United Nations ESCAP/81/11

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
5 February 2025

Original: English

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Eighty-first session
Bangkok, 21–25 April 2025
Items 5 (c) of the provisional agenda*
Review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific and issues pertinent to the subsidiary structure of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific: environment and development

Regional cooperation to enhance multilevel action and raise climate ambitions

Note by the secretariat

Summary

Effective and ambitious climate action requires engagement at all levels of government and society, and robust and coordinated action among stakeholders. Coherent climate strategies must take into consideration national climate strategies, cross-sectoral cooperation and the engagement of local communities, which is where most of the Asia-Pacific region's emissions are generated. Multilevel climate governance can enhance the vertical integration of policies, ensure the efficient allocation of resources and help to accelerate the transition to low-emission development and enhance climate resilience.

In the present document, the secretariat draws on its analysis of nationally determined contributions and on its consultations with Governments, local and subnational authorities, stakeholders and partners to identify opportunities to enhance multilevel climate governance and accelerate climate action at the national and local levels and in the private sector. Furthermore, the secretariat identifies regional and transboundary cooperation opportunities to support multilevel climate action and promote low-emission and climate-resilient development.

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific may wish to take note of the priorities and recommendations contained in the present document and provide guidance on the future work of the secretariat in that regard.

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I. Background

1. The Asia-Pacific region plays a pivotal role in global climate mitigation, as it contributed over 60 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions in 2023. The region accounts for 45 per cent of the world's energy supply; 43.2 per cent of total final energy consumption; and 50 per cent of the global electricity generation, which is generated predominantly through coal. Of the total final energy consumption, 52 per cent is in the industry sector, 17 per cent in transport, 25 per cent in buildings and the remainder in other sectors.[1] While investments in renewable energy in the region are growing, they are not yet sufficient to offset the rising energy demand driven by rapid industrialization and urbanization. To achieve the ambitious climate goals set by various countries, a more aggressive transition to renewable energy sources such as solar, wind and hydropower is essential. At the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the parties called for global renewable energy capacity to be tripled by 2030, a goal requiring Asia-Pacific countries to significantly scale up investments and the deployment of clean energy technologies.

2. Urbanization as a key driver of increasing energy demand presents both challenges and opportunities for climate action. Rapid urban growth can exacerbate emissions, but it also offers a platform for the implementation of innovative climate solutions. By integrating climate considerations into urban planning, cities can enhance resilience and promote sustainable practices. Examples include investing in green infrastructure, improving public transportation networks and fostering community engagement in climate initiatives.

3. Urbanization is reshaping the world. More than half of the global population currently resides in cities, a figure that is projected to rise to approximately 68 per cent by 2050.[2] In 2020, Asia and the Pacific was home to 19 of the world's 30 largest cities, collectively housing 360 million people. The urban population in Asia and the Pacific is expected to account for 60 per cent of the global total by 2030. By 2050, the urban population in Asia is anticipated to grow by 1.2 billion people, which would be a 50 per cent increase compared with 2023[3] and result in an increase in energy consumption, increases in solid waste and the demand for urban transport, and in changes in land cover and land use patterns.

4. These anticipated changes present an excellent opportunity to catalyse climate action. Densely populated urban areas can help to implement large-scale sustainable solutions at a faster pace than their rural counterparts because they have greater access to infrastructure, solutions resulting from economies of scale, technological innovations, education and enabling policies. The transition to renewable energy sources, the development of efficient public transport systems, the effective management of waste and the construction of energy-efficient buildings hold significant potential for achieving a systemic transformation and attaining the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Realizing these goals requires commitment, resources, strategic planning and inclusive policies at all governance levels.

[1] *2024 Review of Climate Ambition in Asia and the Pacific: From Ambitions to Results Sectoral Solutions and Integrated Action* (ESCAP/4-TR/32).

[2] United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), *World Cities Report 2022: Envisaging the Future of Cities* (Nairobi, 2022).

[3] *Asia-Pacific Population and Development Report 2023* (ST/ESCAP/3112).

5. Having become heavily populated, cities are extremely vulnerable to climate change while also being responsible for a significant portion of global carbon dioxide emissions. They therefore play a pivotal role in global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the risks associated with climate change.

6. Effective and ambitious climate action requires the engagement of all levels of government and society and robust and coordinated action among stakeholders. Coherent climate strategies take into consideration national climate strategies, cross-sectoral cooperation and the engagement of local communities where most of the region's emissions are generated. In this regard, several initiatives to advance city-level climate action and resilience have recently been launched at various sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties saw the launch of the Sustainable Urban Resilience for the Next Generation initiative, the emphasis of which was on enhancing urban sustainability through integrated approaches, addressing vulnerabilities and promoting inclusive urban planning. At the twenty-eighth session, the Coalition for High-Ambition Multilevel Partnerships for Climate Action pledge was launched. The focus of the pledge was on fostering collaboration between national, regional and local governments to accelerate ambitious climate strategies. At the twenty-ninth session, the parties issued a declaration on multisectoral action pathways to resilient and healthy cities, which was aimed at creating frameworks for multisectoral cooperation to build urban resilience, improve public health and adapt to climate challenges. Together, these initiatives highlight the critical role of cities in addressing climate change and advancing global resilience.

