

Evento de Alto Nivel sobre Acción de los ODS
Cambio Climático y la Agenda de Desarrollo Sostenible

Sesión 1: Implementado Soluciones

Escalando la implementación del Acuerdo de París y los ODS

I am delighted and grateful for your invitation to be here representing local governments, particularly the Municipality of Quito, host of Habitat III and city where the New Urban Agenda was put in motion. It is important for local leaders to have the opportunity to be in this space and position the vital role and leadership of cities in the compliance of the goals of the Sustainable Agenda for 2030.

Great challenges need great action. And for one of the greatest sustainability challenges of mankind, which is climate change, cities have made the commitment of raising ambition and take bold climate actions. This is one of the first pronouncements among various sectors at a global level. It is fair to recognize the active and positive participation of the cities of the world, and of their networks such as UCLG, ICLEI and C40, which formed the Global Task Force, and were active in the inclusion of the local voices and needs in the formulation processes of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement, and in the New Urban Agenda.

Now, the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, with more than 7000 cities is the world's largest, global coalition leading in the fight against climate change, responding to the need of urgent action that demands the Paris Agreement. This initiative assists cities and local governments in the transition to a low-carbon economy, by encouraging the establishment of commitments, supporting and promoting voluntary action, all this through a transparent, variable and measureable process. Above all this initiative works under an ambitious vision to contribute to the great goal of maintaining a 1.5 degrees Celsius scenario. By the year 2100, the contribution of local governments for global carbon footprint reduction, could be of 40%. This is a goal born in cities, to face in a pragmatic way the effects of climate change and its consequences.

This gives us a measure of the great responsibility assumed by the Urban World, which has also been impacted by the growing threats of a changing climate. Adaptation and mitigation capacity is already being generated at a local level by the institutions that are the closest to civil society. Additionally we all should recognize that this position of bolder and swifter action has been raised even before the pronouncements of the nation states. This shows our true leadership.

City leaders have assumed local responsibility in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. "Localizing the SDGs" has become a new battle flag for cities, that has no color or territory, and that directly demands financial resources for the implementation of local actions, such as climate action. There is clear evidence that national and global sustainability efforts can be scaled-up when local and regional governments are empowered, strengthened as well as resourceful.

Partnership-building is also vital in our efforts to localize the SDGs and advance climate action. Robust and wide-scale local action requires lasting cooperation - whether through coalitions like the Global Covenant of Mayor or between government and the business sector or national, subnational and local authorities. At COP23, in November this year in Bonn, Germany cities will come together at the Climate Summit of Local and Regional Leaders to lay the groundwork for stronger partnerships that enable swift, effective action.

In these days of different geopolitical positions, cities are committed to make radical and effective decisions. This has been possible because local governments have managed to connect climate action with broader initiatives, not necessarily with climatic character such as mobility, biodiversity, citizen participation, productivity and social responsibility. The objective of the Paris Agreement will only be achieved when the social, political, environmental and cultural dimensions of climate actions are considered and made visible.

Quito has shown its commitment in tackling climate change; the city has managed to connect the points between the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and mitigation and adaptation to climate change, including them in every sector of planning and development of the city, including the long term vision for development.

Our daily work and commitment to improve the living conditions of citizens, also has a relationship with our Carbon Footprint. The strengthening of Quito's public transportation system with more trips in the new BRT units reduces annually over 100,000 tons of CO₂, which must be added to the subsequent operation of the Subway system and Cableway. The collection of biogas in our landfill and recycling reduce annually over 20,000 tons of CO₂.

These activities contribute to the city's goal of 10% greenhouse gas emission reductions. According to the latest inventory, updated to 2015, Quito has a Carbon Footprint of 5.7 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalent, which means that each citizen emits 2.26 tons, close to the average in Latin America. This value is below the recommended value of 3 tons per person, necessary to maintain a scenario of 1.5 degrees Celsius.

It is well documented that climate change has adverse effects in populations that live in already vulnerably conditions and are affected by other stressors such as inequality, poverty, unemployment, among others, having

determinant consequences for development. In this context the Municipality of Quito has conducted a vulnerability assessment which has allowed city decision makers not only to identify the main risks and impacts to climate change, but also other underlying social, cultural and economic factors that are included in the implemented adaptation strategies, policies and programs. The prioritized adaptation sectors and actions are water resource management, including the conservation of basins, sustainable agriculture and rural development, conservation of natural heritage and climate risk management; all of them relevant to the geographical region. Moreover all these actions have included local contexts and the diversity of perceptions of change and impacts among different actors, thus contributing to better results.

As mitigation and adaptation strategies have been implemented in the City, we observed that in fact climate change and sustainable development, although with different dynamics and challenges, they are undoubtedly related to each other. In order to eradicate poverty, livelihoods have to be improved, fostering prosperity and securing a healthy world for the generations to come.

Cities, together with their governments, are the ideal space for innovation in the search for solutions to face their problems, including those related to climate change. This work is maximized and better results are obtained when cities collaborate and work together, share best practices and partner with other levels of government and the private sector. The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy will facilitate this cooperation to further enhance the contribution of local action to achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement. The Covenant will consolidate the commitments of the local governments and will mobilize more cities to develop their climate action.

We take this opportunity, as members of the Board of Directors of the Global Compact of Mayors for Climate and Energy and of the Global Executive Committee of ICLEI, to call and encourage other cities to be inspired and to learn from pioneering local governments that have been promoting sustainable urbanization and climate-friendly development.

To conclude, I would like to emphasize that we are going through a moment of opportunities. Global agreements such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the already ratified Paris Agreement offer a roadmap to end extreme poverty and guide the world towards a climate-resilient, low-emissions society. At the moment, more political will is needed to meet national commitments quickly and effectively. Nations need to accelerate their efforts and raise their ambition, but most importantly these efforts must be made in collaboration and reflect the work of local governments, the central players in this battle.

