

Commonwealth Heads of Government adopt Declaration on Sustainable Urbanisation

70% of global carbon emissions attributable to cities

Commonwealth forecast to account for 50% of the growth in cities to 2050



Commonwealth Heads of Government come together at CHOGM2022 in Kigali, Rwanda

On completion of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM2022) in Kigali, Rwanda, this week, Heads of Government have adopted a Declaration¹ to prioritise a greater focus on sustainable urbanisation to address the impacts of rapid urbanisation and climate change in the Commonwealth, to ensure liveable cities, towns and villages for all Commonwealth citizens.

Recognising that Commonwealth countries are projected to account for nearly 50% of the projected growth in the world's urban population to 2050, and that cities are responsible for over 70% of global carbon emissions, the Declaration acknowledges the need for integrated strategies to deliver safe and sustainable urbanisation and to support cities to mobilise resources to develop scalable programmes to address key challenges while reducing risk and vulnerability.

The Commonwealth Secretary General, Baroness Scotland, remarked during the closing Press Conference that "These Declarations provide the guiding framework for the work of the Commonwealth over the coming period".

Commonwealth partners: the Association of Commonwealth Universities, the Commonwealth Association of Architects, the Commonwealth Association of Planners and the Commonwealth Local Government Forum welcomed the Declaration noting that this reinforces the Call to Action on Sustainable Urbanisation across the Commonwealth² which was developed through a Commonwealth-wide consultative process in collaboration with the Government of Rwanda and The Prince's Foundation and published in 2021.

¹ <https://thecommonwealth.org/news/chogm-2022-communique-leaders-statement-and-declarations-delivering-common>

² <https://commonwealthsustainablecities.org/calltoaction>

The Call to Action is, in part, a product of the Declared Actions³ arising from the 10th UN-Habitat World Urban Forum which took place in Abu Dhabi in 2020 and Commonwealth partners will be travelling to Katowice in Poland this week for the 11th World Urban Forum, at which they will be working to consider the ways in which the Call to Action, and the Declaration, can both be used to inform the development of collaborative programmes of practical action and knowledge sharing.

During an intense week of activity in Kigali⁴, Commonwealth partners, city mayors, ministers, representatives of civil society, built environment professionals, technical experts, development partners and private sector partners from all regions of the Commonwealth came together to promote the Call to Action with the support of key stakeholders including Rwandan Minister of Infrastructure, Hon Dr Ernest Nsabimana and UN-Habitat's Executive Director, HE Maimunah Mohd Sharif.

The event emphasised the importance of effective partnerships and collaboration between all levels of government and other key stakeholders to ensure sustainable urban development. It also highlighted ongoing initiatives which illustrate the way in which the Commonwealth is already coming together to develop solutions that are both scalable and replicable:

- The **Commonwealth Sustainable Cities Network**⁵, managed by the Commonwealth Local Government Forum, which brings together cities of all sizes from across the Commonwealth to share experience, learn from each other and develop partnerships for joint working.
- The **Rapid Planning Toolkit**⁶, developed by The Prince's Foundation to support rapidly urbanising communities without access to professional built environment expertise, successfully being piloted in Sierra Leone and Bangladesh.
- The **Commonwealth Youth for Sustainable Urbanisation**⁷ network, launched at CHOGM, to engage students and young professionals from around the Commonwealth with an interest in sustainable urbanisation.
- Practical Action, WRI, WaterAid, The Prince's Foundation and Commonwealth partners jointly launched at CHOGM, a new alliance aiming to accelerate action on climate and **Urban Water Resilience** in towns and cities across Africa⁸.
- The **Lusaka Mapping pilot**⁹, developed by Ordnance Survey, the UK's national mapping agency, in collaboration with the Zambian Ministry of Local Government and the International Growth Centre, which used artificial intelligence and machine learning to map the city, over 60% of whose residents live in informal settlements, in a fraction of the time taken by traditional methods.
- **Green City Kigali**¹⁰, a planned city neighbourhood, being led by Fonerwa, the Rwanda Green Fund, which aims to set new benchmarks for affordable and green development in Rwanda, the wider region and beyond.

During the course of the week, leaders from 20 national architecture, engineering, and planning associations from Africa and beyond came together to sign a collaboration commitment (The Kigali Commitment) in support of the Call to Action on Sustainable Urbanisation across the Commonwealth.

The partners to the Call to Action look forward to supporting the Government of Rwanda during its term as Commonwealth Chair in Office and to ensuring that the momentum and support for a greater focus on sustainable urbanisation across the Commonwealth achieved at the CHOGM is reflected in practical actions towards a more sustainable urban future for all.

Commenting following publication of the Declaration, UN Habitat Executive Director HE Maimunah Mohd Sharif said: "I applaud Heads of Government for recognising sustainable urbanisation as a defining issue

³ Page 5, <https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/WUF%2010%20final%20declared%20actions%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

⁴ <https://commonwealthsustainablecities.org/events/chogm2022/>

⁵ <https://www.clgf.org.uk/what-we-do/cities-network/>

⁶ <http://www.rapidplanningtoolkit.org/>

⁷ <https://commonwealthsustainablecities.org/youth/>

⁸ <https://practicalaction.org/news-media/2022/06/21/new-opportunity-to-help-billions-of-city-residents-cope-with-climate-change/>

⁹ <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/newsroom/news/using-ai-to-map-african-cities-to-improve-infrastructure-at-low-cost>

¹⁰ <https://greencitykigali.org/>

for the Commonwealth. With its shared values and extensive networks, the Commonwealth provides the perfect platform from which to engage with such critical challenges and I look forward to working with Commonwealth colleagues in the coming period.”

NOTES

The Call to Action was informed by a programme of online events focused on sustainable urbanisation in the Commonwealth, which attracted over 2,000 individual participants from over 80 countries from June to September 2020. Opening those events, HRH The Prince of Wales praised the multi-sectoral approach reflected by the Call to Action and said: “I hope that between us we can seize these opportunities towards a better and more harmonious way of living together as local communities, and I very much look forward to hearing of the practical outcomes from this programme.”

The Call to Action is an initiative of four Commonwealth organisations:

- The **Association of Commonwealth Universities** (ACU) is an international organisation dedicated to building a better world through higher education. It has over 500 member universities in more than 50 countries.
- The **Commonwealth Association of Architects** (CAA) is a membership organisation for professional bodies representing architects in Commonwealth countries to promote co-operation for ‘the advancement of architecture in the Commonwealth’.
- The **Commonwealth Association of Planners** (CAP) is a dynamic institution promoting professional planning as a fundamental part of sustainable human settlement. In 2020, CAP celebrates its 50 years of advancing professional planning globally.
- The **Commonwealth Local Government Forum** (CLGF) is a membership organisation bringing together local government, local government associations, and ministries of local government, with associate members from academic, research and professional organisations.

working in partnership with the Princes’ Foundation and the Government of Rwanda.

END

27 June 2022



**Statement issued by the partners to
the Call to Action on Sustainable Urbanisation across the Commonwealth, 26 June 2022**
For details on the Call to Action, visit: <https://commonwealthsustainablecities.org/calltoaction/>
For further information contact info@commonwealthsustainablecities.org