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New C40 research reveals clean construction could create millions of jobs and drive inclusive growth in cities

- **A shift to clean construction will create more jobs than continuing with business as usual**
- **Key growth sectors include maintenance and repair, building upgrades and adaptive reuse**
- **The key policy levers to achieve a just green transition already exist at the city level**

New research from C40 Cities today reveals that making the construction sector more sustainable in cities will generate multiple socio-economic benefits, including the creation of millions of green jobs.

Building greener cities: green job opportunities in clean construction, is the first major piece of work to identify the potential for cities' workforces of adopting clean construction, presenting a compelling economic case for shifting to clean construction practices. The research, supported by Laudes Foundation and the City of Oslo, and with insights from Building and Woodworkers International, spans seven major cities: Bogotá, London, Madrid, Mexico City, Nairobi, Oslo and Seattle, to give a global perspective on how decarbonising the built environment, responsible currently for close to 40% of global CO2 emissions, can support a stable and healthy workforce and provide opportunities for greater social equity.

Researchers modelled the impact of two scenarios from 2023-2050: first, a city's continuation of current carbon-intensive construction scenario, and second, a shift towards clean construction (defined as decarbonised, resource-efficient, resilient and socially just built environment and construction systems). The research projects the changes in job numbers and job roles, maps workforce diversity and quality of work, and calculates the investment needed for each.

The research shows that adopting clean construction will create more jobs than continuing with high-carbon construction. Decarbonising the built environment when planned fairly and inclusively will generate millions of jobs, largely in sectors such as building maintenance, repairs, building upgrades, and timber construction and the use of low-carbon materials. Mexico City, Bogotá and Madrid would see the largest proportional growth in construction workforce (193.1%, 43.5% and 41% respectively), while Oslo, London and Seattle (cities where clean construction is already adopted to a significant extent) will see net workforce growth of 16.6%, 13.4% and 2.6% respectively. Ensuring this takes place as part of a just transition will also mean those displaced from carbon-intensive construction practices (such as concrete and steel production) who bring great expertise and skills, can access greener jobs and these benefits in clean construction.

The specifics of each city economy also play a part in how the clean construction adoption will manifest. Madrid's less-developed clean construction sector will require more investment but also lead to a larger growth in and variety of green construction jobs. Oslo's burgeoning timber economy

and tech startup culture, in a city where 90% of businesses are classed as microbusinesses, means an opportunity for SMEs to lead future clean construction work. In London, clean construction presents an opportunity to ease the housing crisis: developing low-carbon industrialised construction at scale is a key solution. As part of this clean construction drive, the Mayor of London has implemented the pioneering Non-Road Mobile Machinery (NRMM) Low Emission Zone (LEZ) to control emissions on construction sites across the capital. The NRMM LEZ will mean that all building sites in London must have only zero-emission machinery by 2040.

The report also finds that in all cities clean construction generates multiple socio-economic benefits, such as more jobs, improved air quality, reduction in carbon emissions, less noise, and faster building of much needed housing, which can highly improve the quality of life for cities' residents. Financial savings from energy efficiency, faster project completion, and reduced waste will also contribute to offset initial expenses. This makes a strong broad-economy case for the investment required by public and private sector actors to transition to more sustainable construction practices.

The research has also found that a transition to clean construction presents a critical opportunity to improve equity, diversity and inclusion and the quality of working conditions in the construction sector, but it will not happen automatically. Many workers in the construction industry have poor working conditions, and the workforce in most cities is predominantly male, with little representation of women and minority groups. With the right policies, programmes and approaches, cities, businesses, workers, unions and skills providers can foster better working conditions and more equity, guaranteeing that clean construction won't just replicate the same poor labour conditions often seen in high-carbon construction.

The European cities in the research are part of C40 Cities' VISIBLE project: a two-year initiative supporting London, Madrid and Oslo to accelerate their clean construction transition. These three cities are interrogating the social and economic impacts of shifting to greener ways of building through real-economy pilot projects, cross-sector dialogues, and learning labs. Complementary C40 Cities' research on the market landscape for clean construction in these European cities sets out recommended city action to drive industry, finance, and builders towards decarbonisation by identifying current trends and best practices across the construction value chain, unpacking barriers to scaling and how they may be overcome, and highlighting opportunities for further public-private collaboration and investment. Special attention is also paid to the inclusion of SMEs, supporting innovative business models and maximising social value.

Mayor of London and Co-Chair of C40 Cities, Sadiq Khan, said: "I'm proud that London is leading the way in the green transition of the construction sector, with pioneering initiatives like NRMM LEZ reducing both air pollution and carbon emissions from building sites in our capital. The findings from C40's research are clear: through initiatives like the Green Skills Academy and by accelerating building upgrades, we are not only cutting carbon emissions but also creating jobs, and ensuring that new opportunities created are accessible to all Londoners, as we build a greener and fairer city for everyone."