7. Ineffective multilevel governance systems and fragmented responsibilities for climate action among different levels of government are often considered as roadblocks to successful coordination that result in policy inconsistencies. Local governments often lack the institutional and financial resources needed to implement climate policies effectively. Furthermore, a lack of coordination among key stakeholder groups, including academia, civil society and policymakers, widens the gap between knowledge acquisition and policy implementation. Such challenges to the development of climate-resilient cities can be overcome, however, through strategic planning, the design of national action plans and the integration of policies across sectors.

8. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) recognizes that integration in multilevel governance systems is essential for the effective implementation of climate change policies and actions, in particular in the Asia-Pacific region, where urbanization is occurring at a rapid pace. Integrated governance structures are instrumental in promoting sustainable urban development and achieving the targets set out in international frameworks like the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda. Vertical integration ensures that climate action is supported and reinforced at all levels of government, from local to national, aligning goals and maximizing the impact of policies and initiatives. Horizontal integration facilitates collaboration across cities and sectors, enabling the sharing of resources, knowledge and best practices. Thus, integration is vital for creating cohesive strategies that address the multifaceted nature of climate-related challenges.

9. However, cities often face challenges in securing financing for climate change mitigation and adaptation. *The State of Cities Climate Finance 2024* report contains a comprehensive estimate of global urban climate financing and presents solutions for mobilizing climate financing for low-carbon,

climate-resilient urban development.[4] The annual climate finance requirement in the context of urban areas is substantial. Urban infrastructure investment needs have been estimated at between $4.5 trillion to $5.4 trillion each year from 2015 to 2030.[5] However, cities globally on average received only $384 billion in climate finance annually in 2017 and 2018, which is only 7–8 per cent of the required amount.[6] Specifically, cities need significant capital for adaptation: in fact, it has been estimated that between $11 billion and $20 billion will be required annually by 2050 to address climate-related risks to urban infrastructure.[7]

10. Despite these pressing needs, urban climate finance flows still fall far short of the requirement. Emerging markets and developing economies in East Asia and the Pacific (excluding China) saw domestic climate finance grow from $6 billion in 2018 to $9 billion in 2022, accounting for 47 per cent of the region's total climate finance, primarily driven by Indonesia and the Philippines. East Asia and the Pacific also contributed $21 billion, which represented 36 per cent of global South-South climate finance, highlighting their regional leadership. By 2022, domestic financing in the region had surpassed international funding, signalling increased self-reliance in climate investment.[8] Adaptation finance continues to lag, however, threatening the region's ability to manage climate risks effectively. Innovative financing mechanisms and instruments, such as thematic bonds and national and regional carbon trading systems, along with enhanced capacity-building and technology transfer, are essential for bridging the adaptation finance gap.[9] Creating enabling environments at the national and local levels to improve access to climate finance and strengthen the capacity of local governments to deliver sustainable development is also important.

II. Integrating climate action in urban planning and infrastructure development

11. Strategic urban planning for climate action involves collaborative efforts, knowledge-sharing and innovative approaches. By integrating climate considerations into urban development, cities can build resilience and contribute to climate-sensitive development. A holistic approach to urban planning that takes into consideration different sectors and components is required. Cities are complex structures that contribute to greenhouse gas emissions in numerous ways. Integrating different components into urban planning may facilitate the development of climate-resilient cities. Building

[4] Jessie Press-Williams and others, *The State of Cities Climate Finance 2024: The Landscape of Urban Climate Finance*, 2nd ed. (Cities Climate Finance Leadership Alliance and Climate Policy Initiative, 2024).

[5] Katharina Lütkehermöller, "The little book of city climate finance" (Cologne, Germany, NewClimate Institute, 2023).

[6] Priscilla Negreiros and others, *Accelerating Urban Climate Finance in Low- and Middle- Income Countries: An Important Strategic Dimension of MDB Reform* (Climate Policy Initiative, 2023).

[7] Morgan Richmond, Nidhi Upadhyaya and Angela Ortega Pastor, "An analysis of urban climate adaptation finance: a report from the cities climate finance leadership alliance" (Climate Policy Initiative, 2021).

[8] Baysa Naran and others, Climate Policy Initiative, *Global Landscape of Climate Finance 2024: Insights for COP29* (Climate Policy Initiative, 2024).

[9] United Nations Environment Programme, *Adaptation Gap Report 2024: Come Hell and High Water – As Fires and Floods Hit the Poor Hardest, It Is Time for The World to Step Up Adaptation Actions* (Nairobi, 2024).

the necessary infrastructure will be key for creating liveable, climate-resilient and inclusive urban environments that drive economic progress.

12. Efficient land use planning is important considering the rate of expansion of urban areas. Efforts to ensure the effective spatial planning of urban areas need to focus on developing compact and self-reliant infrastructure to minimize the use of resources. Integrating micro-level climate parameters like the direction of the wind, exposure to the sun and the availability of water and food promotes urban sustainability. Special consideration should be given to urban greening, specifically the use of local plant species, and to utilizing the latest remote sensing data for land use planning.

