

CONTACT:

Nitya Kaushik: nitya.kaushik@wri.org, 9819902763
urbantransitions@gpg.com

New Report Finds India's National Government Can Secure Economic Prosperity and Boost Living Standards Tomorrow By Prioritising Zero-Carbon Cities Today

Low-carbon measures in cities could reduce urban emissions by nearly 90% and support 87 million jobs annually by 2030

National governments globally can unlock nearly Rs.17 lakh crores (US\$24 trillion) by investing in zero-carbon cities

New York, NY (19 September 2019) — A new report from the Coalition for Urban Transitions, supported by 50 leading institutions, shows that national governments that invest in low-carbon cities can enhance economic prosperity, make cities better places to live and rapidly reduce carbon emissions. The report finds that implementing low-carbon measures in cities would be worth almost Rs. 17 lakh crores (US\$24 trillion) by 2050 and could reduce emissions from cities by 90%.

Climate Emergency, Urban Opportunity is the most comprehensive report to date to examine how national governments can achieve equitable and sustainable economic development in cities, which are home to over half the world's population and which produce 80% of gross domestic product and three-quarters of energy-related carbon emissions.

Today, a third of India's population lives in urban areas, and the urban population is increasing by over 2% every year. This equates to 416 million additional urban dwellers by 2050. Trillions of dollars will be invested in urban infrastructure to meet the needs of these new urban residents. This offers a huge opportunity to direct investment to sustainable buildings, energy, transport and waste. The coming decades are therefore crucial to shape India's cities into sustainable, equitable and resilient places where residents enjoy a high quality of life and access to opportunities."

Science tells us that we need to reach net-zero emissions by mid-century to avoid dangerous climate change. The *Urban Opportunity* report shows that it is possible to cut 90% of emissions from cities using currently available technologies and practices in buildings, transport, materials efficiency and waste. Low-carbon measures in cities like Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru could collectively deliver over half of the emission reductions needed to keep global temperature rise below two degrees Celsius.

The *Urban Opportunity* report also shows that these low-carbon measures would deliver a significant economic return. The measures would require an investment of US \$1.8 trillion (approximately 2% of global GDP) per year, which would generate annual returns worth US \$2.8 trillion in 2030, and \$7.0 trillion in 2050 based on cost savings alone. Many of these low-carbon measures would pay for themselves in less than five years, including more efficient lighting, electric vehicles, improved freight logistics and improved solid waste management.

The report also demonstrates that in addition to their economic benefits, compact, connected and clean cities provide a higher standard of living and greater opportunity for all. Investments in

low-carbon measures in cities could support 87 million jobs worldwide in 2030. These measures will also reduce choking air pollution, cut chronic traffic congestion, and improve worker productivity.

Promoting more compact urban development could enhance food security and reduce the cost of services (since less land, materials and energy are required when people live closer together). Urban expansion is a major issue in India, which ranks third behind only China and the USA in land converted to urban areas from 2000-2014. Over half of this expansion took place on to agricultural land.

“While cities are at the forefront of climate action, national government support and accelerating access to resources is critical.” said Mayor Nanda Jichkar, Mayor of Nagpur and GCoM Board Member. “Nagpur, along with Central India, has faced extreme heatwave conditions this year and expects to face worse in the years to come. Thriving cities make prosperous countries and we need support from the government in India and across Asia to tackle this crisis.”

Decisions made about cities in the next decade will put countries like India on a path to prosperity and resilience - or decline and vulnerability. National governments must seize this brief window of opportunity, as the costs of inaction could be devastating. Over ten percent of the world’s population, 820 million people, live in coastal zones less than 10m above sea level, and 86 percent of them live in urban or quasi-urban areas. In India, more than 55 million people live in urban centres less than 10 metres above sea level. These people are especially vulnerable to storm surges, sea-level rise and other climate hazards.

Many city governments are already playing an active role in tackling the climate crisis: nearly 10,000 cities and local governments have committed to set emissions reduction targets. However, even the largest and most powerful city governments can only deliver a fraction of their mitigation potential on their own: the *Urban Opportunity* report shows that, excluding decarbonisation of electricity, local governments have direct power over less than 1/3 of the emissions reduction potential in their cities. National and state governments have power over a further 1/3. More than a 1/3 depends on different levels of government working together to cut emissions, making the future of cities a vital collaborative effort.

Dr. O P Agarwal, CEO, WRI India, said, “India is already on a ‘smart’ development pathway through its Smart Cities Mission program. While the past years have focused largely on creating infrastructure for cities, it is time now to expand the focus to ensure a low-emissions, high-sustainability model for the economic and overall well-being of the people.”

Launched just ahead of the U.N Climate Action Summit, the *Urban Opportunity* report provides the evidence and confidence that governments need to submit more ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in 2020, and to propel inclusive, zero-carbon cities to the heart of their national development strategies.

