



This review of the Paris Agreement is part of an analysis commissioned to IIED by Cities Alliance that aims to help a range of urban development actors understand how six global agreements can support the advancement of sustainable urban development.



## The Paris Agreement

[The Paris Agreement](#) was endorsed by the 196 national governments who form the Conference of Parties (COP) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in December 2015. It commits to holding the increase in global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels. The COP set a collective quantified goal of at least USD 100 billion per year for mitigation and adaptation, which makes it the only one of the six agreements to have a strong commitment to large-scale international funding.

It shows linkages to other agreements, notably the Sendai Framework, as underlying elements of vulnerability for disaster risk reduction are equally critical for understanding the risks faced from climate change.

The Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda fit coherently together, as the SDGs strongly endorse the need to take “urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts” (SDG 13) and acknowledge that the UNFCCC is “the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change.”

Yet, it does not consider the linkages between the many SDGs and needed climate change action, especially around adaptation. For instance, dangerous climate change will impede attempts to end poverty and hunger, achieve food security, and ensure healthy lives (SDGs 1-3). It will also hinder universal provision for basic services (SDG 4, 6 and 7) and making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (SDG 11).

The Paris Agreement largely focuses on the role of national governments to act on climate change adaptation and mitigation goals, in part because of the need for national level policies, practices and funding, and because these are the parties who negotiated and signed the agreement. While it recognises the importance of sub-national and non-state actors numerous times in the text, there are few references to their specific responsibilities, capacities, governmental nature, or needs for support.

Each country has developed a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) which outlines the national plans for emission reductions and, in many cases, adaptation needs and plans. Although many sectors targeted for mitigation across NDCs relate to cities and urban development (i.e. transport, energy, waste), not all NDCs explicitly recognise the role of cities or the attention to urban areas. A recent UN-Habitat study found that 110 NDCs had some references to urban, however, not all are in-depth. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many cities are not aware of the NDCs and do not feel a need to relate local climate change efforts to NDCs.

## Strengths

The Paris Agreement and the COP processes have encouraged cities and networks of cities to develop specific agendas for action. The C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group requires its 90+ members to have a plan to deliver their contributions towards keeping global temperature rise below 1.5 degrees and advises how this can be done. At COP23, 25 mayors pledged to develop and implement ambitious climate plans before the end of 2020 to deliver emissions neutral and climate resilient cities by 2050. The “We Are Still In” Campaign in the United States includes almost 250 cities and counties that are committed to meeting the agreement’s goals.

The carbonn Climate Registry (cCR) is a global reporting platform for cities, towns and regions addressing climate change. It allows for exchange, learning and benchmarking among its 950+ registered entities, while providing data that feeds into global climate negotiations through *ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability* as a focal point for the Local Governments and Municipal Authorities constituency.

Global efforts to support climate change adaptation are less comprehensive, but the Durban Adaptation Charter (initially signed at COP17 in 2011) is a commitment by local governments to assist communities to respond to and cope with climate change risks and has 1,082 signatories.

## Challenges

Overall, there are still major barriers to implementation of the Paris Agreement. A large problem is that the commitments to curb greenhouse gas emissions are not legally binding, and there are no sanctions for governments that flout the goals. At the local level, limited capacities of many local governments pose difficulties, and there is a need for new funding sources because of the high costs of achieving low-carbon and resilient urban development. In addition, the focus on global goals for mitigation – which do not bring immediate benefits to the country, region or cities where they are being implemented – can mean less local support.

Many actions that contribute to urban resilience also relate directly to a range of other city priorities. Addressing urban development concerns – particularly around safe, affordable housing with good quality infrastructure and services – is perhaps the single most effective approach to building the resilience of low-income groups. The challenge here is to ensure that climate finance recognises the validity of urban development, particularly the upgrading of informal settlements, as a critical component of meeting the Paris Agreement commitments.