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Contact:

media@c40.org

31 Mayors Introduce Even More Trees, Parks and Green Space in Cities to Save Lives and Tackle the Climate Crisis

Mayors sign C40's Urban Nature Declaration, committing further big investments in urban nature to protect cities from the impacts of climate change and ensure everyone has access to green spaces.

Cities acting now by signing the Declaration are Athens, Austin, Barcelona, Berlin, Bogotá, Buenos Aires, Copenhagen, Curitiba, Durban, Freetown, Guadalajara, Haifa, Lima, London, Los Angeles, Medellín, Milan, Mumbai, New Orleans, Paris, Quezon City, Rio de Janeiro, Rome, Rotterdam, Salvador, Seattle, Stockholm, Sydney, Tel Aviv, Tokyo and Toronto.

London, UK (13 July 2021) – 31 of the world's great cities will be significantly greener in the years ahead, as leading mayors have committed to further expand, restore and protect urban parks, trees, gardens, ponds, and lakes within their cities. These investments in nature will speed up existing efforts to make communities healthier, improve air quality and help protect cities from the increasingly severe impacts of the climate crisis, such as extreme heat, flooding and drought.

The targets set by cities signing the C40 Urban Nature Declaration will see huge increases in public green and blue spaces. In Durban (eThekweni) work has already begun to complete a [Transformative Riverine Management Programme](#) to improve the city's rivers, which will improve resilience and create thousands of green jobs. Barcelona will subsidise [75% of the cost](#) of new green rooftops, creating urban allotments and providing space for renewable energy generation, rainwater collection and composting for organic waste.

In [Guadalajara](#), 67,000 new trees will be planted across 70 green corridors, and over 50 new public gardens will be introduced to cool down the city and provide shade and leisure space. The city is funding courses to train gardeners and tree technicians, and providing 400 workshops for residents on caring for trees and gardens.

Under Toronto's [Urban Forests Grants and Incentives programme](#) over 13,000 trees and shrubs will be planted, educating and engaging communities through planting events, educational workshops and youth programming. In Mumbai, the

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Maharashtra government is making amendments to the 'Tree Act' to protect and conserve old trees and prevent felling of trees, whilst protecting even more mangrove trees than the [9,800 hectares](#) given the status of 'Reserved Forest' in just the last year.

These actions are part of C40 mayors' continued efforts to deliver a green and just recovery from COVID-19.

Cities signing C40's Urban Nature declaration are addressing heat- and water-related risk, ensuring that by 2030, 30-40% of total built-up city surface area will consist of green spaces such as street trees, urban forests and parks; or permeable spaces such as sustainable urban drainage systems and pavements designed to absorb water and prevent flooding. Cities will also focus on promoting accessibility and connectivity for vulnerable communities, ensuring that 70% of the city population has access to green or blue public spaces within a 15-minute walk or bike ride by 2030.

Further details of the commitments made by mayors today can be found [here](#).

Study after study shows equitable access to urban nature is beneficial for both people and the environment; and helps cities to adapt and respond to the current and future impacts of climate change. In Medellín, temperatures have reduced by 2°C as a result of planting more than 10,000 trees for the city's [Green Corridors](#) project. A [study](#) in Toronto, Canada, found that adding just 10 trees to a city block has a huge impact on people's perceptions of their health and well-being, equivalent to the effect of earning \$10,000 more per household or being 7 years younger. [Researchers](#) in Portland, Oregon found the city's urban trees cut nitrogen dioxide levels resulting in significantly fewer respiratory problems, valued at \$7 million in health care savings annually. In Durban, 300 green jobs were created with the ecosystem restoration of [3,000 hectares](#), and in Buenos Aires, the regenerated [Lago Lugano nature reserve](#), formerly the site of a landfill, is now home to over 200 plant species and 99 bird species. It is a natural reservoir to mitigate flood risk and has created jobs and an educational centre for visiting school groups.

As greenhouse gas emissions temperatures and sea levels all continue to rise globally, it has never been more urgent to accelerate efforts to bring nature into cities. [By 2050](#), over 570 cities will be vulnerable to sea-level rise, over 500 cities will be vulnerable to water availability, and over 970 cities will be vulnerable to extreme heat.

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“Supporting and protecting cities’ natural ecosystems is one of our most important tools for building resiliency against the climate crisis and creating the healthy, inclusive urban communities we deserve,” said **Mark Watts, C40 Cities Executive Director**. “Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we were reminded that accessible, green spaces are essential for livable, climate ready and crisis prepared cities. As we seek to deliver a green and just recovery, investing in and implementing nature-based climate solutions will be imperative to public health and well-being, as well as the success of global efforts to tackle the climate crisis. The C40 Urban Nature Declaration is yet another example of city leaders acting now to secure the transformations needed for a better future.”

