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# THE CHAMP OPPORTUNITY

**A toolkit for cities, towns, states and regions  
to take action on climate change**



# WHAT IS THE COALITION FOR HIGH AMBITION MULTILEVEL PARTNERSHIPS (CHAMP)?

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**CHAMP is a new international pledge that was launched at the most recent United Nations climate change negotiations in Dubai, known as COP28.**

The CHAMP pledge was led by the COP28 Presidency, with support from Bloomberg Philanthropies and a coalition of partners including C40, the Global Covenant of Mayors, ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability, the NDC Partnership, the University of Maryland, United Cities and Local Governments, Under2 Coalition, WRI - Ross Center for Sustainable Cities, and UN-Habitat.

The CHAMP pledge has been signed by 72 national governments from around the world. By signing on to CHAMP these governments have pledged to work with their subnational governments (cities, towns, states and regions) in the planning, financing, implementation, and monitoring of climate strategies.

At the core of CHAMP is the commitment to include subnational governments in the climate plans that countries who signed up to produce - namely Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), Long Term Low-Emission Development Strategies and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). NDCs outline national greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and describe plans to achieve them, along with climate adaptation actions. Countries are responsible for updating their respective NDCs every five years. The next round of revisions are due for submission by COP30 in 2025.

The first significant test for CHAMP endorsers will be if these updated NDCs have meaningful urban and subnational content that makes their climate plans and emissions reduction targets more ambitious, inclusive and include provisions (policies, regulations or investments) to support local climate action.

The ability for the world to effectively overcome climate breakdown, while protecting and enhancing the lives of communities and urban residents, will indeed also be determined by NDCs that are ambitious, inclusive and fit for purpose.

# THE CHAMP OPPORTUNITY:

**CHAMP creates a major opportunity for cities, towns, states and regions to secure climate investment and advance ambitious, inclusive climate action on the ground.**

Two big breakthroughs are gaining momentum since COP28 in Dubai:

1. Over 70 countries pledged that cities, towns, states and regions and their climate solutions will be included in national climate plans stemming from the Paris Agreement (NDCs) - which must be submitted by February 2025.
2. Climate finance partners are organizing to build new funding streams for subnational governments to support these national/local climate plans.

The doors for the collaboration have been opened. Cities, towns, states and regions around the world need to meet this unprecedented moment with a strong, united voice for partnership and investment to urgently deliver climate solutions for people.

# WHAT CAN YOU DO TO ACHIEVE THE GOALS OF CHAMP?

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There is a short window of opportunity for subnational leaders to engage in public and private diplomacy with their national governments to ensure national climate plans are made more ambitious through the inclusion of subnational priorities.

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) drafts are due for submission to United Nations climate body (the UNFCCC) in February 2025 and then final submission is due by the end of 2025, so the next 12 months are critical.

## **Suggested ways that mayors, governors and other subnational leaders can engage with their government:**

- Identify departments in your city, town, state, or regional governments that engage with national governments on day-to-day basis. Check whether these departments have not been approached as part of the NDC Development process in the past or at present.
- Advocate for the cities and subnational policy priorities to be included in discussions on national climate plans.
- Organise and engage with other subnational leaders to create or strengthen a national advocacy platform and network of cities and state/regional governments on the national climate plan.
- Ask your local government association or representative body to organise dialogues to bring together different ministerial portfolios, subnational leaders, and technical experts to work together in the 2025 NDC revision process. Discuss how to use the NDCs as entry point to accelerate local climate action, while considering the local and regional contexts (national focal points to the UNFCCC can be consulted and contacted [here](#)).
- Create peer-to-peer learning opportunities across national, regional, and local governments - as well as academia, business, and civil society - to better understand good practices that are happening in cities and local governments around the world.

## **Ideas for public advocacy:**

- Issue public calls for collaboration with government through open letters that are given to media to cover (model open letter [here](#)).
- Promote the city, town, state or region's top priority climate actions - ideally 2-4 projects that combine big emissions reductions with a strong financial case (saving money for citizens) - and highlight how national government support would make this initiative possible or make the initiative have an even bigger impact.
- Publicly release a short document outlining what subnational priorities or actions (from point 2) you would like included in your country's NDC.
- Release a short video with your mayor, governor or leader talking about your subnational government's contribution to national climate plans - for example quantifying emissions reductions in your city, town, state or region.
- Join forces with other mayors, governors and local leaders to arrange a joint meeting with your national environment Minister and publicise the fact of this meeting. If you are connected to one of the city or states and regions networks, reach out to them and see how they can help!
- Use your social media channels to showcase inspiring stories of subnational and city level climate action in your region and around the world.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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## **What is the role of subnational climate action?**

Subnational governments are critical in the fight against climate breakdown.

Over half the world's population live in cities. As centres of innovation and industry, cities are responsible for over 70% of greenhouse gas emissions. Cities are also suffering some of the worst effects of climate change. At the same time cities are where vibrant civil society and communities mobilise and operate.

In 2023, the first-ever UN review of global climate efforts, known as the 'Global Stocktake', concluded that the world is far off track from the Paris Agreement goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees celsius. We face a rapidly narrowing window to meet this commitment.

Research in 2024 also found that only approximately one third of the 72 CHAMP endorsing national governments included strong urban content in their climate goals and strategies.\* Not enough and not as thoroughly as to seize the opportunity that cities offer in achieving decarbonisation and adaptation targets in a fair way.

Many subnational governments are already leading the way – many cities for example have ambitious climate action plans that are reducing per capita emissions faster than their respective countries.

At COP28 the central role of subnational governments was properly recognised for the first time when over 70 national governments signed up to the CHAMP declaration and pledged to work with cities and subnational governments to review their climate targets and plans.

The challenge now is to translate this pledge into action.

## **How many countries have endorsed CHAMP?**

As of April 2024, 72 countries have endorsed CHAMP. Collectively, CHAMP-endorsers represent 34% of the global population, 58% of global GDP, and 36% of global emissions.

With this, CHAMP signified substantial international support for the indispensable role that collaboration between local and national governments plays in realising global climate goals. The latest list of CHAMP-endorsing countries can be found [here](#).

## **Are national governments already taking climate action in their cities and towns?**

A recent analysis conducted by UN-Habitat revealed that among the 72 CHAMP-endorsing countries, only one third of national climate plans (Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)) included strong urban elements. Urban elements means policies or programs that consider how to reduce emissions in a city context, such as low carbon planning and building laws, with more in-depth action on city transport.

The remaining two thirds of CHAMP endorsing countries' NDCs have either 'moderate', 'low' or 'no' urban content in their climate commitments. For cities in CHAMP-endorsing countries, you can find the latest data about your nation [here](#).

This shows there is huge scope for cities and their state and regional counterparts who are also responsible for urban policy to work with national governments to improve the urban parts of these climate plans. This should ideally include giving cities the powers and resources to make mitigation and adaptation plans a reality. Furthermore, cities and local governments are the institutions that are closest to residents and know and deal with vulnerability and inequities on a daily basis. They are well-placed to engage with their local communities on public education and behavioural change. National climate plans that integrate and include cities and urban climate action mean more inclusive, fair and people centred climate plans.\*\*

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\* UN Habitat, Local Action for Global Goals, 2024

\*\* A full review by UN-Habitat on the most recently submitted 194 NDCs, entitled Urban Climate Action - The Urban Content of the NDCs 2024, will be released in mid-2024.

