

# **An Alliance for Sustainable Cities**

A Declaration on the Occasion of the Special Symposium of the Pontifical Academy of Science and the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network  
July 22, 2015

We the participants from across society and around the world – mayors, scholars, development practitioners, religious leaders, national government officials, and representatives of global urban networks – have gathered at the Vatican on July 21-22, 2015 to meet with Pope Francis and to exchange proposals and solutions regarding “Sustainable Cities: Empowering People, Enabling Prosperity and Protecting the Planet.” We are grateful to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences for hosting this fruitful event, and to the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network for co-hosting the Special Symposium on July 22.

Pope Francis called upon the mayors to take leadership in overcoming the growing crises of social exclusion, marginalization, and climate disruption. We, the mayors and others assembled in this symposium, have heard this call from Pope Francis and from our own citizens. We recognize the dire threats to future generations. We must act now.

As Pope Francis said in his address to us yesterday, the UN and leaders in all sectors of society must take into account extreme forms of social exclusion, such as the new forms of slavery, in terms of human trafficking, forced labor, prostitution, and organ trafficking. We recognize that global warming and other environmental degradation exacerbate these ills by intensifying poverty and social vulnerability. The very tissue of our societies is under threat of growing inequalities; the unmet needs of the extreme poor and the extremely vulnerable; and a natural environment being hit by more frequent and intense heat waves, droughts, floods, rising sea levels, and other climate-related threats.

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis calls for joint action at a global scale:

Interdependence obliges us to think of one world with a common plan. Yet the same ingenuity which has brought about enormous technological progress has so far proved incapable of finding effective ways of dealing with grave environmental and social problems worldwide. A global consensus is essential for confronting the deeper problems, which cannot be resolved by unilateral actions on the part of individual countries. (p. 164)

We are gratified that the upcoming Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to be adopted by the UN member states at the United Nations on September 25, 2015, a day to be opened by Pope Francis, can help the world to formulate a “common plan” and a “global consensus.” We, the mayors and other participants, pledge to work towards the success of the SDGs in our own cities and respective areas of endeavor, and to partner with others across the globe to help all cities to achieve the new SDGs with success.

To this end, we pledge today to work together cooperatively and actively across cities and across sectors to coalesce in an Urban SDG Alliance. The SDG Urban Alliance will be open, voluntary, participatory, and eager to engage all urban stakeholders that are committed to sustainable development and the SDGs. In joining together in a new SDG alliance, we recognize and applaud the enormous efforts of world-leading urban networks including UCLG, ICLEI, C-40, the Cities Alliance, Slum Dwellers International, and WEIGO, to promote the prioritization of urban sustainability within the new SDG framework.

The UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, the UCLG, ICLEI, and C-40, will work together with universities, city governments, social movements, UN agencies, the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, and others to establish the SDG Urban Alliance, with the following objectives:

- Helping cities to achieve the SDGs, including to end extreme poverty and hunger; ensure gender equality and gender-sensitive solutions; and guarantee universal access to health, education, and other vital services;
- Urging national and state governments to empower cities to fulfill their SDG responsibilities, including through appropriate devolution of powers and finances;
- Helping citizens and businesses everywhere to understand the SDGs;
- Helping cities to create SDG-based plans;
- Cutting corruption and impunity that undermine sustainable development;
- Identifying pathways to decarbonize the energy system in order to keep global warming below 2-degrees C;
- Promoting and strengthening universities to be innovation hubs for sustainable development;
- Creating new channels for urban sustainable financing and long-term planning;
- Creating decent and sustainable jobs, ensuring human rights, and helping to end homelessness;
- Ending human trafficking and all forms of modern slavery, including through strong commitments to these goals within the SDGs;
- Work with UN-Habitat and other partners for the great success of Habitat III in Quito in 2016.

The Urban SDG Alliance will have its launch on September 24, 2015, near the United Nations, on the eve of the global adoption of the SDGs. We welcome all partners in this new alliance and invite all partners to the launch on September 24.

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Contacts:

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