

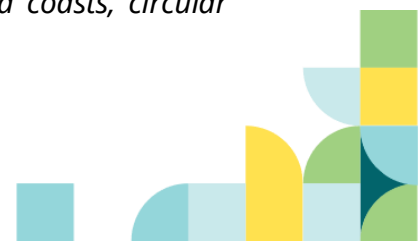


Urban transformation requires holistic, interdisciplinary and multilevel governance approaches

ICLEI member Katowice (Poland) is a former mining town in the process of transforming its industrial legacy, towards becoming a sustainable city that improves air quality, builds smart and green infrastructure and works on community revitalisation without forgetting its heritage. This year (2022) the city hosted the 11th World Urban Forum, the first time that the forum took place in Central/Eastern Europe. The overarching theme, “Transforming our cities for a better urban future” presented a great stage for ICLEI to showcase its diverse work towards low-emission, green, resilient, circular and equitable cities.

In Katowice, ICLEI was represented by colleagues from its Global, European, Asian and African offices, emphasising a diversity of urban sustainability priorities, and demonstrating the value of cross-regional learning and collaboration. [The World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments](#), convened by UCLG on behalf of the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, and co-facilitated by ICLEI, re-emphasised the importance of sub-national government voice in regional, national and global decision making. The Assembly made space for Mayors and urban champions from multiple sectors to share their perspectives and present ideas for consideration throughout the forum. These included that: we are in times of crisis and that local governments have typically had to bear the burdens of decisions made at national level, or indeed by other nations; that these crises have underlying structural causes that must be engaged with; that Mayors and local governments, as the closest to residents, play a vital role in responding to crisis, and setting the basis for sustainable cities; that finance needs to be directed straight to local governments to ensure direct implementation and benefits; that acknowledging and redressing unpaid, overlooked ‘care economies’ must be prioritised in order to reduce the gender gap; that ‘time poverty’ is still a reality for most citizens; that where nations may find strife, cities can show solidarity or “peace between cities;” and that organised civil society is a vital partner for improving governance and urban realities.

Paul Currie, Associate Director: Urban Systems at ICLEI Africa shared that *“As part of ICLEI’s mandate to lead the coordination, on behalf of the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, of the three Rio Conventions – those of climate, biodiversity and desertification – and associated processes, ICLEI is investing its own resources in further thematic areas: those of food systems, water and sanitation, oceans and coasts, circular*






development, and One Health – themes, which need more political attention as part of these processes. We invite our partners to join us in these efforts.”



The [Urban7](#) sessions showcased a variety of innovative actions, taken by local governments around the world, to put their cities on the right path towards the future. As part of this, multilevel cooperation and knowledge exchange between the Global North and Global South were argued as a central tenet for shared global sustainability and prosperity.

As part of the Urban7 network, ICLEI advocates for the 2022 G7 Presidency Programme to recognise the importance of multilevel governance and the role of cities as key drivers of peace, democracy and sustainability on equal footing with national governments. As ICLEI Europe’s Director **Wolfgang Teubner** argued, urban transformation is not only about implementing technical changes. It requires a cultural change and a people-centred approach recognising that cities and citizens are creators of culture. For Teubner, that means that *“urban transformation needs to take into account social equality, otherwise our societies will fall apart before we have managed the transition. We live in an unequal world, not just in matters of Global North and Global South, but also within societies.*






At the same time, responsible citizenship in the G7 countries means taking a global view. That is why it is so important that the Urban7 takes the perspective of the Global South into account.”

During the session, [“Unleashing the Transformative Power of Cities for an Equitable World: Urban7 at G7”](#), participants got the opportunity to get to know these perspectives a bit better. **Mayor Manuel de Araujo** of Quelimane, Mozambique noted that *“Democracy starts in cities. The rule of law, protection of minorities, and freedom of expression are the flagships of democracies. These common shared values need to be the beacon of our movement, and they need to have a crucial role in cities, which need to have a bigger role if we want to reach the SDG’s. The SDG’s are not implemented in a vacuum, most of them are implemented at a local level.”* **Mayor Jefferson Koijee** of Monrovia, Liberia added *“To have sustainable cities, collective participatory approaches are needed. We should not wait for a crisis to bring everyone on board. We need to have an inclusive approach to urban sustainable policy that takes the poor and vulnerable into account.”*

A wide variety of topics were explored in further sessions that were organised and co-organised by ICLEI. These topics ranged from how data can be used to improve cities and citizens’ lives to why [Urban Resilience](#) policies should not just be responses to individual crises. ICLEI Member Mannheim led a discussion on how [#LocalGreenDeals](#) help cities reach their ambitious climate goals, emphasising the importance of citizen engagement. NetworkNature’s session on how nature-based solutions (NBS) contribute to sustainable urban development highlighted ICLEI’s holistic approach to sustainability, showing that NBS don’t just contribute to a healthier environment, but also lead to social and economic benefits. In a co-convened session on [Territorial Governance](#), local governments were encouraged to record their commitments to protecting or enhancing urban nature through the [CitiesWithNature’s Action Platform](#), recognised by the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, as the where cities will monitor and report on their voluntary commitments to national and global biodiversity targets.

