



UNFCCC COP 25 Madrid, Spain

Concept Note Human Settlements Event

**Climate emergency - time to act for zero carbon cities
and buildings**
*Building thriving cities through systemic and inclusive national
and local actions*

Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action

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15:00 – 18:00

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Organized by the Human Settlements Group

Supporting Organizations:



Hundreds of cities and regions around the world have declared climate emergency and some national governments have followed suit. Across the globe national and local governments are taking action to completely decarbonizing their economies, cities and buildings, recognizing this as an essential step to enhancing citizen's wellbeing and to meeting Paris Agreement goals. What do local and national climate action plans look like in practice that drives systemic transformation? What are their political and financial implications? How can cities ensure local communities benefits from, and drive, these transitions? How to bridge the divide between short term emergencies and longer term vision? How to ensure policy coherence across levels of governance? What are the current challenges, opportunities and metrics for pre 2020 actions to realize the transition using technology, innovation and finance for cities, regions and the built environment? What can be learnt from those who are leading ambitious climate action?

Segment 1 - Zero-emission, efficient and resilient buildings and construction-making buildings hubs for climate action

Buildings have enormous impacts on a city's structure and the wellbeing of its citizens. At the same time, cities influence how and where buildings are built, and how they integrate with services, infrastructure and transport. Almost 40% of energy-and process related emissions come from buildings. According the 2018 GlobalABC Global Status Report half of the buildings that are expected to be standing in 2060 have not yet been built, and most buildings will be constructed in the rapidly growing cities in developing and emerging countries – oftentimes with no or weak mandatory building, construction and energy codes in place. Buildings are therefore essential for climate action. What is needed for a systemic transformation in buildings sector?

We need to place energy efficiency in the center of efforts for new buildings and retrofiting existing buildings. We need to assure necessary remaining energy needs are met by carbon-neutral and renewable energy. We need to consider buildings in the context of neighborhoods and cities and therefore intensify efforts to links buildings to urban planning, transport, and land use. We need to transform the way we build, harnessing effective design including nature-based and passive solutions to avoid cooling and heating needs in buildings, but also by reducing heat island effects we can make buildings hubs for our urgently needed climate transition. The good news is that massive improvements in building energy efficiency have been realized. The bad news is that they have been outpaced by demand growth. The net effect is that the *buildings sector is not decarbonizing*.

What is holding us back from stepping up our ambition? Fears of not being able to provide sufficient affordable and adequate housing while we are facing a housing crisis in many cities around the world – although we have the technologies and the finance mechanisms to build sustainable and affordable buildings; sustainable building solutions are amongst the most cost-effective. The fragmentation in the sector, with many individual actors and split incentives to act, is paralyzing progress. We have examples of national building Alliances that help forge a common understanding for more concerted action. We need policy instruments that follow a common vision but cater for each of the stakeholder groups. A disconnect between demand and offer, requiring an informed and trained workforce across the entire value chain. Buildings Codes are amongst the pieces of regulation where change is slowest; often countries are in charge of devising the codes and cities in charge of implementing them, with too little implementation capacity and lack of vertical policy integration. Finally, the biggest transformational opportunities lie in cross-sector cooperation, not yet harnessed – be it in connection to the energy sector with district level solutions and distributed energy, or in connection with the transport sector, when thinking storage capacity with e-mobility. The buildings sector offers great potential for vertical and horizontal integration, yet

Very few building sector actions included in NDCs specify mitigation targets, and if fully implemented, currently cover only about 60% of building related GHG emissions (IEA/UNEP, 2018). Even in the urban sub-sector - mentioned in around $\frac{3}{4}$ of NDCs (UN-Habitat 2017), building sector actions are less prevalent than actions in industry and waste sectors in NDCs.

The upcoming revision of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) provides an opportunity to step up the ambition and unravel action. How can we accelerate the inclusion of building sector targets in NDCs?

Indeed, beyond NDCs, the Paris Agreement has catalyzed thousands of non-party actors (such as municipalities and businesses) to register ambitious buildings-related climate commitments, the UNFCCC's Global Climate Action portal [<https://climateaction.unfccc.int/>] is an impressive testimony of such commitment. Many of these commitments have very ambitious goals such as complete decarbonization, carbon-neutrality and zero-emissions buildings, building momentum towards this. Harnessing such commitments and building them into both city and national regulatory frameworks will raise ambition levels and are essential building blocks in making our cities future-proof.

Segment 2 – Decarbonizing our cities, enhancing resilience while driving social equity, through vertical integration and investments

Looking at the wider city-scape and the strategic necessity for a climate neutral future, the focus of this session is on people, accelerated action and scaling up finance. How are cities and regions contributing to local, national and global climate change mitigation and adaptation goals? What can be replicated and scaled up?