Governing Mayor of Oslo, Eirik Lae Solberg: “2025 marks a shift in the Oslo’s clean construction work. From now on all city-owned construction has zero emission as a standard. That means lower emissions. But it also means a much better work environment for construction workers. This research from C40 supports us in our continued efforts to create more green jobs in the construction sector.”

Mayor of Madrid, José Luis Martínez-Almeida Navasqüés: 'Madrid is ready to lead in the green transformation of our construction sector. C40 research shows the immense potential for our city and our built environment industry. Through public projects like the Thousand Suns Library and Iberia Loreto 01 Social Housing, we’re demonstrating the viability of sustainable solutions. However, realizing this fully will require strong collaboration with the private sector and multi-level government support. Together, we can build a greener future for our city.'"

Mayor of Seattle, Bruce Harrell, “In Seattle, our Green New Deal demonstrates our commitment to creating a greener and equitable economy. As to construction, Seattle boasts an important skilled workforce in timber and retrofits, and the city has been supporting clean construction through multiple initiatives like the Building Tune-Ups program and Clean Heat program. The research corroborates with this strategy – demonstrating the potential of clean construction in creating more good, green jobs in the city.“

Henrique Goes, Research Manager at C40 Cities said: “These are exciting findings that prove the economic sense behind pursuing a green transition of our construction industries. The research illustrates that the workforce will be positively impacted and in fact can become more inclusive and diverse - so long as administrations leverage their powers of direction-setting, investment in training and skills and interaction with industry, and think strategically about how they can use policy and fiscal levers like procurement and taxation to turbocharge the change needed.”

Mark Watts, Executive Director of C40 Cities: C40 research shows that by adopting clean construction practices, cities can not only reduce carbon emissions but also generate millions of new jobs and promote a more inclusive and diverse workforce. Some of the numbers are staggering - up to 40% more jobs in clean construction than the polluting business as usual. The pioneering strategies city governments are using to drive innovation that cuts emissions and creates good green jobs now needs to be also taken up by more national governments. The evidence is clear: the opportunity is here and the time to act is now.

[LINK TO THE OVERVIEW REPORT]

ENDS

CITY CASE STUDIES

Seattle: the Building Emissions Performance Standard and the Building Tune-Ups programme have improved energy efficiency in existing buildings, helping to reduce emissions while prolonging buildings’ lifespan (thus avoiding new construction emissions).

Bogotá: programmes such as its Eco-Urbanism and Sustainable Construction Regulations are setting minimum sustainability standards for new buildings. Meanwhile, the 'Mujeres que Construyen' programme has successfully upskilled women in construction, showing how targeted initiatives can increase diversity in a sector traditionally dominated by men.

Mexico City: Clean construction is promoted through the Sustainable Building Certification Programme, which incentivises resource efficiency and low-carbon materials. The city also targets the recycling of construction and demolition waste, setting specific goals within its climate action plan.

London: The city's Responsible Procurement policy uses public investment to promote fair wages, job security and safer working conditions.

Madrid: The TANDEM green jobs pilot project is training refugee workers in various clean construction and energy-efficiency skills, preparing them for future jobs in the sector. Other notable projects include Madrid Nuevo Norte, an urban redevelopment district, which will be the flagship of clean construction in Madrid in the coming years.

Oslo: is a leader in zero-emission construction sites, where electric machinery is used to reduce air and noise pollution, with health improvements for workers and nearby communities. The "Oslo Model" further promotes fair labour practices and fights social dumping through public procurement, setting an example for other cities on how to link sustainability with worker rights.

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ABOUT C40 CITIES

C40 is a global network of nearly 100 mayors of the world's leading cities working to confront the climate crisis. Mayors of C40 cities employ inclusive, science-based and collaborative approaches to cut their fair share of emissions in half by 2030, help the world limit global heating to 1.5°C, and build healthy, equitable and resilient communities.

ABOUT THE CLEAN CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMME

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ABOUT PROJECT VISIBLE

VISIBLE is a two-year project from C40 Cities' Clean Construction team, running across Oslo, London and Madrid. The project brings city leaders and officials together with representatives from workers' unions, housing providers, construction industry representatives, and finance and development stakeholders. Through research, dialogues and pilot projects, it presents cities and their citizens with models for economically and financially viable clean construction that include and benefit residents and workers. A core objective for VISIBLE is to support and encourage senior city officials to lead their built environment's transition by giving them the information to make a robust case for change. VISIBLE is supported by Laudes Foundation.