13. Buildings account for 30 per cent of global final energy consumption and 26 per cent of global energy-related emissions, of which 8 per cent are direct emissions and 18 per cent are indirect emissions from the production of electricity and heat used in buildings. From 2020 to 2022, the demand for energy in the building sector increased by around 4 per cent. The energy efficiency of buildings can be improved by learning about the local climate and integrating local resources and infrastructure. The concepts and requirements of green buildings need to be adapted to the specificities of each city. Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals and ensuring the alignment of nationally determined contributions with city-level action plans enables the development of city-specific green and sustainable buildings. National policies to raise the capital for energy-efficient buildings will also be important. For example, green bonds and subsidies are offered to attract investment in sustainable construction in China. The Green Mark Incentive Scheme in Singapore provides grants and incentives to help in the achievement of certification. In Japan, tax incentives and low-interest loans are provided to encourage the development of energy-efficient buildings. Sustainable development is supported in Australia through grants and rebates available from the Green Building Fund. In Thailand, financial assistance for energy-efficient building projects is offered through an energy conservation and promotion fund.

14. To achieve meaningful progress in combating climate change, cities must adopt ambitious renewable energy targets aligned with the global commitment to accelerate renewable energy production at scale. Urban areas, as major energy consumers, play a pivotal role in this transition. In order to reduce energy demand and emissions effectively, efforts to double annual energy efficiency by 2030 should focus on urban infrastructure, transportation systems and buildings. It is critical to accelerate the decarbonization of urban power grids, which requires cities to phase out fossil fuel subsidies and redirect resources toward cleaner, renewable technologies that support sustainable urban growth.

15. Transport is one of the largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions, and it is therefore crucial to address it in climate strategies. By encouraging people to shift from private car use to public transportation, cycling and walking, cities can significantly reduce emissions. For instance, doubling the modal share of public transport and active mobility could achieve a 50 per cent reduction in transport emissions. In India, the metro network in Delhi has been expanded significantly, providing a reliable and eco-friendly alternative to road transport. By encouraging more people to use public transport, both traffic congestion and emissions have been reduced.

16. In order to achieve climate targets, it is crucial for cities to manage waste effectively, as it helps to reduce methane emissions, which is key to slowing the increase in temperature. In Asia and the Pacific, several cities have

implemented successful waste management strategies that contribute to climate goals. For example, in the Republic of Korea, a comprehensive waste management system that includes mandatory recycling, food waste separation and waste-to-energy facilities has been implemented. As a result, the amount of waste sent to landfills has been significantly reduced, thereby cutting methane emissions.

17. Efficient water management in cities is essential for achieving climate targets, as it helps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhances resilience to climate impacts. In Asia and the Pacific, several cities have implemented successful water management strategies that contribute to climate goals. For example, in Singapore, an integrated water management system has been developed. The system has four sources of water: local catchment water, imported water, recycled water and desalinated water. Using this approach has ensured a reliable water supply while reducing the energy required for water treatment and distribution. In addition, the country's extensive use of green infrastructure, such as rain gardens and green roofs, helps to manage stormwater and reduce urban heat islands.

18. Strengthening regional cooperation on mitigation efforts, especially among cities, can facilitate the exchange of knowledge, resources and best practices. Urban areas can provide the lead in the development of regional carbon trading schemes, providing economic incentives for emission reductions while fostering efficient resource allocation. By integrating these strategies into urban planning and governance, cities can enhance their climate ambitions, build resilience and lead the transition towards a low-carbon, sustainable future.

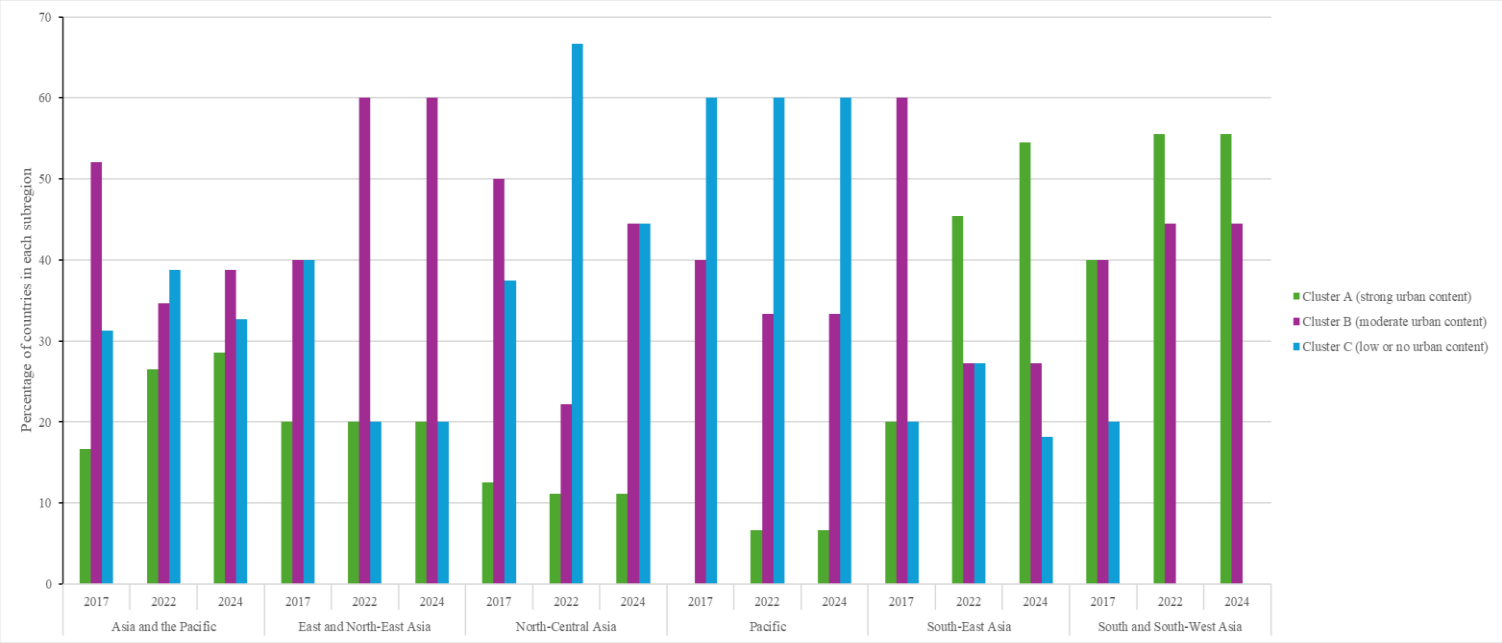
III. Strengthening the urban content in national climate action plans

