**SEIZING THE URBAN OPPORTUNITY: SOUTH AFRICA**

*Tackling urban poverty and inequality through decarbonisation and resilience-building*

**National Priorities for Action for South Africa**

* **South Africa’s cities serve as population hubs and economic powerhouses**, with its 8 major municipalities producing over 58% of GDP in 2018. Its urban areas are home to two-thirds of the country’s population and this share is projected to reach 74% by 2035.
* **But South Africa’s cities still remain significantly unequal and spatially divided.** A lack of basic services and adequate housing, especially in peri-urban areas, exacerbates this inequality and urban poverty. Urban sprawl has consumed ecosystems essential for biodiversity and carbon sequestration, putting marginalized populations at greater risk to the impacts of climate change, including drought, water scarcity, extreme heat and flooding.
* **South Africa is working to promote compact, connected, clean and inclusive cities aligned with low-carbon, resilient development** with the adoption of its Integrated Development Framework (IUDF) and its Long-Term Low Emissions Development Strategy (SA-LEDS) which serves as a first step towards achieving net-zero by 2050.
* **This is a pivotal time for South Africa** as COVID-19 has taken a serious toll, shrinking GDP and fuelling massive unemployment. In February 2021, the government passed a $38-billion stimulus package which included some support for renewables but also a large amount for high-carbon industries. Future stimulus efforts could give greater priority to urban investments that reduce emissions and build resilience to align better with South Africa’s vision for a net-zero future and sustainable, inclusive cities.
* **The report highlights numerous opportunities for action,** which include:
  + **Accelerate policy reforms** to enable municipalities to procure their own cleanenergy and use renewables to improve electricity access
  + **Put pro-poor urban measures at the heart of plans to implement the SA-LEDS** and achieve a just transition
  + **Promote improved mobility** for lower-income urban residents
  + **Revamp housing strategies** to prioritise smaller-scale projects that can be built in city sub-centres and on providing well-connected, serviced sites for construction
  + **Provide targeted support for cities of different sizes and economic structures**, helping them to overcome capacity and resource gaps and foster mutual learning
  + **Protect and restore ecosystems** in and around cities and invest in greening the urban landscape
* **Successful implantation of the report’s solutions** could result in:
  + **92% fewer GHG emissions** from urban buildings, transport and waste by 2050
  + **Economic returns of $220 billion** by 2050 (with investment of $270 billion)
  + **656,000 new jobs** in 2030