Effective vertical integration and sound investments

The transition to a climate neutral future has started – ensuring optimized use of resources, access to sustainable energy, enhanced resilience and adapting to a changing climate. A lasting change demands a systemic shift in the way national frameworks are shaped, funds are invested in a regionally balanced manner, and high impact action is realized locally. This session will explore how to create such a shift, exploring vertical integration between all levels of government, the use of finance mechanisms, investment approaches and procurement models, showcasing a variety of approaches that cities and regions have successfully used and where replication opportunities exist for enabling conditions to achieve climate neutrality.

By adding a “climate lens” to all decisions, actions and investments, all levels of government can define their roadmap, moving from commitment to action that addresses carbon neutrality and climate change resilience. Cities and regions are important places for action, led by their local and regional governments to help realize NDC implementation, while addressing local goals. The focus of this session is on key enabling factors that can be widely replicated: coordination, collaboration, communication, policy and technical expertise at all levels of government, to mention but a few. Successful cases of vertical integration of climate action and other enablers are presented and exploring lessons learned.

People-centered, equitable and participatory policies

To foster a fair and inclusive transition, it is crucial to embed social equity and public participation in climate action. This session will look at ways cities have placed these issues at the core of ambitious climate plans and projects across different sectors, such as housing, waste, energy, green space and food production.

Linking climate and sustainability policies have far-reaching positive consequences in the daily lives of residents, who need to be part of the transition process. Social equity and participation are critical for the smooth implementation of these policies. This demands a considerable shift in the way people act, move and consume and how all infrastructure investment is assessed from a resilience, low carbon and longevity

perspective. Furthermore, there can be no lasting change without the continuous involvement of the community in decisions that will affect their lives. To ensure a fair and equitable access to services and support programs while addressing burdens on underprivileged populations, all different voices across the city need to be heard. Where people understand what is at stake they can also take more informed decisions – this is relevant to policy makers and citizens alike.

Objective of the event towards the following issues:

Pre-2020 action

Sustainable cities, buildings, and city development have long been discussed as one of the pathways for a sustainable future. Technological advancements hold great promises for more effective urban and building solutions. From smart grids and district energy solutions and effective, performance-based building energy codes for buildings, or real-time traffic management, waste management and water systems, smart technologies and ambitious policy action enable our cities to operate more effectively. Yet, the key to unlocking cities potential extends far beyond that: raising political ambition, driving innovative housing policies, creating sound economic incentives, and advancing smart urban planning are among current challenges. Therefore, ambitious, integrated, and coordinated actions of stakeholders such as innovators, policymakers, investors and developers are needed to accelerate impact and achieve the Paris Agreement goals.

Climate Action Pathway/Yearbook of Global Climate Action/Global Climate Action portal (NAZCA)

A zero-carbon future, aligned with the 1.5 degree commitment and adaptation goals, sees buildings that are hubs for climate action: being zero carbon or even “energy-positive” they act as material banks and are huge emission savers. Thanks to full decarbonization, instead of being the biggest consumers for resources, cities are efficiency hubs, relieving ecosystems and being at the forefront for climate action.

This session will offer the opportunity for local and national leaders to showcase achievements and discuss new solutions towards zero carbon cities and buildings: effective financial and regulatory incentives (effective, performance-based building codes, preferential loan rates, PACE financing, procurement favouring zero-carbon buildings, etc.) both for residential and public buildings; evidence collected and displayed that zero-emission buildings and efficient, circular cities are cost-competitive, yield long-term cost savings and multiple co-benefits.

2019 United Nations Climate Action Summit

The 2019 United Nations Climate Action Summit highlighted the need for urgent and ambitious action, by all: National governments, local governments, finance sector, industry and beyond.

This session will offer an opportunity for local and national leaders to present how they will take their commitment forward on decarbonizing buildings and cities for the benefit of everyone. Essential to scaling the transition is involving national and local governments, as well as financial institutions (providing the much-needed financial tools and models), and practitioners such as architects in the conversation.

The event will also refer to several UN SG Summit commitments, including zero carbon buildings by 2050, nature-based solutions, the 3% club for energy efficiency, the cool coalition to address rising cooling demand, and the commitment for financial organizations to divest from fossil fuels, as well as the UN Climate Action Summit's demand for "practical actions to shift global response into higher gear". **Three key pillars of climate emergency response action will be explored in their role to accelerate and consolidate carbon reduction.**

The complete phase out of fossil fuel dependency and the transition to highly efficient cities and buildings covering remaining energy needs with 100% renewable energy depends on political commitments on all levels; strategic investments and procurement schemes are key to enable a scaling of solutions; thirdly, fair and people-centered transitions consider the role and effect for each individual and ensure stronger resilience for vulnerable communities.

This session will offer the opportunity for political leaders from national and local government to discuss with civil society and private sector stakeholders how strategic climate action can lead to environmentally, socially and economically sustainable societies.

Types of speakers:

The event will bring together representatives from national and sub-national governments, financial institutions, city and thematic networks, Academia and practitioners from the important buildings and construction sector.