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| **ENVE-VII/037** | |
| **17th ENVE commission meeting, 10 May 2023** | |

**WORKING DOCUMENT**

**Commission for Environment, Climate Change and Energy**

**UNFCCC COP28: the role of subnational authorities in keeping climate ambition on track**

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| \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Rapporteur: **Rafał Trzaskowski**  Mayor of Warsaw  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

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| This document will be discussed at the meeting of the **Commission for Environment, Climate Change and Energy** to be held from **11 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. on 10 May 2023** |

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| Reference document  Own-initiative opinion |

**Working document of the Commission for Environment, Climate Change and Energy (ENVE) –  
UNFCCC COP28: the role of subnational authorities in keeping climate ambition on track**

The recently published IPCC [6th Synthesis Report](https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-cycle/) provides a stark reminder that even with drastic reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, global warming will exceed 1.5°C this century. Therefore, the road to COP28 and the first [Global Stocktake[[1]](#footnote-1)](https://unfccc.int/topics/global-stocktake) leads all parties and non-party stakeholders on an urgent path to deliver climate action and enhance Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

The [Summary for Urban Policymakers of the IPCCC 6th Assessment Report](https://supforclimate.com/consolidated-report/) concluded that cities and urban areas will be impacted the most. Yet, it also shows that cities and regions are critical hubs for innovation, mitigation, adaptation, and the implementation of sustainable development goals (SDGs), with many already spearheading action in these areas. The 2022 [Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCoM) Impact Report](https://www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/2022-GCoM-Impact-Report.pdf) showcases how over 12500 GCoM signatories across 144 countries are gearing up for the challenge, adopting targets projected to reduce global emissions by 4.1 GtCO2e in 2050, implementing actions to improve energy efficiency, investing in renewable energy generation, addressing energy access, and adapting to the impacts of climate change.

With local and regional authorities (LRAs) playing a central role in how we adapt and mitigate, policymakers at all levels have the opportunity to scale up solutions by working together:

* LRAs support and inspire increased climate ambition at national scale in the lead-up to COP28. They provide EU and national negotiators with confidence that increased ambition is not only possible but necessary to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement.
* Multilevel collaboration is essential to tap the full potential of climate action. Therefore, subnational commitments, actions and achievements should be integrated in National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and NDCs and leveraged in support of the Global Stocktake.
* Effective consultation and participation of LRAs in COP28 processes should be facilitated. By doing so, negotiators could leverage the expertise and resources of local and regional actors, while ensuring that these actors have the adequate capacity and financial resources to drive implementation.

***From recognition to partnerships - delivering on multilevel action at COP28***

The COP26 [Glasgow Climate Pact](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2021_10_add1_adv.pdf) marked a significant milestone in acknowledging the role of subnational governments in combatting and adapting to climate change. For the first time, the Pact included a vision for multilevel and cooperative action and recognised the important role of non-party stakeholders, including local and regional governments, in working towards the goals of the Paris Agreement. Additionally, the COP27 [Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cop27_auv_2_cover%20decision.pdf) re-emphasised the urgent need for multilevel and cooperative action.

The COP27 decisions on mitigation ambition were perceived by subnational governments as falling short of bringing enough efforts to increase and accelerate the reduction of GHG emissions. In this context, the need for multilevel action is even more urgent. Subnational governments have been working steadily toward climate neutrality through initiatives such as the [Race-To-Zero](https://unfccc.int/climate-action/race-to-zero-campaign), [Race-To-Resilience](https://unfccc.int/race-to-resilience-campaign), the Mission Innovation’s [Urban Transitions Mission](https://explore.mission-innovation.net/mission/urban-transitions/) and [Climate Action Pathways](https://unfccc.int/climate-action/marrakech-partnership/reporting-and-tracking/climate_action_pathways). In the EU, LRAs in the Covenant of Mayors – which comprises 11 000 municipalities – and in the Horizon [Mission on 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/eu-missions-horizon-europe/climate-neutral-and-smart-cities_en) serve as examples that subnational governments around the world can become climate-neutral by 2050.