“Growing our urban forests and restoring our natural ecosystems are vital to the health of our cities – bringing cooler temperatures, cleaning our air, and making our communities more beautiful,” said **C40 Chair and Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti**. “The C40 Urban Nature Declaration is a reminder of the obligation we have to restore the natural world around us, and an example of how Mayors are leading with climate solutions that strengthen communities hit hardest by the climate emergency.”

“Freetown the Treetown is our city's ambitious plan to plant and grow one million trees over two rainy seasons. But we’re not only planting them, we’re growing them - which means we’re monitoring their growth, and bringing new life to our hillsides and mangrove forested areas,” **Freetown Mayor Yvonne Aki-Sawyer** said. “A million trees will not fix climate change, but it will reduce flooding and landslides. It will ensure that we bring back biodiversity into our cities - and really make a significant impact.”

Aaditya Uddhav Thackeray, Minister for Environment & Climate Change, Guardian Minister for Mumbai Suburban said, “Climate change is the greatest inequity - the ones least responsible are most affected. I am certain that Mumbai will be a shining example of how diverse ecosystems can thrive in urban environments to achieve inclusive climate resilience for all.”

C40 mayors have been leading the charge towards a green and just recovery from the pandemic. The [Global Mayors COVID-19 Recovery Task Force](#) was formed in March 2020 - a coalition of mayors driving forward a green and just recovery capable of tackling the present public health, climate and economic crises, and calling on national governments to follow their lead. The C40 Mayors’ Agenda for a Green and Just Recovery highlights the importance of building with nature and ensuring those spaces are accessible to all.

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LaToya Cantrell, Mayor of New Orleans, said:

“I am proud to join my fellow C40 mayors in pledging to increase green space and green infrastructure in our cities. Investing in nature-based infrastructure improvements has long been a focus of my administration’s adaptation strategy. This is an example of how we are playing to our strengths, using our natural climate to our advantage instead of trying to fight it. We are committed to better managing stormwater and providing our residents with equitable access to green space.”

Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, said:

“In my first term as Mayor we made huge strides in increasing and protecting our city’s green spaces and secured London’s status as the world’s first National Park City. However, in the face of the ongoing climate and ecological emergencies I want to go much further and faster.

“This is why I have put protecting, restoring and increasing London’s natural green spaces at the heart of my plans for a green recovery, creating a healthier more resilient city where everyone has access to a green space. This includes continuing to work to fulfil my ambitious manifesto pledge that no Londoner should be more than 10 minutes away from a green space.

“In the year of the biodiversity and climate COPs I am pleased to join other C40 mayors in committing to this declaration to using nature-based solutions to solve challenges our cities face”.

Eduardo Fabian Martínez Lomelí, Mayor of Guadalajara, said:

“In Guadalajara, we have placed nature among our main interests in our public policies, understanding the impacts of climate change in our lives and mainly, the global responsibility that we share on taking care of the environment.”

Lars Weiss, Lord Mayor of Copenhagen, said:

“Our cities have many valuable green areas such as parks, nature areas and private and public green spaces and gardens. In Copenhagen we are dedicated to ensure that the development of the city preserves and improves these valuable green areas. Urban nature benefits citizens' quality of life, biodiversity and helps to adapt the city to the climate of the future.”

Anna König Jerlmyr, Mayor of Stockholm, said:

“To safeguard and secure the biodiversity in the City of Stockholm we need a strategic approach. As part of the City of Stockholm’s systematic work to be a resilient, green and healthy city I am therefore proud to be signing the C40 Urban Nature Declaration. The signing of the declaration is one way to show how Stockholm will fulfil our goals on biodiversity under our city's Environment Programme as well as national targets and several of the UN development goals under Agenda2030.”

John Tory, Mayor of Toronto, said:

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"Urban nature has never been more important. During the pandemic of the past year and a half, urban residents the world over have sought out and embraced urban nature more than ever. Every park, ravine and waterfront greenspace in Toronto has drawn more visitors than before, benefitting our physical and mental health. Toronto residents have a wealth of urban nature – almost half of Toronto's parkland system is natural parkland. However, not all communities have equal opportunities to access and benefit from green spaces and nature. Now is the time to renew our commitment to the design and protection of our green spaces and to do so in a way that supports green jobs and involves vulnerable and marginalized communities."

