

UNEA-7 Cities and Regions Summit

5 December 2025

Summit Report

Convened on Friday, 5 December 2025, the [Cities and Regions Summit](#) of the seventh session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-7) brought together over 90 participants in person ([photos](#)) and nearly 600 online ([livestream recording](#)), including Member States, representatives of local and regional governments, financial institutions, civil society, and experts.

A strong and consistent message emerged: **empowering cities and regions is essential to advancing sustainable solutions and turning global commitments into reality, but this requires strengthened multi-level governance to ensure their systemic inclusion in multilateral processes, alongside significantly improved access to finance.**

The Summit reaffirmed that subnational, national, and global levels are deeply interconnected. Global action must be accompanied by locally tailored solutions and enabling national frameworks.

The highlights and outcomes of the Summit were presented by **Balakhsher Qazi**, Mayor of Turbat, Pakistan, and reported in the opening plenary of UNEA-7 ([watch](#) his intervention at 02:11:00) by **Ali Nizar**, Mayor of Addu City, Maldives. This ensured a strong and cohesive voice from cities and regions in the UNEA-7 deliberations.

Opening of the Cities and Regions Summit
The opening session set a clear tone: addressing the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution and achieving a resilient planet cannot succeed without the full engagement of cities and regions – as incubators of innovations, shelters for green jobs, and stewards of health and livelihoods.

In her opening remarks, **Inger Andersen**, Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), emphasized the transformative role of urban action, stating “[What happens in cities shapes the world](#)”. She called for stronger inclusion of cities and regions in shaping national positions and policies under multilateral environmental agreements, as well as greater autonomy and support for local and regional implementation.

H.E. Abdullah Bin Ali Al-Amri of Oman, UNEA-7 President, emphasized the Assembly’s theme, “*Advancing sustainable solutions for a resilient planet*” as a call for practical, science-based, and cooperative solutions grounded in both traditional wisdom and modern innovations.

H.E. Sakaja Arthur Johnson, Governor of Nairobi City County, Kenya, highlighted rapid urbanization and stressed that climate action must be urban and translated into tangible benefits for citizens, such as green jobs and improved livelihoods.

H.E. Sultan Hajiye, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Embassy of Azerbaijan in Kenya, further underscored the intrinsic linkages between sustainable urban development and environmental protection, noting opportunities for integrated action in light of Azerbaijan as the host country of the 29th Conference of the Parties (COP29) to UNFCCC and the thirteen session of the World Urban Forum (WUF13).

Regional and local leaders reinforced these messages by elaborating how resilience can be built through everyday decisions made on the ground. **Beyrouk Mohamed Lemine Beyrouk**, Vice President of the Nouakchott Region, Mauritania,

highlighted Africa's readiness to lead in a new phase of environmental multilateralism in which solutions to these interconnected and integrated challenges are grounded in local and regional realities. **Meritxell Budó**, Mayor of La Garriga, Spain, and President of the Catalan Association of Municipalities, illustrated how joint procurement mechanisms in Catalonia are enabling small and medium municipalities to access to green technologies and products.

Thematic Session 1: Environmental Governance: Empowering Local and Regional Governments to Achieve the Goals of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs)

The session underscored the ample potential for more integrated action, highlighting cities and regions as key anchors for advancing multilateralism and achieving MEAs. **Mirey Atallah**, Chief, Adaptation and Resilience Branch, Climate Change Division, UNEP, moderated this session, noting the increasing proliferation of instruments, plans, and tools and the need for greater synergies in implementation. In addition, she brought to online participants' attention that a [Miro Board](#) would be used throughout the two thematic sessions to capture their inputs.

In his [keynote presentation](#), **David Dodman**, General Director, Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies, presented preliminary findings from an ongoing analysis of local and regional governments' participation and contributions in key MEAs. He highlighted that meaningful impact requires formal and sustained engagement of subnational actors throughout the full lifecycle of MEA processes beyond COPs. While local governments contribute contextual knowledge and enable tailored, equitable responses, MEAs in turn provide legitimacy, policy direction, and leverage to scale local action.