This shows that local and regional climate plans must be taken into account and supported, in order to complement and strengthen the effectiveness and transparency of global climate action. The importance of multilevel governance in the fulfilment of NDCs and NAPs should be highlighted in the Global Stocktake by openly encouraging parties to include subnational climate commitments, actions and achievements in their NDCs and NAPs.

In the EU, the ongoing update of National Energy and Climate Plans and the revision of the Governance Regulation provide a unique opportunity to take a step forward in this area. The upcoming amendment to the EU Climate Law, aimed at establishing a 2040 climate target and a greenhouse gas budget for 2030-2050, is also a prolific opportunity to work closely with EU LRAs.

Direct access to funding for cities and regions should also be facilitated. Some ways in which this can be done are: by improving advisory services on available financing options, by supporting capacity building and targeted training on the use of financial instruments, and by facilitating the use of different funds and financing options for investing in climate action.

At the same time, there should be closer cooperation with LRAs in defining relevant fiscal measures, in line with the Paris Agreement's recognition of "the importance of integrated, holistic and balanced non-market approaches[[2]](#footnote-2) to enable voluntary cooperation being available to Parties to assist in the implementation of their NDCs, (...), in a coordinated and effective manner". This would encourage parties, LRAs, private sector stakeholders and civil society organisations to actively engage in the research, development and implementation of non-market approaches.

***From commitment to implementation – bridging gaps to deliver on the Paris Agreement***

In the EU, natural disasters affected nearly 50 million people between 1980 and 2020 and caused an average of €12 billion in economic losses each year. Over 80% of losses and 95% of fatalities can be attributed to natural disasters caused by weather and climate-related extremes, while the economic damage from climate-related events amounted to at least €419 billion within the same period[[3]](#footnote-3). The effects of these losses are further exacerbated by the fact that they are unevenly distributed, harming cities and regions that may already face challenges such as low economic growth or high youth unemployment.

Effective local adaptation is therefore essential to promptly address the needs of communities and the climate threats they are facing. It is also essential in reducing both the risks and the effects of maladaptation. Despite the progress made at COP27, with the launch of the [Sharm el-Sheikh Adaptation Agenda](https://climatechampions.unfccc.int/cop27-presidency-announces-ambitous-climate-resilience-agenda/)[[4]](#footnote-4), current global financial flows for adaptation are insufficient. National governments should provide credible targets and plans for deploying this capital, and they need to reinforce dedicated mechanisms for LRAs to directly access climate finance opportunities. The [EU Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/eu-missions-horizon-europe/adaptation-climate-change_en) can serve as an inspiring model.

LRAs must therefore be engaged in the establishment of the [Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) framework](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/GGA_decision.pdf). As with any adaptation goal-setting, the GGA must be based on an understanding of what resilience means, not only for individual countries, but for the diverse local realities within them. This makes LRAs the most suitable actors to define adaptation goals, needs, and solutions. As the Global Stocktake assesses effectiveness and scalability of research and application of adaptation policies and solutions, LRAs would be able to share their expertise in tracking and measuring progress in this area.

COP27 marked a turning point for loss and damage, with progress on operationalising the Santiago Network. Since COP26, LRAs have shown leadership in addressing loss and damage thanks to financial pledges from [Scotland](https://www.gov.scot/news/funding-pledge-for-loss-and-damage/) and [Wallonia](https://www.brusselstimes.com/321733/cop27-wallonia-to-double-funding-for-countries-impacted-by-loss-and-damage), showing with meaningful actions how subnational climate diplomacy and cooperation between Global North and Global South can raise ambition and accelerate the impact of climate action at all levels, bearing in mind that climate change is a global issue.

This cross-level coordination is paramount in order to establish viable locally-led approaches that enable affected communities to act as the primary agents of change, increase local ownership of the solutions implemented, and offer meaningful responses for all, including the most vulnerable. As highlighted in the Scottish Government's [Practical Action for Addressing Loss and Damage](https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/research-and-analysis/2023/03/practical-action-addressing-loss-damage/documents/practical-action-addressing-loss-damage/practical-action-addressing-loss-damage/govscot%3Adocument/practical-action-addressing-loss-damage.pdf), LRAs have an essential role in diagnosing, assessing and shaping responses based on the best available data concerning both the needs, risks and threats of their local population and territories.