19. The world must achieve a 15.2 per cent annual decarbonization rate to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, aligning with the goals set out in the Paris Agreement.[10] At the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, it was stressed that to close the gap, stronger commitments and more ambitious nationally determined contributions were needed by 2025.

20. Nationally determined contributions are the cornerstone of the Paris Agreement and are the main policy instruments used by Governments to indicate their commitment to global climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. Given that urban areas are responsible for approximately 67 per cent of global primary energy consumption and 70 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, it is essential that nationally determined contributions explicitly mention urban considerations and that they be aligned with national action plans. Although the number of countries having significant urban content in the nationally determined contributions has increased since 2017, there are many countries where the gap persists. As of 2024, the nationally determined contributions of 16 countries in Asia and the Pacific region have little or no urban content, 19 have moderate urban content and 14 have strong urban content (see figure I). To align urban climate action with national action plans, it is imperative to focus on the overall urban content in the nationally determined contributions. Such an alignment will promote a cohesive approach to addressing the impacts of climate change in cities.

[10] *2024 Review of Climate Ambition in Asia and the Pacific.*

Figure I
Urban content of nationally determined contributions of countries in Asia and the Pacific, by subregion, in 2017, 2022 and 2024



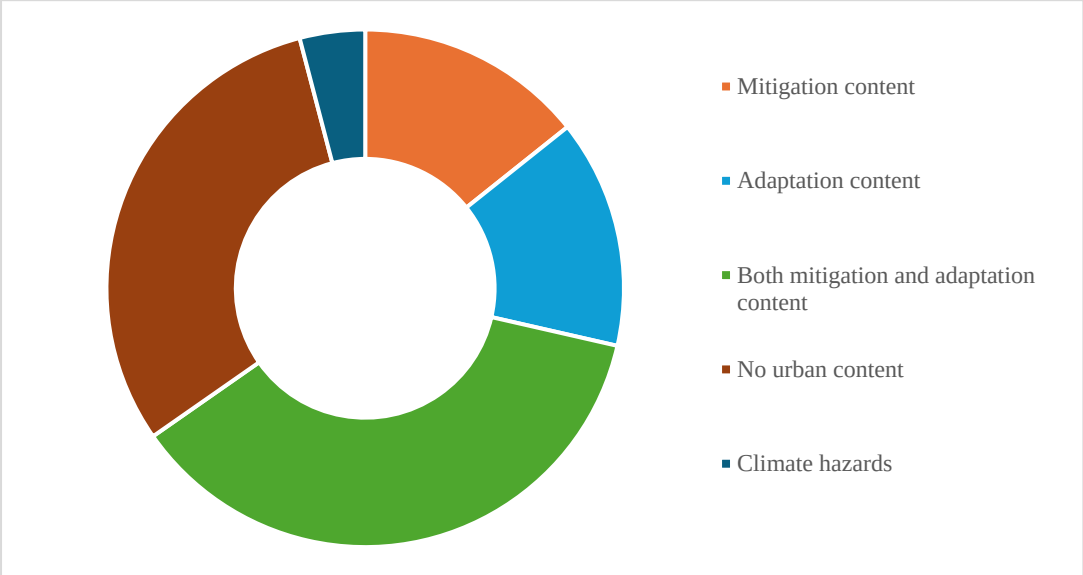
Sources: ESCAP calculations based on global data from United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), *Sustainable Urbanization in the Paris Agreement: Comparative Review for Urban Content in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)* (Nairobi, 2017); UN-Habitat, *Urban Climate Action: The Urban Content of the NDCs – Global Review 2022* (Nairobi, 2022); and UN-Habitat, *Urban Content of NDCs: Local Climate Action Explored through In-Depth Country Analyses – 2024 Report* (Nairobi, 2024).

*Note: "*Strong urban content" refers to nationally determined contributions with specific urban sections and/or in which urban areas are identified as priority sectors, excluding nationally determined contributions that are not backing the prioritization with a clear identification of specific urban challenges and/or responses. "Moderate urban content" refers to nationally determined contributions with urban mentions within the body of text. "Low or no urban content" refers to nationally determined contributions with low or no explicit urban mention within the text. "Low urban mention" refers to cases where the word "urban" appears but not in the context of addressing challenges or developing responses.

