

Renewable Energy Declaration: Powering Green and Just Cities

As mayors, we know that energy enables our cities to thrive. Cities use over two-thirds of the world's energy¹ – to power essential services, jobs and cultural activities, to cook, to heat and cool our buildings, to light our streets and to power transport and industry. Energy enables us to connect, be safe, work, play and create.

But this comes at a cost: energy is still mostly produced from fossil fuels and is the biggest source of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Electricity and heat is responsible for most emissions within the energy sector with half of it coming from energy use in buildings.² Increasing fossil fuel generation capacity would lock the world in a high carbon trajectory and turn those oil, gas and coal projects into stranded assets while destroying our local biodiversity and poisoning the air we breathe in cities. In 2018 alone, fossil fuel air pollution was responsible for 8.7 million premature deaths in the world.³

We are a long way from achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 7: reliable, sufficient, affordable and sustainable energy remains out of reach for many of our most vulnerable city residents. Almost 800 million people still lack access to electricity, almost 700 million people in urban areas are at high risk for nutrition, health and safety due to lack of cooling⁴, over 1 billion people live in urban informal settlements and slums without access to basic services, including energy, and 2.8 billion people cannot cook safely or with clean fuels.⁵ Even cities with ample access to electricity are still home to residents affected by energy poverty.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the vulnerability of our societies, our economies and our ecosystems. But it has also given us the unprecedented chance to do things differently. We know that to power sustainable, equitable and vibrant communities and achieve a just transition that leaves no one behind, we need to adopt a new energy system – one that creates good local jobs, improves our health and builds resilience.

Renewable energy is one of the key enablers to realise our Paris Agreement compatible climate action plans. Moving away from fossil fuels and switching to renewable energy to decarbonise electricity used in our cities and heating, cooling and cooking needs in our buildings will massively reduce urban GHG emissions and air pollution. Renewable energy technologies are versatile and can be deployed locally, building resilience by helping our cities adapt to and mitigate extreme weather events that will become more frequent due to climate change. Decentralised renewable energy solutions such as community renewable energy projects, rooftop solar systems, battery storage or minigrids can increase energy access and enable communities to have a greater voice in the energy transition.

A fair transition to renewable energy brings also other social and economic benefits to our communities. Renewable energy technologies are now cheaper than fossil fuels in many parts of the world thanks to massive cost reductions.⁶ They create 7.5 full-time equivalent jobs per USD 1 million of investment⁷ – almost three times as many as fossil fuel technologies – and every one dollar invested would bring a payback of between three and eight dollars in reduced environmental and health costs.⁸ Prioritising renewable energy investments in stimulus packages rolled out worldwide can enable a sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, creating economic growth and jobs in our cities – and by ensuring those jobs are equitably distributed and localised, it can also support a just transition. An estimated 5.5 million jobs would be created by 2030 by reaching the necessary investment level for a renewables-based energy transition in the recovery phase and thereafter.⁹

As mayors, we know we must take transformative actions to move away from traditional and fossil fuel-based energy systems and accelerate the deployment of renewable energy technologies that have proven to work and are cost-effective. Cities can create change through leveraging their demand and leading by example for

¹ IRENA (2016), [Renewable Energy in Cities](#)

² WRI (2020), [4 Charts Explain Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Countries and Sectors](#)

³ Vohra, K. et. Al (2021), [Global mortality from outdoor fine particle pollution generated by fossil fuel combustion: Results from GEOS-Chem](#), Environmental Research, 195

⁴ Sustainable Energy for All (SEforAll) (2020), [Chilling prospects 2020: tracking sustainable cooling for all](#)

⁵ UN (2020), [The Sustainable Development Goals Report](#)

⁶ IRENA (2019), [Renewable Power Generation Costs in 2019](#)

⁷ Garrett-Peltier, H. (2017) Green versus brown: Comparing the employment impacts of energy efficiency, renewable energy, and fossil fuels using an input-output model. Economic Modelling, 61: 439–447

⁸ IRENA (2020), [Global Renewables Outlook: Energy Transformation 2050](#)

⁹ IRENA (2020), [Mobilising institutional capital for renewable energy](#)

municipal operations. Cities can incentivise renewable energy generation, aggregate local demand, support community energy projects to engage city residents in the energy transition and enable innovation and digitalisation. They can lobby – and collaborate with – state and national governments, regional key players, regulators, utilities and private sector partners to prioritise renewable energy.

Our commitment

To meet the goal of the Paris Agreement and build the world envisioned by the Global Green New Deal¹⁰, we, as mayors of some of the world’s largest and most influential cities, pledge to power a green and just recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic with renewable energy and take all possible steps to accelerate the full decarbonisation of electricity, heating, cooling and cooking and the phasing out of fossil fuels.

To meet this commitment, we will:

- Adopt one of the following pathways in line with our objectives, priorities and context.
- Lead by example, either switching municipal electricity consumption to 100% renewable energy by 2025 or deploying renewable energy systems on all feasible municipal assets by 2030.

Pathways:

- **Accelerating renewable energy transition:** Use 100% renewable electricity citywide by 2035 and fully decarbonised energy to cook, and heat and cool buildings within the city no later than 2050.
- **Enabling energy access with renewables:** Achieve universal access to reliable, sustainable and affordable electricity and clean cooking¹¹ fuels and technologies by 2030 and use 100% renewable electricity citywide by 2050.
- **Maximising local renewable energy:** Deploy clean energy systems for electricity, heating, cooling and cooking to achieve 50% of the assessed feasible potential within the city by 2030 and 100% by 2050.

To achieve our committed targets, we will:

- Adopt (if not already in place) a clear roadmap and strategy for our pathway objectives within two years of signing. For the Maximising Local Renewable Energy Pathway, we also will develop an assessment of the feasible potential for deploying renewable and decarbonised energy systems on all buildings and sites within the city within two years of signing.
- Ensure that this strategy follows the principle of ‘energy efficiency first’ where it is cost-effective and take all necessary actions to increase the efficiency and electrification of end-use sectors.
- Prioritise and secure investments for actions that benefit low income and marginalised groups such as community energy projects, and that strengthen diversity and inclusivity in the energy sector such as initiatives to upskill workers transitioning from the fossil fuel industry into the renewable energy sector.
- Champion and publicly advocate for the goal of reaching 100% decarbonised energy systems and phasing out of fossil fuels at the city, state, regional, national and global level in collaboration with other cities and engaging with relevant stakeholders.
- Implement ambitious policies, programmes and projects and engage with the private sector to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy in the residential, commercial and industrial sectors while stimulating local markets and jobs.
- Publicly report every year on the progress made towards our goals.

¹⁰ C40, [The Global Green New Deal](#)

¹¹ Fuel-technology combinations that meet WHO guidelines for indoor air quality is considered clean for cooking.