and regions are the ideal scale where traditionally siloed environmental action can be broken down. Through integrated planning, strong synergies can be achieved between actions on climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, pollution and waste, and SDGs. **Wade Crowfoot**, Secretary for Natural Resources of the State of California, USA, emphasized that “Climate change and biodiversity conservation are two sides of the same coin.”

Cities and regions can take innovative and experimental action to explore solutions that simultaneously address multiple environmental challenges, such as transit-oriented development and nature-based solutions. **Kweku List**, Deputy Mayor of Freetown, Sierra Leone,

introduced how the “[Freetown the Treetown](#)” campaign is experimenting with new models to protect urban biodiversity and increase resilience using digital innovation and blended sources of finance.

However, cities and regions cannot address these challenges alone – we need a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. Establishing formal national institutional arrangements and procedures for engaging subnational governments in the implementation of MEAs and national initiatives is key to achieving global goals. According to **Vann Monyneath**, Under-Secretary of State for the Ministry of Environment, Cambodia, Cambodia’s Pentagon Strategy, which aims to transform the country into an upper-middle-income country by 2030 and a high-income one by 2050, continues to focus on the modernization of urbanization at both national and subnational levels, while emphasizing digitalizing the subnational level administration, finance, and planning.

Effective multi-level governance also requires formal arrangements at the international level, and several MEAs are strengthening the involvement of subnational governments in their processes. The Paris Agreement, under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), in 2015 introduced a new momentum and spirit by institutionalizing multilevel governance, based on the decades-long efforts of the Local Governments and Municipal Authorities (LGMA) Constituency, as the voice of towns, cities and regions in the UNFCCC process. The most recent 28th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP28) demonstrated an unprecedented recognition of cities and regions in achieving the Paris Agreement. The [Local Climate Action Summit](#) (LCAS) was a first-of-its-kind Summit hosted by a COP Presidency in recognition of the critical role that local leaders play in reducing emissions, addressing climate risk, and supercharging national efforts to move further and faster on climate progress. In addition, the hosting of the [second Ministerial Meeting on Urbanization and Climate Change](#), the launch of the [Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships](#) (CHAMP), and the operationalization of the [Loss and Damage Fund \(LDF\)](#) at COP28 with a provision enabling direct access for subnational governments – all signified a strong commitment to putting cities at the centre of the global climate agenda.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) adopted in December 2022, sets the first global target on enhancing green spaces and urban planning for human well-being and biodiversity (Target 12). This target, together with the decision on engagement with subnational governments, cities and other local authorities (Decision 15/12), and the Plan of Action on Subnational Governments, Cities and Other Local Authorities are creating opportunities for stronger mobilization of subnational government in the implementation of the GBF. **Maria Teresa Becerra Ramirez**, Head of international affairs office, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, Colombia, announced that efforts to involve subnational governments will continue at CBD COP16 end of 2024, where a day will be dedicated to cities for furthering discussions on the transition toward climate-resilient and biodiverse cities.

Discussions at the Summit also explored best practices and the role that all stakeholders, including international organisations, can play to strengthen and scale-up multi-level governance. This includes ongoing discussions to involve local governments in the legally binding instrument on plastic pollution currently being developed and the revision of the Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement in the lead up to COP30.



Panel discussion on “Beyond borders”: coordinated action to achieve the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, with **Wade Crowfoot**, Secretary of Natural Resources, State of California, United States of America and **Lorraine Gerrans**, Director: Environmental Management, Cape Town, Republic of South Africa, opened by **Gulnara Roll**, Head of Cities Unit, UNEP, and moderated by **Ingrid Coetzee**, Director: Biodiversity, Nature & Health, ICLEI Africa and Global Cities Biodiversity Center.

In the afternoon, **Thematic session 2 - “Unlocking finance for sustainable urban transformation”**, highlighted that securing additional money for cities and regions to address global environmental challenges requires a combination of piloting innovative financing models and the facilitation of subnational governments’ access to climate and development finance. This discussion occurred against the backdrop of an existing global financial architecture structured around the needs of countries, cities and regions, particularly those in low- and middle-income countries, which face many challenges in attracting funds and financing, such as poor credit worthiness, poor financial alignment with national governments, and a lack of direct access to MDB funds, among others.

Local and subnational governments need to mobilize resources from different streams.

Eugénie L. Birch, Co-Director, Penn Institute for Urban Research, University of Pennsylvania, **Jean Lemire**, Envoy for Climate Change, Northern and Arctic Affairs, Government of Quebec - MRIF, Canada, and **David Albertani**, CEO, Catalytic Finance Foundation, while speaking from different perspectives, all highlighted the important role the private sector can play in strengthening investment in local climate projects through mechanisms like public-private partnerships, green bonds, and carbon markets. To attract private investment, national governments can strengthen the incentives and the feasibility of such initiatives, by creating enabling and regulatory frameworks. International organizations can step up to build capacity among governments and private sector actors to develop investment-ready resilience projects and create a new asset class for climate finance.