21. Furthermore, the nationally determined contributions of 14 per cent of countries in Asia and the Pacific focus either only on mitigation or on adaptation. Focusing on both mitigation and adaptation aspects provides a much more significant opportunity for attaining climate goals (see figure II). To effectively address the growing threat of climate change, it is important to improve awareness and explore various climate response options across different sectors, as highlighted in articles 2 and 7 of the Paris Agreement and recommended by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. This approach is aimed at fostering synergies while reducing conflicts between adaptation and mitigation efforts. Given the intricate nature of adaptation and mitigation strategies, they can provide opportunities to adopt integrated approaches that address both areas concurrently. These opportunities involve bridging knowledge gaps, breaking down silos in climate action efforts, maximizing shared benefits, minimizing unintended trade-offs, utilizing modelling tools to strengthen the evidence base, gathering data to inform policy decisions and fostering climate-resilient economic growth.

Figure II

Proportion of mitigation and adaptation content with reference to urban areas in nationally determined contributions of countries in Asia and the Pacific



Source: ESCAP analysis based on UN-Habitat, *Urban Content of NDCs: Local Climate Action Explored through In-Depth Country Analyses* (see figure I).

22. Given the sector-based breakdown of nationally determined contributions, it is important to note that there is a significant gap between national and urban responses in nationally determined contributions for different mitigation and adaptation sectors (see figures III and IV).

Figure III

Number of nationally determined contributions with national and urban mitigation responses in the Asia-Pacific region

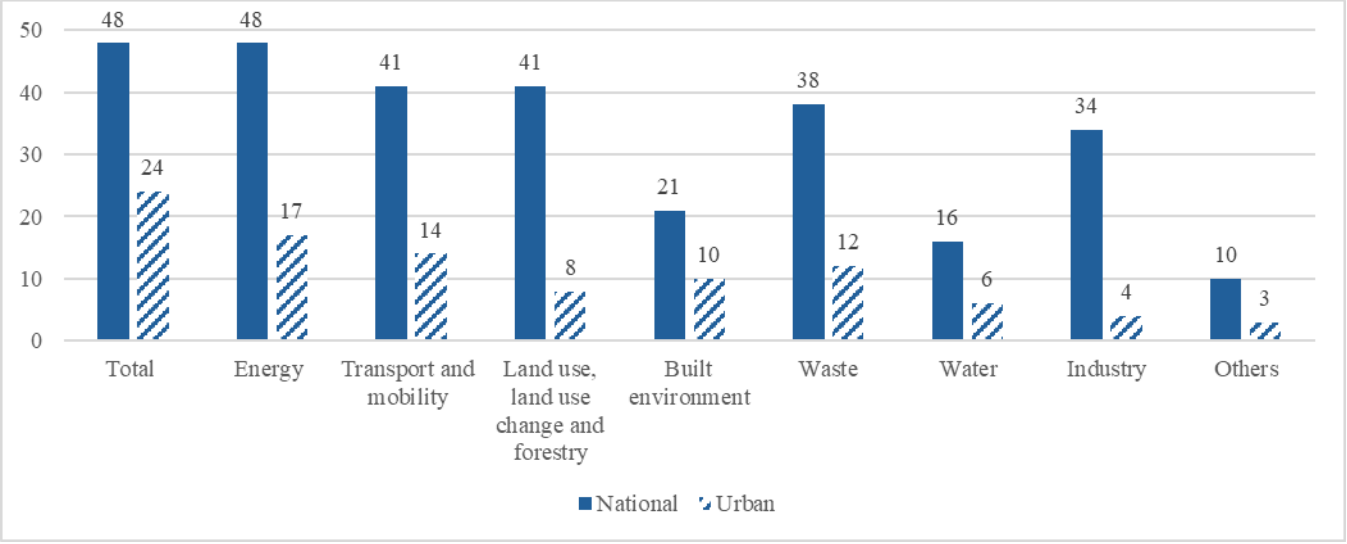
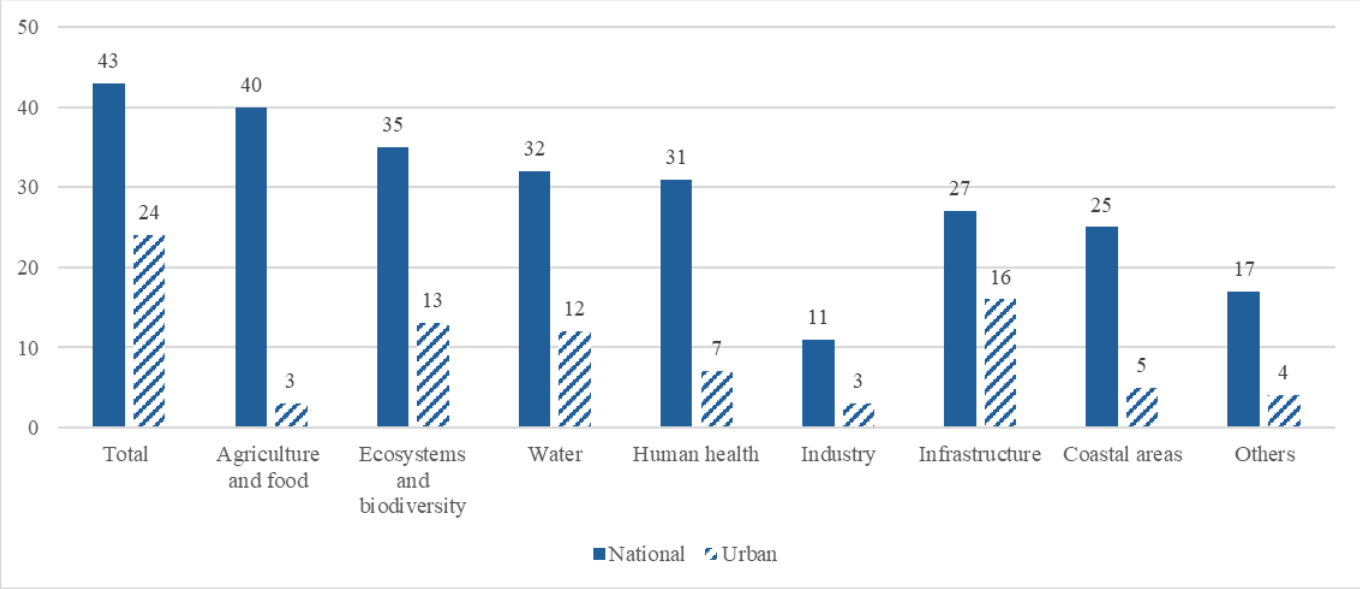