Daniel Quintero Calle, Mayor of Medellín, said:

"We are committed to nature, which is why in our Development Plan 2020 - 2023 "Medellín Futuro" we invite you to work together to make Medellín an Eco-city, increasing the green space per inhabitant and the number of trees in urban areas and building a cleaner and more inclusive human mobility. We act with intelligence and forcefulness to prevent periods of environmental crisis and most importantly, we take measures that allow us to overcome these crises. To do this, it is essential that all citizens engage in participation and in the construction of natural environments and the protection of biodiversity, to reduce the impacts of climate change and make our city greener, fairer and more sustainable."

Ahmed Aboutaleb, Mayor of Rotterdam, said:

"In line with this declaration, Rotterdam will realize seven iconic Urban Greening projects, a green riverbank program and a blue-green subsidy scheme. These investments will improve the wellbeing of our citizens, advance biodiversity and help us adapt to severe heat, drought and heavy rain, which each could occur in a short period of time."

Giuseppe Sala, Mayor of Milan, said:

"Since COVID-19 hit cities disproportionately, we have seen an even stronger call by citizens of all ages from across the world for a greener urban space and a healthier environment, with better and safer air, food, and water. The green and just recovery that is needed to create more sustainable and healthier cities sees urban nature as a key element for building back better. In Milan, we are committed to plant 3 million trees by 2030, to use nature-based solutions to increase resilience and protect citizens from the climate crisis, to refresh our neighbourhoods with green areas and water, and to regenerate the urban environment in a sustainable manner. Our commitment is to the people and the planet at once."

Ada Colau, Mayor of Barcelona, said:

"The city of Barcelona is working hard on the challenges posed by the conservation of nature on Earth, climate change and the health of citizens. That is why we have advanced policies already in place, and now endowed with the Pla Natura Barcelona 2030 (Nature Plan). This strategic and participatory instrument defines and plans the objectives and commitments of the municipal government in relation to the increase of city green infrastructure with the conservation of biodiversity, and as already known to citizens - enjoy and improve the urban

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nature and take care of it. With this plan, Barcelona wants to add its contribution to the global challenges of the world's cities "

Yuriko Koike, Governor of Tokyo, said:

"Waterways and greenery in cities are invaluable assets in reducing the effects of climate change and contribute to realizing a relaxed and enriched lifestyle in the new normal. Tokyo will enhance its reputation as a world-class city by increasing the number of parks, green spaces, and other greenery, and by enriching its waterfront. As a vice-chair of C40, I will work hand in hand with cities of the world and stakeholders to advance our initiatives."

Eduardo Paes, Mayor of Rio De Janeiro, said:

"Rio is the natural capital of Brazil. Our iconic mountains, beaches, and bays are celebrated in samba songs that touch deep into the hearts and minds of the world. Our breathtaking landscape is a UNESCO heritage site.

"The urban nature of Rio deserves our best efforts. We will build green corridors, invest and pursue nature-based solutions for infrastructure, regulate and foster carbon markets and green financial solutions while generating green jobs. Both ecology and economy can locate in Rio their home.

"Like no other city, we have been a beacon of hope for global cooperation and local action on climate change, resilience and sustainable development —the spirit of Rio92 and Rio+20 lives. Rio's urban nature - a treasure for humankind - is the passport for a green, equitable future for all 'Cariocas' and for the world."

Dr. Einat Kalisch Rotem, Mayor of Haifa, said:

"The city of Haifa cannot be imagined without its urban nature. This understanding is widely expressed in my vision for the city. We must strengthen nature and preserve it, while adopting new, groundbreaking principles. We do so by creating a green environment using minimal means to cool the climate, and finding alternative ways to grow food in collaboration with the residents. Action plans for renewing neighborhoods take into account the natural structure, the need for shade and a respectful public space, and also sustainable transportation and accessibility.

"We are currently promoting master plans for trees incorporating the natural shading of urban streets, green roofs and urban vegetation, preservation of the Wadis that interface with ridgetop neighborhoods, maintaining local species and rich biodiversity. Hopefully, with combined efforts and shared knowledge between mayors around the world, we will be able to achieve a sustainable solution for universal crises, both at the urban and global levels."

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About the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group

C40 is a network of nearly 100 mayors of the world's leading cities who are working to deliver the urgent action needed right now to confront the climate crisis and create a future where everyone, everywhere can thrive. Mayors of C40 cities are committed to using a science-based and people-focused approach to help the world limit global heating to 1.5°C and build healthy, equitable and resilient communities. Through a Global Green New Deal, mayors are working alongside a broad coalition of representatives from labor, business, the youth climate movement and civil society to go further and faster than ever before. The current Chair of C40 is Mayor of Los Angeles Eric Garcetti; and three-term Mayor of New York City Michael R. Bloomberg serves as President of the Board. C40's work is made possible by our three strategic funders: Bloomberg Philanthropies, Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF), and Realdania.