Worldwide, fewer than two in five countries have an explicit national strategy for cities, and only seven countries currently have both a National Urban Policy and a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) that specifically address climate mitigation in cities. India’s NDC references climate challenges and the importance of climate adaptation in cities.

This report offers case studies from around the world where national and local governments have worked together to rapidly and profoundly transform their cities for the better within two or three decades, including: Chile, China, Colombia, Denmark, Germany, India, Indonesia, Namibia, Rwanda and South Korea.

The case study on Indore, Madhya Pradesh, shows how the Government of India can support and build on the work of city governments. In just four years, the city of Indore moved up the rankings from India's 149th cleanest city to the cleanest city in the country. It did this by building latrines, expanding waste collection services and building a waste-to-energy plant that now powers about 15 city buses. The national government partially funded these efforts through the Swachh Bharat and Smart Cities Missions, as well as by introducing legislation that enabled city governments to issue municipal bonds. Cities across India are now looking to replicate Indore's success.

This report also presents **six key priorities** for actions that national governments can take to seize this opportunity:

1. **Develop an overarching strategy to deliver shared prosperity while reaching net-zero emissions – and place cities at its heart**, which can guide all line ministries to incorporate urban development into their approach, de-risk low-carbon investment by providing clear signals to private actors, and empower local governments to go farther and faster.
2. **Align national policies behind compact, connected, clean cities**. Examples include removing land use and building regulations that limit higher, liveable density; banning the sale of fossil fuel-powered vehicles; and adopting green alternatives to steel and cement. Senior decision-makers in India are already suggesting that the sale of fossil fuel-powered passenger cars and two-wheelers will be prohibited from 2030.
3. **Fund and finance sustainable urban infrastructure**. Examples include eliminating subsidies for fossil fuels and establishing a carbon price of US\$50–100 per tonne to sharpen investment incentives; reforming land and property taxes; and shifting national transport budgets from road-building to public and active transport. Today, India spends 20% more of its national transport spending on roads than rail investments. Shifting its transport budget to support safe, shared streets could improve air quality, reduce traffic injuries and cut greenhouse gas emissions.
4. **Coordinate and support local climate action in cities**. Examples include authorising local governments to introduce climate policies and plans that are more ambitious than national policies; and allocating at least one third of national R&D budgets to support cities' climate priorities.
5. **Build a multilateral system that fosters inclusive, zero-carbon cities**. Examples include placing cities at the heart of enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions in 2020 and 2025 and ensuring that all international development assistance is aligned with national urban strategies compatible with the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

6. **Proactively plan for a just urban transition.** Examples include using revenues from carbon taxes or fossil fuel subsidy reform to compensate those who bear the costs of climate action; supporting community-led upgrading of informal settlements to reduce poverty and enhance climate resilience; and anticipating, protecting and supporting the workforce of the future, including by developing transition plans for fossil fuel-based workers and industries.

A full list of the report recommendations for national governments can be found here: <https://urbantransitions.global/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Climate-Emergency-Urban-Opportunity-Priorities-for-National-Governments-FINAL.pdf>

A summary of key report findings can be found here: <https://urbantransitions.global/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Climate-Emergency-Urban-Opportunity-Key-Messages-FINAL.pdf>

The full report can be found here: <https://urbantransitions.global/urban-opportunity/>

About *Climate Emergency, Urban Opportunity*

Climate Emergency, Urban Opportunity: How national governments can secure economic prosperity and avert climate catastrophe by transforming cities is a new report from the Coalition for Urban Transitions. The report is underpinned by a three-year research effort by a coalition of 50 of the world's foremost research institutes, networks of national and city governments, investors, infrastructure providers, strategic advisory companies, non-governmental organisations and social movements. Together, they call for national governments to prioritise compact, connected and clean cities in order to secure economic prosperity and tackle the climate crisis.

The report was released ahead of the United Nations Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit, and is a foundational document for the Summit's Infrastructure, Cities and Local Action track.

About the Coalition for Urban Transitions

The Coalition for Urban Transitions is the leading global initiative supporting national governments to unlock the economic power of inclusive, zero-carbon cities. The Coalition equips national governments with the evidence-based research and policy tools to prioritise more compact, connected, clean urban development. The Coalition's in-country programmes in China, Ghana, Mexico and Tanzania provide models for other countries on how to effectively develop national urban policies and infrastructure investment strategies. Founded in 2016 and guided by an Urban Leadership Council, the Coalition is comprised of 36 diverse stakeholders across five continents. A special initiative of the New Climate Economy, the Coalition is jointly managed by the World Resources Institute Ross Center and the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group.

Follow the Coalition's work at www.coalitionforurbantransitions.org, on [LinkedIn](#), on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 19 SEPT 2019 at 9:30 IST / 00:01 EDT