Figure IV
Number of nationally determined contributions with national and urban adaptation responses in the Asia-Pacific region



23. Updating nationally determined contributions to align with urban sectors such as energy, transportation, waste management, water resources and construction has a significant impact on emissions and resource consumption. Furthermore, integrating policies aligned with nationally determined contributions into these sectors ensures a cohesive approach to sustainability, reducing carbon footprints while enhancing climate resilience. For instance, efforts to promote energy-efficient buildings, expand climate-neutral public transport and improve waste recycling contribute directly to emission reductions. A sector-wide alignment also fosters policy coherence, enabling cities to effectively implement climate strategies while supporting national and global commitments.

24. The engagement of all stakeholders is critical for updating targets and implementation plans, including in the key sectors of energy, transport, industry and waste management, to raise ambitions for climate action. The process of updating nationally determined contributions needs to contribute to creating an environment conducive to the development of subnational climate policies and plans that encourage the participation of the private sector and promote investments in climate-resilient urban infrastructure.

25. Many municipal, local and regional governments have already committed themselves to ambitious mitigation targets through international organizations or alliances, including ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability, the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group and the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy. Nationally determined contribution targets could incorporate subnational ambitions to reflect the highest possible support to local governments, thereby localizing the national targets.[11] Such localized contributions could, in turn, accelerate the overall attainment of the nationally determined contributions, for example through integrated assessments to identify synergies between nationally determined contributions and national adaptation plans, cross-sectoral cooperation, target

[11] UN-Habitat, *Enhancing Nationally Determined Contributions through Urban Climate Action* (Nairobi, 2020).

alignment, resource mobilization and financing. The Philippines, for example, has successfully aligned its nationally determined contribution with its national adaptation plan, setting a precedent for integrated climate action. It has ensured that its contribution does not just contain stand-alone commitments but that those commitments are well-integrated into national development objectives, such as sustainable industrial development, poverty eradication, energy security and social and climate justice. The alignment of its nationally determined contribution and its national adaptation plan has enabled the Philippines to secure financial and technical support and take cross-sectoral measures, thereby strengthening its resilience and adaptive capacity.[12] In North and Central Asia, Kazakhstan has also successfully aligned its nationally determined contributions with its national adaptation plan and extended those efforts to city-level climate action. The country's nationally determined contributions are focused on reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 15 per cent compared with 1990 levels, with an emphasis on transitioning away from coal, developing renewable energy sources and enhancing energy efficiency.

26. Translating nationally determined contributions to the city level requires the adoption of a holistic approach to urban planning that leverages sector-wide contributions. For example, establishing low-carbon urban development policies in line with the nationally determined contributions can accelerate climate action in cities.

IV. Promoting regional cooperation for the alignment of city-level climate action with national targets

27. City-level climate action is vital for achieving national climate targets, as urban areas are major contributors to emissions and climate risks. Effective policies in sustainable transport, green buildings, waste management and renewable energy can significantly cut emissions while enhancing resilience. Climate-sensitive urban planning, guided by frameworks like the National Urban Policy Framework of India, helps cities to adapt to extreme weather and environmental challenges. Aligning local efforts with national commitments ensures tangible progress, making city-level action essential for achieving broader climate goals.