The panel discussion reinforced that multilevel governance and global partnerships are key to elevating local and regional leadership in environmental action. **Pedro Mariano Martins**

Pontes, General Coordinator for Bilateral / Plurilateral Cooperation, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Brazil, highlighted climate federalism through institutional arrangements that integrate subnational into national policy development and implementation, as well as through Brazil's external engagement with subnational partners abroad, including a memorandum of understanding with the State of California, United States of America (USA).

Meghan Hertel, Deputy Secretary, Biodiversity and Habitat, California Natural Resources Agency, USA, emphasized the critical role of subnational leadership, particularly in challenging national political contexts. She also pointed to California's cooperation with Kenya, Canada, and other national partners as examples of sustained environmental engagement across borders.

Rebekah Shirley, Deputy Director for Africa, World Resources Institute, stressed the Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships (CHAMP) and country platforms as promising mechanisms to mobilize collective efforts, streamline coordination, and channel resources more effectively to local and regional levels.

Interventions from the floor underscored a shared recognition that multilateralism is evolving, with increasing acknowledgment of the interlinkages and synergies between climate, biodiversity, and land agendas – many of which are inherently subnational in both impact and implementation.

Closing the session, **Yunus Arikan**, Director of Global Advocacy, ICLEI World Secretariat, ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability, reflected on the engagements of local and regional governments in the 33 years of history of the Rio Conventions. He noted the increasing convergence across environmental agendas, the complexity of the engagement process, and the capacity of subnational governments to drive innovation even under constrained financial and institutional conditions.

Thematic Session 2: Overcoming the Financial Barriers: Unlocking Finance for Synergistic Local Action

Finance emerged as a central challenge and opportunity throughout the first half of the Summit. **Hongpeng Lei**, Chief, Mitigation Branch, Climate Change Division, UNEP, moderated the finance session, inviting panelists to explore ways to unlock finance and address barriers that prevent cities and regions from moving from ambition to implementation, including limited direct access to international finance, high transaction costs, constrained creditworthiness, and insufficient flows of private capital.

To address these barriers, national governments can act as aggregators, enablers, and intermediaries between the supply and demand sides for the subnational governments, said **Émilie Maehara**, Deputy Director, Sustainable Finance Observatory, in her [keynote presentation](#). Stressing the misalignment between the immense finance needs and the vast, largely untapped potential of private capital, which she called the “Valley of Death”, she pointed to the development of bankable pipelines that meet financiers’ requirements for risk, return, and impact as the solution. This is achievable through multi-level technical cooperation to transform small, fragmented projects into aggregated investment-ready portfolio, and through innovative finance mechanisms based on financial engineering, all requiring active national government engagement.

Additionally, national governments can embed urban climate action in national budgeting priorities and institutionalize it in its work, as described by **Patricia Baariu**, Assistant Director, Department of Urban Governance, Management and Resilience, State Department for Housing and Urban Development, Ministry of Lands, Public Works, Housing and Urban Development, Kenya. She also highlighted the value of leveraging local innovation and technology, such as from residents of informal settlements to develop cost-effective

solutions for resilient housing – a key intervention for urban climate financing.

Voahary Rakotovelomanantsoa, Expert in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Regional Development and Former Governor of Anôsy, Madagascar, illustrated how country platforms can shift fragmented funding toward coordinated, aligned priorities across levels, avoiding duplication and pooling efforts to generate complementary synergies.

However, even in the absence of external financing or national government support, local governments possess significant autonomy to act.

Silvio Barros, Mayor of Maringá, Brazil, presented a methodology for assessing subnational enabling framework conditions (EFCs) for urban climate financing, showing how local governments can reduce building and construction emissions through public procurement and legislative incentives for green building and construction in the private sector. Similarly, **Jacquis Gabriel Kemleu**, Mayor of Dschang, Cameroon, encouraged cities to identify assets, articulate needs, and co-create solutions with financing partners.

