

## C40 URBAN NATURE<sup>1</sup> DECLARATION

### Making our Cities Greener and More Resilient

Nature breathes life into cities. Cultivating and caring for urban nature creates opportunities for healthy and sustainable livelihoods, from improving our physical and mental health to bettering employment and economic outcomes. Ensuring that communities have access to green and blue spaces and nature, especially those who are vulnerable or marginalized, is important to secure the many benefits nature provides to those that need it most. Urban nature also acts as habitats for wider ecosystems, creates biodiversity corridors for other forms of life, and provides space for urban communities to connect and find recreation.

**We are in the midst of a climate emergency, exacerbated by the health, water, food and economic crises, that requires bold, urgent action.** Nature in cities serves as a natural buffer and regulator of climate impacts and protects urban residents and city infrastructure from extreme heat, flood, drought, sea level risk or storms. Designing and deploying natural solutions that create an equilibrium with changing and future climate conditions will be critical to our cities' resilience and our planet's future. These solutions protect, restore and manage ecosystems in ways that also benefit humans.

As noted in the C40 Mayors' Agenda for a Green and Just Recovery, **we must build with nature** as we recover from COVID-19<sup>2</sup>, and **ensure those natural spaces are accessible to all**. Given that urban development has replaced several natural spaces, mayors and city governments are becoming more aware that solutions that are inspired and supported by nature, and which mimic natural processes can provide ecosystem services<sup>3</sup> and multiple benefits to communities.

By signing the C40 Urban Nature Declaration, C40 mayors are committing to establish ambitious nature targets to achieve climate resilience and create an agenda for people and nature to support one another. The Declaration commitments provide a set of quantifiable pathways to achieve these targets and build upon established motivations and aspirations<sup>4</sup> to further preserve and foster both nature and biodiversity. Incorporating nature into cities through the enhancement and expansion of green and blue spaces<sup>5</sup> can take many forms such as: tree canopy, green streetscaping; gardens and green roofs; urban parks, forests; urban farms; wetlands; estuaries; naturalized coastlines, hills, ponds, lakes streams and riversides. When designed and delivered in an inclusive way, these spaces provide not only significant and measurable benefits to communities, but are also crucial in adapting our cities to a changing climate.

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<sup>1</sup> The term "Nature" has been used in the Declaration text for document accessibility as the term "nature-based solutions" is not universally defined. It refers to both human-made and naturally occurring green and blue infrastructure.

<sup>2</sup> Emerging infectious diseases similar to COVID-19, particularly, are linked to deforestation and habitat-loss pushing wildlife into closer contact with human settlements

(<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/forest-loss-diseases-covid19-coronavirus-deforestation-health>).

<sup>3</sup> Benefits people obtain from ecosystems. These include provisioning services such as food and water; regulating services such as regulation of floods, drought, land degradation, and disease; supporting services such as soil formation and nutrient cycling; and cultural services such as recreational, spiritual, religious and other non-material benefits. (Hassan R, Scholes R, Ash N (eds) (2005) Millenium Ecosystem Assessment: Ecosystems and Human Wellbeing, Volume 1, Current State and Trends. Island Press, Washington).

<sup>4</sup> Examples include the UN Leaders' Pledge for Nature, CitiesWithNature (ICLEI), Cities4Forests (WRI), New Deal for Nature and People (WWF), and Nature4Climate (IUCN).

<sup>5</sup> The Nature Declaration defines "green space" as all urban land covered by vegetation of any kind. This covers vegetation on private and public grounds, irrespective of size and function and is commonly applied to all open natural and semi-natural areas in built areas; and can also include water bodies such as ponds, lakes or streams (i.e. "blue spaces").

## OBJECTIVES

The C40 Urban Nature Declaration will amplify and support the delivery of urban nature by setting greening targets and accelerating actions focused on delivering solutions for equitable climate resilience, building an inclusive economy and ensuring healthy communities — setting cities on a pathway where people and nature support one another.

The importance of nature and its ecosystem services for addressing the interlinked food, climate, and health crises, and to provide mitigation and resilience to climate change, while also helping cities to prevent and recover from disasters has never been clearer. **The objectives of this declaration are to set inclusive and equitable targets to develop living, climate-ready, and crisis-prepared cities.**

- **Living Cities:** Cultivating and caring for urban nature to create socio-economic opportunities and ensure that community health is improved through equitable accessibility to the many benefits nature provides and ensuring resource security.
- **Climate-ready cities:** Maximising and protecting nature to make cities more resilient, by protecting them from extreme weather events and changing climates, helping to mitigate climate risks.
- **Crisis-prepared cities:** Transferring learnings of addressing city shocks and stresses to redesign our climate responses by building with nature and mimicking its regenerative design as we recover from Covid-19.