***From consultation to participation – expanding scale and scope of climate action through vertical and horizontal integration***

The journey towards COP28 and the Global Stocktake must be undertaken alongside subnational governments. Thanks to their ambitious action on mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage, LRAs are ideal partners for parties to show how the goals of the Paris Agreement are not only alive but can actually be attained. Learning from the experiences of the Cities and Regions Talanoa dialogues[[5]](#footnote-5), LRAs can effectively support the Global Stocktake.

In the lead-up to COP28, last year's successful collaboration and partnership between the European Committee of the Regions and the European Commission, as well as with the European Parliament, and the Council of the EU, should continue. In this regard, the upcoming Spanish Presidency of the Council should support a stronger presence of EU LRAs at the COP, to ensure that the important role of subnational governments in climate action is effectively represented and integrated in the preparations and during the negotiations.

In addition, stronger partnerships and opportunities for collaboration will be established with stakeholders in the UNFCCC Local Government and Municipal Authorities (LGMA) Constituency and the UNFCCC Friends of Multilevel Action, as well as with the High-Level Climate Champions in delivering on the priorities of the Breakthrough Agenda.

The momentum offered by the first-ever Urbanization and Climate Ministerial at COP27, which brought together the climate and urban communities at both national and subnational level, should continue, and a second Ministerial should be organised at COP28 to support it. In addition, further support should be given to the COP27 [Sustainable Urban Resilience for the Next Generation (SURGe) Initiative](https://unhabitat.org/cop27-presidency-sustainable-urban-resilience-for-the-next-generation-surge), with the objective to enhance and accelerate local climate action through multilevel governance, engagement, and delivery through five integrated tracks.

***Questions:***

* What are the main benefits for cities and regions in actively contributing and taking part at UNFCCC COPs? How can subnational governments better demonstrate their leadership, ambitious actions, and meaningful impact at COP28?
* How are cities and regions helping to strengthen the ambition of their national governments and why should cooperation across all levels of government be increased?
* How are COPs' decisions impacting the subnational level and how can they support local and regional policy implementation? How can subnational authorities further contribute to the Global Stocktake of the Paris Agreement?
* What key barriers must be overcome in order to recognise LRAs' contribution to climate action decision making (e.g., in discussions with national governments)?
* How can LRAs be better supported technically and financially to keep climate ambition on track?

1. **PROCEDURE**

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| **Title** | UNFCCC COP28: the role of subnational authorities in keeping climate ambition on track |
| **Reference(s)** |  |
| **Legal basis** | Own-initiative opinion |
| **Procedural basis** | Rule 41 b) ii RoP |
| **Date of Bureau/President's decision** | 7 February 2023 |
| **Commission responsible** | Commission for the Environment, Climate Change and Energy (ENVE) |
| **Rapporteur** |  |
| **Analysis** |  |
| **Discussed in commission** | Scheduled for 10 May 2023 |
| **Date adopted by commission** | Scheduled for 29 June 2023 |
| **Result of the vote in commission**  **(majority, unanimity)** |  |
| **Date adopted in plenary** | Scheduled for 9-11 October 2023 |
| **Previous Committee opinions** |  |
| **Date of subsidiarity monitoring consultation** |  |

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1. The global stocktake enables countries and other stakeholders to see where they are collectively making progress toward meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement and where they are not. It means looking at everything related to where the world stands on climate action and support, identifying the gaps, and working together to agree on solution pathways (up to 2030 and beyond). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [Paris Agreement Art.6.8 (Non-Market Approaches to Climate Finance)](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma3_auv_12c_PA_6.8.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [Overview of natural and man-made disaster risks the European Union may face: 2020 edition](https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/89fcf0fc-edb9-11eb-a71c-01aa75ed71a1) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Launched by the COP27 Presidency Agenda in partnership with the High-Level Champions and the Marrakech Partnership, the Sharm-El-Sheikh Adaptation Agenda outlines 30 adaptation outcomes to enhance resilience for 4 billion people living in the most climate vulnerable communities by 2030. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The Cities and Regions Talanoa dialogues were designed in 2018 to convene local and regional governments and national ministries of climate, environment, and urbanization, along with host organizations and climate stakeholders to take stock of, shape and strengthen NDCs. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)