The private sector was highlighted as a key connector and catalyst for mobilizing blended finance. **Julius Kamau**, Group Acting Sustainability Director, Equity Group Holdings, discussed strategic partnerships with development financial institutions to share risks and scale investments in underfunded areas, including loans to vulnerable populations considered high-risk in conventional banking systems. **Ross Palmer**, Associate Director, Sustainable Infrastructure Middle East and Africa, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, presented the Green Cities program, which supports cities in deploying diverse financing instruments, de-risking tools, and creating enabling environments for subnational borrowing.

International initiatives such as the [C40 Cities Finance Facility](#) further support cities in mobilizing finance directly from private sources, leveraging

sovereign credit, fostering green credit lines, and offering concessional loans and co-financing, as noted by **Anthony Okoth**, African Regional Director, C40 Cities.

Following the panel, participants suggested additional mechanisms to unlock local and regional finance, including restructuring national financial architecture; leveraging own-source revenues, public finance, and capital investment planning; as well as standardizing green finance products while simplifying certification to better regulate the market.

Across the discussions, it became evident that finance must be treated as a multi-level, cross-sectoral ecosystem that requires collaboration from all actors to share risks and align benefits in order to deliver meaningful outcomes. Closing the session, **Eugenie Birch**, Professor and co-Director, Penn Institute for Urban Research, University of Pennsylvania, called for an expanded dialogue with ministries of finance. She also highlighted the neighborhood scale as a critical level for implementation, where tangible work and impact occur.

Cities and Regions Summit Wrap-Up: Linking Summit Outcomes to UNEA-7 and the Global Sustainability Agenda

This session called on countries and the international community to support cities and regions so that they can deliver what they agreed to deliver under MEAs, with results and impact.

Moderated by **Rafael Peralta**, Regional Director, Regional Office for North America, UNEP, this session invited participants to map out strategic engagement opportunities for cities and regions to advance sustainable solutions for a resilient planet.

H.E. Mirko Giulietti, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Embassy of Switzerland in Kenya, [highlighted](#) the summit as an opportunity for national governments, mayors, urban planners, and researchers to engage with one another across viewpoints and forge approaches, ideas, and

solutions, moving “from speech to implementation”.

Similarly, **Rafael Tuts**, Director, Global Solutions Division, UN-Habitat and Co-Chair of the Local2030 Coalition, emphasized recent progress in integrating urban priorities into NDCs and advancing the human rights dimension of human settlements and climate adaptation. He emphasized that international forums provide crucial spaces to translate these trends into influence and action.

On finance, **Jordi Llopart**, Senior Advisor to the Administrator, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), stressed the importance of bridging national and local priorities through Integrated National Financing Frameworks, localizing nationally agreed goals, and creating collaborative spaces to mobilize diverse actors and resources for locally driven development.

Kamelia Kemileva, Co-Director, Global Cities Hub, highlighted the need to showcase good examples to the Member States to influence the negotiations and resolutions and said “Local-level innovation must not only happen; it must also be seen to happen at the international level. In other words, more interactions between local and regional governments and Member States are needed to showcase good practices.”

Carlos Mascarell, Head of Regional Affairs, UCLG, and **Magash Naidoo**, Head of Circular Development, ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability, as the co-chairs of the Local Authorities Major Group (LAMG) to UNEP, co-presented the [LAMG Outcome Document](#) of the UNEA-7 Cities and Regions Summit endorsed by the Global Taskforce of Local Government. They called on Member States to reform financial architecture, institutionalize multilevel environmental governance, and adopt a more integrated approach, while encouraging cities and regions to maximize their impact with the resources and capacities they have.

In summarizing, co-rapporteur **Balakhsher Qazi**, Mayor of Turbat, Pakistan, highlighted that global environmental goals can only be achieved when local and regional action is recognized, empowered, and equitably resourced, followed by the closing remarks by **Martin Krause**, Director, Climate Change Division, UNEP. He highlighted

encouraging progress: more MEAs are formally recognizing the role of cities and regions and ended with a positive note: **while challenges remain around governance and finance, the Summit demonstrated strong optimism, practical solutions, and a shared commitment to move from dialogue to impact and implementation.**



LED BY:



CORE PARTNERS:



SUPPORTING PARTNERS:



CONTRIBUTION TO:

SUPPORTED BY:

