



Strengthening Nationally Determined Contribution (NDCs) through Urban Climate Action

Introduction

Cities play a crucial role in addressing the climate crisis. Cities account for over 70% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and consume up to 78% of the world's energy. Cities are also more susceptible to climate risks such as flooding, heat stress, and rising sea levels (IPCC AR6, 2023, as cited in UN-Habitat, 2025). National climate policy continues to have constraints regarding the incorporation of urban issues. An analysis of second-generation Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) indicated that 73 percent featured only low or moderate urban content, while only 27 percent incorporated substantial, place-based commitments (UNDP, UN-Habitat & SDU.Resilience, 2024).



UN-Habitat's guide, [Seizing the Urban Opportunity](#), presents a three-step framework aimed at addressing the implementation gap and enhancing the urban components of NDCs 3.0 (UN-Habitat, 2025).

1. Access



Countries are encouraged to evaluate the urban content ratio in their current Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), identify potential connections with national and subnational climate policies, and assess the condition of multilevel governance partnerships. The process of assessment is necessary for finding gaps in institutions and making sure that current policy frameworks are in alignment with each other.

2. Prepare



National governments should focus on open discussions that include civil society, subnational governments, and urban networks. Better governance frameworks and clear ways for people to be involved help make sure that local conditions match national climate goals.

3. Co-Design



In the final step, all stakeholders should work together to come up with Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) that have strong urban elements. To do this, the government has to provide a baseline for urban emissions and risks, identify problems in each sector (including energy, transportation, housing, and waste), and come up with measurable solutions that fit with the country's climate goals. To ensure their viability, urbanized NDCs should include provisions for funding, technology, and capacity-building.

Conclusions

Studies show that cities could be responsible for as much as 40% of the emissions cuts needed to meet current NDC commitments and stay on track for a 1.5°C global warming by 2030 (GCoM & Arup, 2024, as cited in UN-Habitat, 2025). Including urban initiatives in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) is a way to speed up the process of decarbonization and make cities more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable in the future. Thailand's NDCs currently demonstrate a moderate degree of urban content, underscoring the necessity for enhanced integration of city-level mitigation and adaptation strategies.

References

- UNDP, UN-Habitat & SDU.Resilience. (2024). *Urban Content of NDCs: Local climate action explored through in-depth country analyses*. Nairobi: UN-Habitat.
- UN-Habitat. (2025). *Seizing the Urban Opportunity: A 3-Step Guide for Strengthening NDCs 3.0*. Nairobi: United Nations Human Settlements Programme.