

UNESCO Cities Platform

CONCEPT NOTE

Adapting Cities for Climate Resilience



Cities are hubs of human activities be they economic, social, cultural and environmental. Given the growing world population in cities today and in the future as well as urban density in general, cities have a primary impact on environment and climate change. Meanwhile, they are also at the forefront of our common efforts to address these global challenges by tapping into their tremendous resources, talents, creativity and responsiveness. The COVID-19 pandemic has further solidified the core importance of cities in terms of policies, strategies and actions that crucially contributes to addressing contemporary global development challenges and opportunities. Not only has the pandemic unveiled the unpredictability of future challenges, but it has also revealed the fact that cities' vulnerabilities are, on the other hand, predictable hence the revival response to recovering from the unforeseen hardship is to reconstructing anew from resilient and sustainable cities.

Every year from 2019, UNESCO celebrates World Cities Day (WCD), based on the coordination ensured by the UNESCO Cities Platform (UCP),¹ which brings together the 8 cities centered or related networks and programmes of the Organization. The event will be an opportunity to showcase UNESCO's transversal experience and expertise demonstrated by the various events and activities carried out by the Platform's member networks and programmes, contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular, Goal 11 "Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable".

[1] UCP is comprised of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN), Media and Information Literacy Cities (MIL), the International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities (ICCAR), Megacities Alliance for Water and Climate, UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC), World Heritage Cities Programme, Disaster Risk Reduction Programme (DRR), and UNESCO/Netexploratory Observatory.

World Cities Day 2021 will revolve around the global theme of '*Adapting cities for climate resilience*', which aims to address a wide range of linked issues from management of ecosystems to poverty eradication. Climate resilience and action has become an increasingly important and integral part in UNESCO's programmes and activities, recognized by Member States as an essential crosscutting theme for advancing sustainable development worldwide.

Global challenges and opportunities, notably in the urban environment, need to be addressed in a holistic way, with integrated climate resilience policies and action plans to greatly reduce climate related risks for their populations. In light of this recognition, with the occasion to celebrate the World Cities Day, the UNESCO Cities Platform has brought together a number of pragmatic Urban Solutions to convey to Member States, cities, partners, and the general public, in order to contribute to our collective actions and measures towards adapting cities – primary human habitat – for climate resilience as well as to encourage cooperation and collaboration mechanisms among all stakeholders.

These practical Urban Solutions may be of particular interest for all countries and cities that are most vulnerable to climate changes. The proposed UNESCO Urban Solutions will also contribute to the Organization's key messages in the course of the upcoming 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 26), to be launched in Glasgow, on 31 October, also World Cities Day.

In the endeavor to catalyze cities' recovery, UNESCO takes this opportunity to increase awareness on climate change adaptation and urban resilience as well as to inspire effective and participative climate action at all international, national and local levels to build better cities for better lives.