The Summit brought to the forefront several ways in which international organizations can act as conduits between transformative projects and potential financiers. For example, as explained by **Mirey Atallah**, Head of the Climate Adaptation Branch, UNEP, the [Restoration Factory](#) mentors entrepreneurs developing nature-based solutions projects, and helps them connect with investors. In addition, the GEF-funded, UNEP-led UrbanShift programme offers local governments a range of resources, like Finance Academies and Investors Roundtables, that connect representatives directly with financiers to learn how to strengthen the appeal of their resilience projects for investors. Initiatives like ICLEI's Transformative Actions Program helps local governments strengthen project proposals to ensure bankability and success.

Streamlining subnational access to finance requires impactful reforms of the global financial architecture. **Priscilla Negreiros**, Senior Manager, Cities Climate Leadership Alliance (CCFLA), Climate Policy Initiative, highlighted key findings of the recent CCFLA's report titled "Accelerating Urban Climate Finance in Low- and Middle- Income Countries: An important strategic dimension of MDB reform". The key message was that MDBs must work more closely and effectively with cities, given their unique position to support the urban climate finance agenda directly and through partnerships with national governments. On the collaborative [Miro Board](#), Summit participants also highlighted challenges faced by local governments to access this funding and the fact that they often have to rely on intermediaries, which lengthens the process.



Panel discussion on "Innovative Financing Models for Sustainable Urban and Territorial Development": **Jean Lemire**, Envoy for Climate Change, Northern and Arctic Affairs, Government of Quebec – MRIF, Canada, **Gulnara Roll**, Head of Cities Unit, UNEP, **Agathe Cavicchioli**, Deputy Director of International Advocacy, GCoM, on behalf of the C40 x GCoM partnership, and **Kweku Lisk**, Deputy Mayor of Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Summit conclusions

The session “Empowering subnational governments to achieve global environmental goals” concluded the Summit with interventions from leaders from national, sub-national, and local governments and city networks. Building on the summit discussions, participants highlighted the importance of the following:

- Institutionalizing multi-level governance mechanisms at international level to ensure more effective implementation of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).
- Adopting a whole-of-government approach at national level through concrete formal engagement mechanisms of subnational governments for the development and implementation of national strategies and programmes.
- Strengthening national, regional and global initiatives and networks supporting local and subnational governments in addressing the triple planetary crisis and creating peer-to-peer learning opportunities between cities and countries to share best practices on strengthening environmental action.
- Using local implementation as a lever to enhance synergies between climate action, nature and biodiversity restoration, pollution reduction management, and the SDGs.
- Supporting local and subnational governments in mobilizing resources from different streams, for example, attracting private investors by developing new financial models and partnerships that provide an attractive risk-return ratio.
- Streamlining the access of local and subnational governments to national and international climate and development funds.

Report on the Summit at the UNEA-6 opening plenary

Following the Cities & Regions Summit, Mayor **Joy Belmonte** Quezon City, Philippines, and 2023 [UNEP Champion of the Earth](#), ensured that the learnings and recommendations from the event were shared with other stakeholders and the member states participating in UNEA-6. Reporting at the Global Major Group and Stakeholder Forum on February 24 and the [UNEA Opening Plenary](#) on February 26, she underscored the importance of subnational actors in addressing the triple planetary crisis. The Mayor called for national governments to work hand-in-hand with cities, while cities continue to actively engage communities and stakeholders. This multilevel approach, leveraging both top-down support and bottom-up innovation, is critical to transforming local successes into global impact. She highlighted the need to facilitate access for local authorities to financing mechanisms. Finally, she emphasized the need for stronger subnational government involvement in implementing Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), echoing best practices seen in the Paris Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity. These key messages were shared throughout the Summit and UNEA-6, thereby successfully amplifying the voices of local and subnational governments and laying important groundwork for the upcoming events and discussions on multilateral platforms such as the UN Summit of the Future, the Twelfth World Urban Forum (WUF12), the 2024 United Nations Biodiversity Conference (CBD COP16), and the 2024 Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC (COP29), along with other major events in 2024 with important implications for the environment and sustainable urban development.



Joy Belmonte, Mayor of Quezon City, spoke at the UNEA-6 Opening Plenary as the rapporteur of the Cities and Regions Summit.

Summit organizers

Organization of the Summit is led by the [United Nations Environment Programme \(UNEP\)](#) jointly with UN-Habitat and the [UrbanShift programme](#) partners: [World Resources Institute \(WRI\)](#), [C40 Cities \(C40\)](#) and [ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability \(ICLEI\)](#), in collaboration with the Local Authorities Major Group to the UNEA. UrbanShift is a knowledge and learning platform that connects cities and regions with national and international organizations with expertise in integrated urban planning; UrbanShift is funded by the [Global Environmental Facility](#).

The Summit organization is supported by Summit Partners: [Bloomberg Philanthropies](#); the [Cities Climate Finance Leadership Alliance \(CCFLA\)](#); the [Global Covenant of Mayors \(GCoM\)](#) for Climate and Energy; the [Global Environment Facility \(GEF\)](#), the [SDSN Global Commission for Urban SDG Finance, United Cities and Local Governments \(UCLG\)](#); the [Penn Institute for Urban Research \(PennIUR\)](#); the [Global Cities Hub](#); the [United Nations Development Programme \(UNDP\)](#); the [United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction \(UNDRR\)](#); and the UN Regional Commission ([ECA](#), [UNECE](#), [ECLAC](#), [ESCAP](#), [ESCWA](#)).