



PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Statement

by

Ms. Tatiana Molcean

**United Nations Under-Secretary-General
Executive Secretary
of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**

at

Local Action, Global Goals: UN support towards cities in the NDCs

14 November 2024

11:30 – 13:00

Excellencies,
Distinguished Speakers,
Dear Colleagues,

It is a pleasure to be here. Thank you very much to UN-Habitat and all our partners for the invitation to join you today.

Cities are on the frontline of climate action. They are not just a major source of emissions. They are also where most of us live... where our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren will live. Cities are already suffering from climate change. From floods to drought to extreme heat, the human, environmental and economic toll continues to increase.

Therefore, **we must urgently deliver the Paris agreement at scale, both in cities and for cities.** Yet:

- The Paris Agreement is an agreement among countries.
- The intergovernmental and financial architecture for its implementation focuses on countries.

It is thus critical that we adequately reflect urban issues in Nationally Determined Contributions. To do this, we must **systematically align policy and action across sectors and from the national to the local level** to deliver at scale.

Local governments have a unique ability to develop and deliver integrated solutions to complex problems. Yet national governments play a foundational role to drive, align and support local action. They can develop national policy and planning frameworks, together with funding and technical support also and include subnational governments.

And the international community must support this essential work – which is what we do at UNECE.

- We work with countries to develop policies, plans and capacity for multilevel action. Local governments are key partners.
- We create housing and land management profiles that support countries in implementing effective urban policies and solutions.
- We develop smart and sustainable city profiles to help cities identify focus areas to boost overall efficiency, including energy efficiency and climate neutrality.
- Each year, we convene mayors at the Forum of Mayors, providing a platform to exchange best practices, strengthen networks, and collaborate on advancing urban sustainability."

We work on direct climate action through nature-based solutions, greener, more trees, more forests in and around cities: To counterbalance the effects of climate change, to cool cities, reduce flood risk, and increase biodiversity.

While all these benefits and action far outweigh the costs, and can deliver national and global goals, most cities need more support to deliver this climate and SDG solution.

- The UNECE Trees in Cities Challenge, has engaged mayors from nearly 100 cities to make and implement tree planting pledges of over 19 million trees in 5 years.
 - **The lessons from these trailblazing cities can provide critical insights to strengthen national policy, planning and action and NDC integration mechanisms.**
-

- This is also why, at COP28, **UNECE launched the Trees in Dry Cities Coalition** with partners from around the world, to support multilevel efforts to deliver trees in cities.
- **And very importantly, we are preparing cities to better integrate urban trees and nature into national policy and NDCs.**

Esteemed colleagues,

Before closing, I must also **highlight the need for finance.**

- Local governments need more support, yet **the climate finance architecture so far remains a cumbersome and incomplete solution.**
- **Private finance** will play a role. Indeed, we cannot deliver the Paris Agreement without the private sector.
- But we also cannot deliver our global goals without **public finance.**

We need to urgently scale up **grant and concessional support for national and local investment** in public goods.

- For example, we cannot effectively deliver nature-based climate action such as trees in cities without public finance.
- It would be **essential to see increased support from climate finance institutions to develop policies, plan and deliver these critical public goods in cities.**

This type of work is where the UN system excels and remains a committed partner.

I am very glad that today we are coming together among mayors, ministers,

bankers and global experts.

- **The insights we will hear on integrating urban matters into NDCs, and addressing gaps, can guide our collective efforts going forward.**
- We are eager to work with all of you.
- The challenges we and our cities face are significant, but so is our potential to overcome them. By working together, we can create a more sustainable, equitable, and just world. **Let's commit to taking action, big or small, to make a positive impact.**

Thank you.