28. The development of third-generation nationally determined contributions, which is currently under way, is a key opportunity to align national emission trajectories with the global target of limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and to address the impacts of climate change. These nationally determined contributions are expected to be more ambitious and inclusive, reflecting the urgent need for climate action as highlighted in the *2024 Review of Climate Ambition in Asia and the Pacific*. Nationally determined contributions must prioritize comprehensive strategies that integrate climate resilience, sustainable development and equitable growth. Integrating specific sectoral targets into nationally determined contributions will enhance accountability and facilitate measurable progress towards climate goals. In order to effectively align the new cycle of nationally determined contributions with emission reduction commitments, as well as with long-term low-emission development strategies and net-zero pledges, it is essential for countries to establish absolute emission reduction targets based on a 2019 baseline year, as recommended by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. This approach will facilitate the development of comprehensive economy-wide emission reduction strategies that are both ambitious and

[12] See niccdies.climate.gov.ph/files/documents/Philippines%20NDC%20Quick%20Facts.pdf.

actionable. Furthermore, it is crucial to identify and define clear financing and technology gaps that hinder the modernization of regional developing economies. By addressing these gaps, countries can enhance their capacity to implement effective climate actions while ensuring that their nationally determined contributions are aligned with global climate goals. Such an alignment not only supports the overarching objectives set out in the Paris Agreement but also fosters sustainable development by promoting resilience and adaptation strategies tailored to national circumstances. As countries prepare for third-generation nationally determined contributions submissions in 2025, a coordinated effort to integrate these elements will be vital in driving meaningful progress toward a low-emission future.

29. Key recommendations to enhance sector-based emission reduction targets in upcoming nationally determined contributions include the following:

(a) *Integrate urban considerations*. Given that cities are responsible for a significant portion of greenhouse gas emissions, nationally determined contributions should explicitly incorporate urban-specific strategies, including setting ambitious targets for sectors such as transportation, energy, waste management and urban planning;

(b) *Strengthen sector-based targets*. Countries should further enhance their national greenhouse gas emission inventory frameworks to include well-defined sectoral emissions at the city level. Doing so will help to establish clear, measurable sector-based emission reduction targets within their nationally determined contributions. As a result, local governments will be able to develop their own emission transparency and reporting frameworks to facilitate the implementation of city-tailored strategies that address their unique challenges and opportunities;

(c) *Enhance financial mechanisms*. It is crucial to develop and mobilize innovative financing mechanisms that support local governments in achieving their sector-based targets. Efforts may include establishing dedicated climate funds and public-private partnerships and leveraging international climate finance;

(d) *Promote capacity-building*. Regional cooperation should focus on capacity-building initiatives that equip local governments with the necessary skills and resources to implement effective climate policies. Examples include training programmes, knowledge-sharing and technical assistance tailored to sector-specific needs;

(e) *Facilitate data collection and monitoring*. Establishing robust data collection and monitoring systems will be essential for tracking progress towards emission reduction targets. Countries should invest in technologies and methodologies that enhance transparency and accountability in reporting emissions;

(f) *Encourage multilevel governance*. Strengthening coordination among national, regional and local governments is vital to the effective implementation of nationally determined contributions. This can be achieved by fostering collaborative frameworks that facilitate communication, resource-sharing and joint action across different levels of governance;

(g) *Leverage regional cooperation*. Countries should engage in regional partnerships to share best practices, experiences and lessons learned in sector-based climate action. Collaborative efforts can enhance the collective capacity to address common challenges and accelerate progress towards meeting commitments related to nationally determined contributions.

30. Local urban actions in Asia and the Pacific have led to significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. For instance, some cities, including Yokohama, Japan, have adopted comprehensive energy management systems, resulting in a substantial decrease in energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. In Shanghai, China, efforts have been focused on improving public transportation and promoting electric vehicles. The city has expanded its transport system and introduced incentives for electric vehicle adoption, leading to a decrease in emissions from the transportation sector. The development of a 6.5-kilometre elevated bike lane in Beijing has encouraged 23 per cent of commuters to shift away from driving as their primary transport mode, which has eased congestion between dense residential and office districts, thus promoting non-motorized transport as an emission-free transport alternative. Meanwhile, collaborative actions from all sectors of society have helped to turn Panaji, India, into a zero-waste city, which has resulted in an overall decrease in emissions. In Thailand, the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration has introduced the Green Bangkok 2030 initiative, which is aimed at increasing green spaces and promoting sustainable urban development. Efforts include planting trees, creating parks and enhancing public transportation, which all contribute to lower greenhouse gas emissions.

31. Regional initiatives for supporting the implementation of nationally determined contributions in Asia and the Pacific have made strides, but gaps persist. An assessment carried out by ESCAP, the United Nations Environment Programme and the Greenwerk has revealed that financing the implementation of nationally determined contributions remains a significant weakness, with less than 25 per cent of countries having sufficient financial frameworks in place.[13] Targeted support for the implementation of nationally determined contributions at the local level is required to address the challenges in attaining the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals.

32. Following consultations with development partners within and outside the United Nations system and with city networks, including the Asia-Pacific Localization Partnership for Sustainable Cities, it has been proposed that a regional urban initiative be launched to support national and local governments in implementing their nationally determined contributions. The initiative would provide local governments with technical assistance to address common challenges in localizing nationally determined contributions, including inadequate financial resources, limited technical capacities and insufficient data. It would strengthen the integration of nationally determined contributions into local development and investment strategies by enhancing the enabling conditions, including in terms of local sources of climate finance. The importance of such an initiative lies in its potential to foster regional collaboration to scale up action, build capacity and raise the funding necessary for the local implementation of nationally determined contributions, thereby accelerating the translation to low-carbon, resilient urban development.

