

# Climate-diligent cities: Aligning mitigation ambitions with the Paris Agreement

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CIDOB, Sala Maragall. Elisabets 12, 08001 Barcelona

Organized by: CIDOB's Global Cities Programme, in collaboration with C40 Cities and with the support of Barcelona City Council

## Background

At the current rate, by 2030 the planet will have exhausted the remaining carbon budget of [500 GtCO<sub>2</sub>](#), determined by the IPCC as the safe threshold to avoid the most critical climate scenarios. In an increasingly urban world, cities play a fundamental role against climate change as they account for [67-72%](#) of the global GHG emissions.

During the last decades, this evidence has led several cities to adopt climate-sensitive strategies. This is particularly the case of climate-oriented city networks through which local governments amplify urban climate mitigation and seek to contribute to the objectives of the international climate regime. For instance, the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy (GCoM) estimates that the climate mitigation objectives adopted by their signatories will reduce global emissions by [4.1 GtCO<sub>2</sub>eq](#) by 2050. Likewise, C40 Cities aim to [halve their collective emissions](#) by 2030. ICLEI has joined forces with Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) and created the [world's leading city climate reporting platform](#).

Indeed, in overall terms, city governments have demonstrated to be [more ambitious than their national counterparts](#) in terms of GHG emission reduction goals. But is this enough to fulfill the urgent measures needed to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C as the Paris Agreement pledges? The truth is that there are several [tools](#) to monitor the mitigation strategies of nation-states and to determine their fair share. However, we lack information and instruments to assess whether a city is doing enough to combat global warming, making it harder for citizens to hold their governments accountable.

In this context, we advocate for the notion of [climate-diligent cities](#). A diligent city is one which deploys the adequate means and best feasible efforts to reduce its net emissions. In line with the expectations that the Paris Agreement sets on countries, diligent cities are those whose contribution reflects their highest possible ambition. The notion of climate-diligent cities suggests that cities' mitigation efforts could leapfrog by adopting the very formal rules underpinning (countries') international climate regime. This logic underpins the work by C40 Cities to support their members in developing Paris Agreement-compatible [climate action plans](#) and adhering to the recommendations of the UN report [Integrity Matters](#) on net zero commitments.

CIDOB's Global Cities Programme, in collaboration with C40 Cities and with the support of Barcelona City Council, organizes an in-person international seminar in Barcelona to explore this seminal idea and its possible avenues for action. Bridging policy and science, the closed-door event will aim to boost a fruitful dialogue between key speakers from city networks, city governments, academia, specialist partners, and a selected expert audience. Following an introductory brief presentation and supported by keynote interventions, the seminar will first survey how cities are contributing to the current (state-based) international climate regime and then delve into the preliminary characteristics of an urban climate standard of diligence.

**Programme**

- 10:00 – 10:15 **Welcome remarks**  
**Agustí Fernández de Losada**, Senior Research Fellow and Director, Global Cities Programme, CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs)  
**Pau Solanilla**, Commissioner for International Relations and City Promotion, Barcelona City Council
- 10:15 – 10:30 **Introduction – What is a climate-diligent city?**  
**Ricardo Martínez**, Senior Research Fellow, Global Cities Programme, CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs)
- 10:30 – 11:00 **Keynote intervention 1 – City diplomacy and urban climate action**  
**Benjamin Leffel**, Assistant Professor, University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV)
- 11:00 – 11:30 **Coffee break**
- 11:30 – 13:00 **Roundtable 1 – Cities and the international climate regime**  
**Hannah Abdullah**, Senior Program Officer and Fellow, GMF Cities, German Marshall Fund (*online*)  
**Didac Amat**, PhD candidate in International Climate Law, Pompeu Fabra University (UPF)  
**Rodrigo Perpétuo**, Executive Secretary, ICLEI Latin America  
*Chair:* **Alicia Pérez-Porro**, Scientific Coordinator, Centre for Ecological Research and Forestry Applications (CREAF)
- 13:00 – 14:00 **Lunch**
- 14:00 – 14:30 **Keynote intervention 2 – The state of net zero cities**  
**Angel Hsu**, Assistant Professor, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (*online*)
- 14:30 – 16:00 **Roundtable 2 – Toward an urban climate standard of diligence**  
**Frederic Hans**, Climate Policy Expert, NewClimate Institute  
**Victor Kotey**, Deputy Director, Climate and Waste Management, Accra Metropolitan Assembly (*online*)  
**Júlia López**, Regional Director for Europe, C40 Cities  
**Ana Romero**, Head of Climate Emergency and Environmental Education, Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB)  
*Chair:* **Marta Galceran-Vercher**, Research Fellow, Global Cities Programme, CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs)
- 16:00 – 16:15 **Concluding remarks**  
**Ricardo Martínez**, Senior Research Fellow, Global Cities Programme, CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs)