

WUF11 SESSION CONCEPT NOTE

GREENER URBAN FUTURES

Accelerating urban climate change action

1. List of Partners Contributing to the Session:

- Global Covenant of Mayors
- World Bank
- Polish Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy
- Polish Ministry of Climate and Environment
- European Commission
- Council of European Municipalities and Regions
- UNEP
- Government of Egypt (Host of COP27)

2. Key Words:

Climate Change; Local Climate Action; Climate Change Communication; Net-Zero Development and Energy Efficiency; Urban Resilience; Multilevel Climate Governance; Climate Finance; Biodiversity; Cities at the centre of a Just Climate/Energy Transition; Urban Climate Science and Innovation

3. Objectives of the Session:

This dialogue will explore how cities can transition to sustainable urban futures characterized by net-zero GHG emissions and reduced impacts on the environment. It will have a special focus on effective climate change communication to urge action at different scales and by all stakeholders. The Dialogue will approach Green Urban Futures from the perspectives of adaptation and mitigation strategies; biodiversity conservation and restoration; multilevel governance and innovative policy frameworks; climate finance; just transition and urban climate science and innovation.

This session will bring together stakeholders from different backgrounds, organizations, and geographies to discuss the nexus between science, policy, and global and local climate action. The dialogue will provide insights on how to close the implementation gap in cities for sustainable urban development with an emphasis on approaches to integrating resiliency into urban planning and design, partnerships, innovative financial instruments and mobilization of investments, and the research needed for evidence-based decision-making.

4. Summary:

Without a doubt, the climate emergency is a defining challenge of our time. The IPCC has warned that without drastic reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, global warming will not be held to the target of 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels. As confirmed at COP26, it is within cities – which account for nearly 70% of global greenhouse gas emissions – that we must take action to meet the global goal of carbon neutrality by the end of the century. In addition, over 68% of the world's population is predicted to live in cities by 2050.

Moreover, the sixth mass extinction looms. The destruction of natural habitat harms life directly and indirectly with the loss of regulating ecosystem services and enabling wasteful land use that increases vehicle miles traveled. Rapid and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, improved natural resource efficiency, mitigating the negative impacts of climate change, and safeguarding critical ecosystems and biodiversity are all needed to address the global environmental crisis. Resilient infrastructure design should be prioritized against major climate change risks. Decarbonizing how we move around in cities is essential. Partnerships, innovative financial instruments, and fast mobilization of investments are crucial.

The “Greener Urban Futures” Dialogue will explore and provide insights on how cities can transition to a sustainable urban future. This session will bring stakeholders from different backgrounds to discuss the nexus between science, policy, and global and local climate action. The dialogue will provide insights on how to communicate climate change effectively to prompt action in cities for sustainable urban development.

5. Guiding Questions for Discussions:

- How can cities transition to sustainable urban futures characterized by net-zero GHG emissions and reduced impacts on the environment?
- Can new forms of governance frameworks emerge where national governments provide stronger enabling environments and where cities contribute more explicitly to the achievement of global goals?
- What investment pathways are needed to achieve an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future within the globally agreed timelines?
- How can cities foster innovations that build on enduring behavior and institutional change that will secure green urban futures?
- What role can cities and various actors play in reducing greenwashing of investments which undermine their sustainability targets? How can a coherent policy framework be developed to achieve this?

6. Expected Outcomes and Impact:

This dialogue will serve as a flagship for future sessions on climate change and the urban environment at WUF and beyond. It will provide a foundation for new and innovative ideas for sustainable urban developments. The session will provide a platform for local and global discussions through the high-level and powerful speakers invited and by directly linking to the related Special Sessions and partner events. It will also set the scene for establishing the Local Government and Municipal Authority engagement at COP27, in particular the cities and build environment day.

7. Session Format:

The dialogue will take advantage of its hybrid format to increase interaction and engagement using online tools such as Mentimeter to be used by both virtual and in-person participants. The 2-hour session will have 5 subtopics:

1. Resilient Development
2. Transition to net-zero urban development

3. Climate Change Communication
4. Multilevel Governance and Climate Finance
5. Climate Science and Research

Agenda

1. Welcome and introduction
2. Keynote and short impact speeches
3. Panel discussion
4. Open floor
5. Remarks and Closing