33. The key objectives of the proposed initiative are the following:

(a) To facilitate regional cooperation through a multi-stakeholder network for the local implementation of third-generation nationally determined contributions;

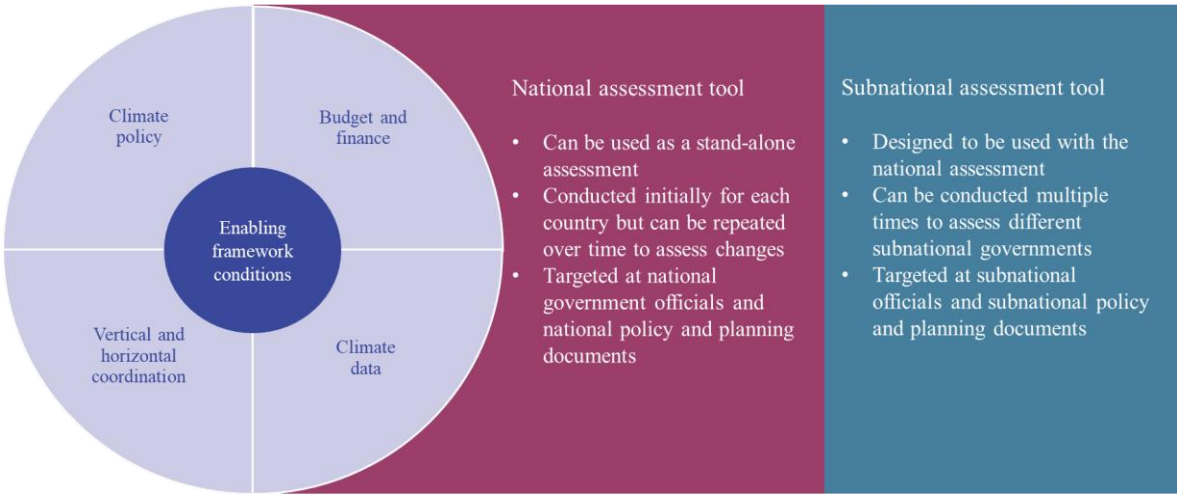
[13] ESCAP, United Nations Environment Programme and the Greenwerk, “Progress of NDC implementation in Asia-Pacific: methodological framework and preliminary findings”, 2020.

(b) To enhance the environment for enabling national Governments to support the localization of nationally determined contributions in urban areas;

(c) To provide technical guidance to subnational governments and cities for the mobilization of market-ready project concepts and financial resources for investments aligned with their third-generation nationally determined contributions.

34. Moreover, the initiative would support the carrying out of further assessments, strengthen existing capacities, address gaps and leverage opportunities in the implementation of third-generation nationally determined contributions in urban areas. The ESCAP secretariat has recently developed tools for use at the national and subnational levels with support from the German Agency for International Cooperation, the Cities Climate Finance Leadership Alliance and United Cities and Local Governments Asia-Pacific (see figure V). The tools, which have been piloted in India and Indonesia, are aimed at assessing whether frameworks exist for enabling climate finance in urban areas. The provision of such assistance in other countries in the region would strengthen capacities to plan and implement comprehensive actions through feasible and bankable project concepts.

Figure V
Overview of tools to assess national and subnational enabling framework conditions to access climate finance



35. The ESCAP secretariat has also developed training courses with academic institutions in the region designed for national and local government officials and relevant stakeholders on multilevel climate action, project planning, financing and implementation. Workshops, seminars and knowledge products targeted specifically at enhancing the implementation of third-generation nationally determined contributions by improving project feasibility could be conducted.

36. The proposed initiative could strengthen these existing knowledge platforms supported by the secretariat to promote regional cooperation by compiling and sharing practices and lessons learned from cities that have successfully localized their respective nationally determined contributions. A repository of that information will be accessible to all participating cities and will serve as a valuable resource for guiding future actions and policies. The network could also report, track progress and share information on the impact

of actions taken to implement nationally determined contributions in Asia-Pacific cities.

37. A regional advisory group comprising representatives from participating member States, city networks, international financial institutions and universities could be involved in supporting the development and operation of activities. The initiative will be supported through voluntary contributions from member States, development partners and cities.

38. Partnerships will play a crucial role in the initiative, leveraging synergies and avoiding duplication of efforts by collaborating with existing networks and initiatives, including the Asia-Pacific Localization Partnership for Sustainable Cities, the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, the Nationally Determined Contributions Partnership and the Regional Pacific Nationally Determined Contributions Hub.

39. A whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to climate action is needed. As the Asia-Pacific region watches ever more people moving to urban centres, it will become increasingly urgent to adopt an integrated approach to policy planning and implementation in support of climate-sensitive urban development. Ensuring that nationally determined contributions have a strong urban content and are implemented at the subnational and local levels is important for attracting financial support from all stakeholders and for realizing a climate change-resilient urban future in Asia and the Pacific.

V. Issues for consideration by the Commission

40. The Commission may wish to take note of the recommendations contained in the present document and advise on the future work of the secretariat, including with respect to the proposed initiative for translating the nationally determined contributions into city-implemented action plans.

41. The Commission may also wish to provide guidance on strengthening the secretariat’s work on technical cooperation and partnerships to implement sustainable urban development and localize climate action for better integration of urban components into national climate strategies.

42. Members and associate members are invited to share their suggestions for enhancing regional cooperation to strengthen the capacity of cities to translate the national climate strategies into city-level action plans to realize the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda.