

U20 CO-CHAIRS STATEMENT ON GREEN AND JUST RECOVERY FROM COVID-19 March 9th, 2021

The Italian G20 Presidency has announced that this year's G20 agenda will focus on "People, Planet, Prosperity"¹. As we start this G20 cycle, the Co-chairs of the Urban 20 would like to draw the G20's attention to what we, mayors, consider crucial to make this agenda a reality: a COVID-19 recovery that is green, just, and local.

We are at a unique moment in history. As of March 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic has already claimed millions of lives² and destroyed hundreds of millions of jobs worldwide³. At the same time, this is the first year of the "decade of climate action", that must conclude in 2030 with 50% less greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions globally, if we are to keep global warming to a safe level for humanity⁴.

In this particular context, our countries have a dual responsibility: we are best equipped to address the health crisis, thanks to our wealth, but as we are also the biggest emitters of carbon emissions, we must be at the forefront in tackling the climate emergency.

So far, G20 countries have cumulatively announced USD 13 trillion in fiscal support and stimulus packages and plans to recover from COVID-19⁵. In the year of COP26, it is necessary that the biggest public investment since the Marshall Plan is used in a forward-looking, strategic way that not only dramatically reduces GHG emissions, but also creates sustainable jobs and improves resilience and equity.

We call on the G 20 to be visionary and determined. Mayors in G20 countries have been on the frontlines responding to both the COVID19 and the climate crises through the provision of public services, and have developed a visionary agenda to reduce GHG emissions, support jobs, increase resilience, and improve the wellbeing of all our citizens⁶.

The most significant test of any government's commitment to climate action right now is where it is directing COVID-19 recovery funding. For that reason, we need COVID-19 recovery plans that are:

- **Green:** Currently only 7% of COVID-19 stimulus packages are explicitly directed to green projects⁷. That number represents a failure. To ensure people around the world experience a green and just recovery from COVID-19, we need all recovery funding to contribute to the goals of the Paris Agreement. In particular, we need to stop financing all forms of fossil-fuels, invest in public transportation, and create more sustainable food systems that are healthier for both people and the planet - e.g. ensuring food security for all, minimizing carbon footprint and ensuring healthy and safe nutrition. Building cities with nature and ensuring those natural spaces are accessible to all is another key dimension of a green and just recovery. As a form of global social solidarity, the G20 must also ensure that ODA is structured to enable developing countries to move in the same direction. This requires continuing to meet the 0.7% of GDP target despite the impact of COVID-19.
- **Just:** At a time of mass unemployment and economic hardship in many parts of the world, with the most vulnerable communities disproportionately affected, generating jobs is a high priority. A 'green and just recovery' could create as many as 50 million good, sustainable jobs by the end of 2025 across the C40 network and their supply chains, over a third *more* than a traditional, "high-carbon" recovery⁸. To be just, recovery plans and investments should contribute to rebalancing economic inequalities and create more equitable and inclusive societies and communities. In particular, a considerable proportion - between 40% and 50%⁹

- of climate investments should directly benefit frontline, underserved or marginalised communities¹⁰. Programmes should provide equitable access to green and just jobs and equal employment opportunities, increase women's participation in the labour force¹¹ and develop appropriate regularisation mechanisms and social coverage for essential informal workers. Because equity is also a matter of global solidarity, we call again upon G20 leaders to guarantee fair and equitable access to vaccines across all nations of the world.¹²

- **Local:** Cities are where most people in our countries live, and urban centers have been hit hard by COVID-19. They are also centers of innovation and are charged with directly caring for their people. Despite all this, cities have not been adequately engaged in the development of the recovery packages and most of them won't benefit from them. We ask for cities to be direct recipients of stimulus packages and for at least 30% of urban projects to be included in the national recovery plans that are currently under discussion in many G20 countries. Cities have ready-made ambitious and equitable climate action plans and, if supported in rolling out bold city-level recovery measures, they can build back better and become nations' key allies to achieve their climate and equity goals.¹³ The recovery also needs to be based on local public service provision. The COVID-19 Pandemic shines a light on the critical role of maintaining the functionality of all public services and the need to ensure access to these services for all. From health services to sanitation, water and waste management, housing, mobility, digital technologies, education, food security and services that protect the most vulnerable facets of the population, it is clear that the sustainability of local public service delivery must be maintained to contain the pandemic, address inequalities and achieve a green and just recovery.

Public transportation is a prime and urgent example of these needs. A resilient, well resourced mass transit system not only underpins all ambitious climate action, but it is also a source of jobs and economic prosperity and absolutely crucial to ensure fair access to essential services and jobs. Yet mass transit systems in many cities globally are under significant financial threat and facing a level of service cuts and job losses which would significantly hamper a green and just recovery. That is why we specifically call on national governments to invest in urban mass transit as a priority measure in all COVID-19 recovery plans.

These issues, and more, will be at the heart of the Urban 20 Communique, which will be presented to the G20 Presidency during the Urban 20 Summit in June 2021.

¹G20, "Italian G20 Presidency Priorities" *G20 Italia 2021*, <https://www.g20.org/en/priorita.html>

² Johns Hopkins University, "Coronavirus Resource Center," *Johns Hopkins University & Medicine*, updated 8 February 2021, <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/>

³ ILO, "Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work: Updated estimates and analysis", *International Labour Organization* 7 (2021), 1.

⁴ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), *Global Warming of 1.5°C: Summary for Policymakers* (Geneva: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2018), https://report.ipcc.ch/sr15/pdf/sr15_spm_final.pdf, 14.

⁵ BloombergNEF

⁶ C40 Cities, "C40 Mayors' Agenda for a Green and Just Recovery," *The Global Mayors COVID-19 Recovery Task Force*, 15 July 2020, https://c40-production-images.s3.amazonaws.com/other_uploads/images/2093_C40_Cities_%282020%29_Mayors_Agenda_for_a_Green_and_Just_Recovery_original.pdf?1594824518, 9.

⁷ BloombergNEF.

⁸ C40 Cities, "Technical report: The case for a green and just recovery," *The Global Mayors COVID-19 Recovery Task Force*, 28 October 2020, <https://c40.my.salesforce.com/sfc/p/#36000001Enhz/a/1Q000000gRCH/24OgSbRwj1hZ305yJbyPMZJQKhXXWNYE8k8sr2ADsi8>.

⁹ Based on President Biden's Executive Order on tackling the climate crisis published on Jan 27th, 2021

¹⁰ [G20, Labour and Employment Ministers Ministerial Declaration, Virtual Meeting - September 10, 2020, para 10, 11.](#)

¹¹ [G20 Leaders' Communiqué Brisbane Summit, 15-16 November 2014](#), para 9: G20 countries have committed to enhance women labour force participation by 25% by 2025.

¹² See the U20 2020 Communiqué, alerting since October 2020 on the crucial question of vaccine access.

¹³ Manisha Gulati et al., *The Economic Case for Greening the Global Recovery through Cities: Seven priorities for national governments*, (Washington D.C., London: Coalition for Urban Transitions, 2020).