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C40 Cities announces historic co-chair model, with London and Freetown mayors at the helm

- ***New inclusive co-chair model requires one mayor from the Global North and one from the Global South at the core of C40's leadership***
- ***Mayor of Freetown, Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr is announced co-chair of C40 Cities, alongside Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan***
- ***Mayor Aki-Sawyerr will lead the C40 mayoral delegation at COP28 in Dubai***

9 November, 2023 (FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE) - In a move to champion inclusive global leadership in climate action, C40 Cities has today announced its new co-chair model with Mayor of London Sadiq Khan and Mayor of Freetown Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr as co-chairs of the organisation. As the elected leaders of the C40 organisation, the co-chairs play a key role in raising the bar on climate ambition around the world and advocating for the role of cities in addressing the climate crisis. Mayor Khan requested an updated leadership model to not only represent a commitment to celebrate and uplift the significant contributions of Global South cities in addressing the climate emergency but to enable their voices to be heard.

Mayor Khan who was elected C40 chair in 2021 has consistently prioritised the support for cities in the Global South, which are often most acutely affected by the climate crisis. In September this year, Sadiq was the first UK Mayor to participate in the UN Climate Ambition Summit, recognising cities and particularly London's role as a driving force in accelerating and delivering climate action. As chair of C40, Sadiq oversaw:

- Two thirds of the C40 budget dedicated to accelerating climate action in the Global South.

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- Launched Breathe Cities, a new US\$ 30 million clean air partnership between Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Clean Air Fund, and C40 Cities.
- Expanded C40's air quality work, engaging more cities in the Global South. 50 per cent of all C40 cities are committed to delivering clean air through the Clean Air Accelerator. Approximately 227 million people across the signatory 49 cities will benefit from cleaner air and improved health.
- Launched C40's new Inclusive Climate Action Fund, which will provide resources to cities to pilot and drive forward fair and inclusive climate action.
- At the World Mayors Summit in Buenos Aires, united C40 mayors to drive the creation of 50 million good, green jobs by the end of the decade.

Freetown became a member of C40 Cities in 2019. Mayor Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr has been a vocal supporter of the [Global Green New Deal](#), launched at the C40 World Mayors Summit in Copenhagen as a solution to tackle inequality and the climate crisis together. Freetown has committed to planting and growing 1 million trees to build resilience against flooding and absorb carbon dioxide. In 2019 Mayor Aki-Sawyerr, launched the Transform Freetown plan, a three-year vision for the development of the city. It aims to work with residents to address a range of issues from waste management and job creation, to improving urban mobility and tackling environmental degradation.

Mayor Aki-Sawyerr is committed to advancing multilateral action, expanding the influence of city leaders, ensuring financial investments for climate action, and actively engaging the youth for a more sustainable future. Recognising the importance of Global South voices in the fight against the climate emergency, newly elected co-chair Mayor Aki-Sawyerr will be leading the C40 mayoral delegation to COP28 in Dubai.

Mayor of London and C40 Co-Chair, Sadiq Khan, said: "Cities are leading the way when it comes to tackling the climate emergency and I am committed to doing more to empower cities in the Global South, which are on the frontline – facing the worst consequences of the climate crisis. The co-chair model is a milestone in our commitment to engaging and elevating Global South cities. Working alongside Mayor Aki-Sawyerr, I will amplify the significant roles cities across the world play in global climate action initiatives."

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Mayor of Freetown and C40 Co-Chair, Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr, said: "I would like to take the opportunity to thank Mayor Khan for his leadership over the last two years and the leaders of other C40 cities for their solidarity and support in addressing the climate emergency. It's crucial that the voices of Global South cities are heard and considered in climate action planning. As co-chair, I'm dedicated to ensuring our perspectives and needs are not just included, but prioritised, and these priorities form the foundation of our shared mission."

UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Climate Ambition and Solutions, President of the C40 Board, and 108th Mayor of New York City, Michael R. Bloomberg said: "Tackling climate change effectively requires greater collaboration between local leaders in the global north and south, and our new co-chair model will help foster it. As COP28 and the Local Climate Action Summit approach, I look forward to working with Mayors Khan and Aki-Sawyerr to help C40 cities do more, faster."

Since his time as mayor in New York City from 2002-2013, Bloomberg has elevated the role of mayors and local leaders in the global climate fight. In 2007 - the same year he launched the groundbreaking PlaNYC effort to cut greenhouse gas emissions and create a more sustainable, livable New York - Bloomberg hosted the second C40 Summit, bringing together mayors from major global cities alongside business, and civil society. In 2010, Bloomberg was elected Chair of C40 during which he pioneered C40's data driven approach and continued working to expand C40's impact in the global climate fight. In 2011, Bloomberg Philanthropies began supporting C40, bringing significant resources and infrastructure to create a preeminent global climate action organisation. Bloomberg assumed his current role as President of C40's Board in 2013, and over the last decade has helped elevate and turbocharge the climate work of cities and the critical role mayors play in helping nations meet ambitious climate goals.

Mayor of Rio de Janeiro and a former C40 chair, Eduardo Paes said: "I commend C40 for taking a bold step in establishing this co-chair system. Recognising the importance of Global South cities is a testament to C40's commitment to truly inclusive global climate action. I look forward to supporting Mayors Khan and Aki-Sawyerr in transitioning cities from a diverse and truly global perspective towards a greener and healthier future."

Mayor Eduardo Paes became the first C40 Chair from the Global South in 2014, and oversaw the addition of Global South cities to C40's ranks – growing to represent more than 50% of C40's membership during his tenure. In 2015, Mayor Paes announced his city's full compliance with the Compact of Mayors (now the

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Global Covenant of Mayors), making it the first city in the world to reach the Compact compliance milestone. In the same year, at the pivotal UN Climate Change Conference in Paris (COP21), Mayor Paes passed the baton to Paris Anne Hidalgo—the first woman to hold this position—and together, they introduced C40's flagship Deadline 2020 programme.

C40 Cities Executive Director, Mark Watts, said: “I am delighted to announce the historic co-chair model and welcome Mayor Aki-Sawyerr as C40's new co-chair. Mayors Khan and Aki-Sawyerr leading together represents a dynamic and inclusive approach to climate leadership. As mayor of Freetown, Mayor Aki-Sawyerr has driven initiatives such as planting more than 500,000 trees and launching the Transform Freetown plan to create jobs and make the city greener and more liveable, as well as engaging with youth to build resilience in the city. If we are to succeed in keeping global heating to 1.5 degrees, starting with halving global emissions by 2030, action based leadership is essential.”

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NOTES TO EDITORS

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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 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. We work alongside a broad coalition of representatives from labour, business, the youth climate movement and civil society to support mayors to halve emissions by 2030 and help phase out fossil use while increasing urban climate resilience and equity.

The current co-chairs of C40 are Mayor Sadiq Khan of London, United Kingdom, and Mayor Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr of Freetown, Sierra Leone; 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 and Realdania.

To learn more about the work of C40 and our cities, please visit [our website](#) or follow us on [X](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).