Social benefits of sustainability programs were also the focus of an ICLEI-led [workshop](#), in which the [Equitable Transitions Guidebook: Local tools for fair and inclusive sustainability programs](#) was launched. To support equitable and inclusive transitions, ICLEI collaborated with cities from different world regions under the [Urban Transitions Alliance](#) project to create a methodology that allows mapping the social equity outcomes of local sustainability plans across three dimensions: access, participation, and opportunity. For each dimension, tools and recommendations for action were identified, as well as indicators to monitor progress and best practices from cities of the ICLEI network to learn from. An initial version of this methodology was [tested with the city of Turku as part of the Circular Turku project](#). Drawing from Urban Transitions Alliance exchanges, the guidebook supports city practitioners to better understand and unpack what social equity means for sustainability programs at the local level. **Duncan Booker**,





Policy and Partnerships Manager at the Glasgow City Council, emphasised during the event: *“When cities get together, we speak a common language in terms of equity concerns. For instance, we noticed commonalities across regions in challenges to integrate social justice in Covid-19 recovery and climate action.”*



In several FAO- and UN-Habitat-convened sessions on food systems, ICLEI emphasised the importance of cities in driving food system transformation, namely through by looking beyond agriculture to address the whole food value chain, and that local governments have a strong role to play in food security, particularly through their embedded mandates of infrastructure development, transport and traffic management, water treatment and distribution, and operation, maintenance and upgrading of urban markets. **Mayor Sefiani** of Chefchaouen, **Mayor Mwamfupe** of Dodoma, and **Governor Anyang’ Nyongo** of Kisumu County argued that by taking systems approaches to food, we could reduce malnourishment, enrich our cities cultures, bring more nature into cities and improve employment opportunities, especially for the youth.





Climate finance and project preparation were featured as a key step in overcoming the main barriers faced by cities and regions in developing climate initiatives. Through the Cities Investment Fair, ICLEI showcased the project SOLAR II – Sustainability for all, which is part of the Transformative Actions Program (TAP) pipeline. The project developers had a chance to share the main aspects of the project in front of an expert jury, providing feedback on how to improve concept notes, amplifying its impacts in tackling climate change.

ICLEI's holistic approach highlighted at WUF is necessary. As **Matthew Bach**, Coordinator Just Transition at ICLEI Europe, noted, *“we are between a rock and a hard place. We need to transform our societies quickly to avert a climate disaster. But at the same time we need to make sure that we create an equitable society where no one is left behind.”*

Mayor Mohammed Sefiani, Chefchaouen, adds the need for urgency: *“we need concrete programmes and projects in our cities, directly committed to reducing inequality. And we need them right now.”* Approaching Just Transitions has already presented quite a challenge, but the COVID-19 crisis and the war in Ukraine have only made things more complicated. Several speakers noted that while a coal phase out is widely discussed, energy demand has expanded and currently there are record amounts of coal being consumed.

The good news is that WUF also showed that cities are increasingly taking actions that are producing encouraging results, often helped by organisations like ICLEI that support the development of localised green deals, climate risk assessments, data management, climate action plans, co-creation sessions and citizen engagement. When doing this, it is





important to keep in mind that there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution. As **Rohit Sen**, Head of Sustainable Energy at the ICLEI World Secretariat reminded, *“cities need to work together with all stakeholders to find the right solutions. That includes citizens and behavioural scientists. We can’t build cycling paths in New Delhi and Dhaka and expect that people will use them in the same way as in Amsterdam and Copenhagen.”*

Finally, the World Urban Forum represented an opportunity to elevate local and global climate action, and for cities and regions to advance their advocacy strategy to elevate global climate action into climate emergency under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) towards the upcoming 27th Conference of Parties (COP27) to be held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt in November 2022.

At WUF11 in Katowice, in its capacity as the focal point of UNFCCC Local Governments and Municipal Authorities Constituency (LGMA) on behalf of the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments, [ICLEI convened a multi-stakeholder consultation to prepare for COP27](#), and strategise about ensuring local and regional voice. COP27 is announced as the “Implementation COP”, in order to ensure full delivery of the Paris Agreement in the second phase that kicked-off with the adoption of the Glasgow Climate Pact at COP26. The LGMA Constituency announced #MultilevelActionDelivers as the motto towards COP27, building on with the acknowledgement of the urgent need for multilevel and cooperative action under the Glasgow Climate Pact.