## COMMITMENT & PATHWAYS

**To protect our communities from climate risk and help meet the goals of the Paris Agreement while improving overall health and wellbeing, our cities pledge to increase and enhance nature in our urban environments that reduces climate risk and vulnerability, supports wider ecosystem services, and is equitably distributed and publicly accessible, by 2030.** With increased global research and recognition of the significant benefits of adaptation measures that mimic and complement nature, our commitments to tackle these challenges are being incorporated into climate action plans (CAPs). We will fulfil this pledge in accordance with one, or both, of the following pathways<sup>6</sup> :

### PATHWAY 1 QUALITY TOTAL COVER

#### Heat & Water related risk



**30-40%** of the total built-up city surface area is:

a.) **Green spaces** (e.g., street trees & urban forests, parks, building integrated vegetation)

**and/ or**

b.) **Permeable spaces** (e.g., pavements, infiltration trenches, swales, detention basins, regenerative urban agriculture)

Which favours protecting and restoring **biodiverse and climate resilient ecosystems**

### PATHWAY 2 EQUITABLE SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION

#### Accessibility and connectivity



**70%** of the city population has access to a fit for purpose green or blue space within **15 minutes**<sup>7</sup> – equitably prioritised to maximise accessibility and connectivity to nature for the most vulnerable

<sup>6</sup> Towards achieving the pathways, signatories should maximise the environmental quality of their interventions by not only focussing on the total cover or spatial distribution, but on how they can incorporate biological diversity to reduce climate risks.

<sup>7</sup> Based on UN-Habitat public open spaces categorization-this approximates to walking a 1.2km Euclidean distance.

As milestones of our progress toward this 10 year goal:

**Within two years, we commit to:**

- Make our nature goals public, develop support and skills building programmes for green jobs<sup>8</sup>, and develop a process for involving vulnerable and marginalized communities in design and implementation and monitoring of our nature targets.
- Map our current and expected climate risks and vulnerability, and set ambitious targets to restore, conserve and increase equitable access to nature in line with our city climate action plans to strengthen our communities’ resilience, and ensure our cities are climate ready by 2030<sup>9</sup>.
- Conduct a gap analysis and mapping of where new greening is needed and opportunities for existing green spaces to be upgraded to respond to local needs.
- Significantly accelerate action to address governance barriers to implementation, and mobilize access to investments and resources that support the Declaration targets; this includes sharing approaches and learnings in recognising funding and governance mechanisms for delivering urban nature solutions.
- Publicly report annually on our progress towards a) reducing climate risks and injustices for each of our city’s targets and, b) achieving the commitments in this declaration<sup>10</sup>.

**Within five years, we commit to:**

- Implement new or enhanced public green spaces and green streetscapes, in areas with the greatest impact<sup>11</sup> for the most vulnerable, towards achieving at least 50% of the 2030 target.
- Complete a baseline natural vegetation inventory and undertake natural capital accounting to raise awareness of the associated value of urban nature with particular emphasis on climate hazard risk reduction<sup>12</sup>.
- Develop new inclusive governance frameworks, practices and programmes<sup>13</sup> to a) mandate or incentivize both the private sector (residents, businesses and institutions) and link sectors within public services; and b) increase and enhance natural solutions, in our urban form, buildings and infrastructure design, that provide direct human, ecosystem and climate services towards achieving the 2030 target.
- Update our climate action plan adaptation actions to reflect our ambitious nature targets<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> According to WWF (2020) some 1.2 billion jobs in sectors such as farming, fisheries, forestry and tourism are dependent on the effective management and sustainability of healthy ecosystems. Nature-based Solutions offer an opportunity to create immediate “no harm” jobs, while at the same time supporting a transition to a greener and job-rich economy.

<sup>9</sup>It is proposed for cities that have already completed their climate action plans to include a supporting nature appendix within two years.

<sup>10</sup>Reporting, which should include equity assessments, includes mapping the impact of the reductions of climate risks and injustices.

<sup>11</sup> Impact areas include environmental, socio-economic, lifestyle and cultural impacts.

<sup>12</sup> Inventory will be monitored and periodically updated; and overlaid with climate risk/vulnerability maps.

<sup>13</sup> Examples include building codes, land use policies, regulatory guidelines, community benefits ordinances and supporting programmes etc.

<sup>14</sup> Nature pathways being considered should either be added to their Climate Action Plans, or added as an addendum to be formally included in the next update.