

MEDIA RELEASE

# Daring cities use their public procurement power to tackle the climate crisis

Bonn, Germany (27 October 2020) - Cities around the world commit to leveraging their purchasing power to reduce carbon emissions at Daring Cities - the global virtual forum for urban leaders boldly tackling the climate emergency.

In three action-oriented sessions organized by ICLEI's [Global Lead City Network on Sustainable Procurement](#), participants from over 45 countries engaged online to explore how public buyers can navigate the race to zero-emissions in an environment where 'lowest-price' still is the deciding factor.

Procurement accounts for 12 percent of GDP in OECD countries, and up to 20 percent in many developing countries. Two-thirds of that is spent at sub-national level. At the same time, local and regional governments around the globe are at the frontline of dealing with the climate emergency through local climate action. They engage as they are at the forefront of dealing with the impacts of climate change, which they already experience and they are closest to communities. Increasingly we see that subnational governments commit to the necessary ambitious targets towards climate neutrality, including operating at 100% renewables or aiming for zero emission construction sites. These targets can be achieved by adopting sustainable procurement as a tool.

*"If climate is the problem, procurement is the solution. It is a mechanism that is already in place within public authorities. It is essential to use it."* - Mark Hidson, Deputy Regional Director, Global Director of ICLEI's Capacity Center

## KEY OUTCOMES

From reducing emissions to bolstering the green recovery and improving the equity of food systems, members of the Global Lead City Network on Sustainable Procurement (GLCN) are using procurement to meet climate and sustainability goals and improve systems and quality of life for their residents.

The **City of Cape Town, South Africa**, has adopted a number of successful green procurement projects and practices in its operations. The [GLCN member city](#) recently finalised a Green Procurement Action Plan, in development since 2016, which seeks to give effect to the City's commitment to green procurement and seeks to consolidate and mainstream the implementation of green procurement in the City.

The [City of Pittsburgh, USA](#) the newest member of the GLCN, is using procurement to reach important goals for 2030, such as their goal of operating the entire city with 100% renewable energy. Moving away from fossil-fuels is a key objective for Mayor William Peduto: *"Our future does not have to be connected to our past."* The city uses procurement to build new industry as well as to develop local workforce, helping companies and communities in the region to transition to the 21st century. *"Procurement gives cities the opportunities to lead and to build the type of world that we all want to live in,"* continued Mayor Peduto.

The **City of Oslo, Norway**, uses procurement strategically to reach climate goals aligned with the Paris agreement and the SDGs. In 2017, [Oslo](#) adopted a new procurement strategy which is based on the premise that all purchasing decisions have to contribute to the goal of becoming an emission free city. With €3 billion of annual spending on goods, services and constructions works - this is leverage. In addition, Oslo's climate strategy outlines targets that related to procurement action. For example, the city created a climate budget that is fully integrated with the financial budget and that keeps track of how many emissions are impacted by which measures. *"In Oslo we believe that emission reductions are not to be implemented somewhere else, another time or by someone else. We want to take responsibility now and our goal is to reduce emissions by 95 percent by 2030"* says Espen Nicolaysen, Head of Section Public Procurement, City of Oslo.

The **Western Cape Government in South Africa**, has launched a ['Green is Smart' strategy](#) through which it aims to become the lowest carbon region and a green economy leader. Francini van Staden, Department of Environment Affairs and Development Planning, Western Cape Government, outlined that for cities and regions with a limited budget, and ambitious climate goals, procuring resource efficient infrastructure must have a life-cycle perspective. *"We can no longer separate the economic, environmental and social component"* said van Staden. Embedding of sustainable procurement is not the responsibility of a single service provider or one tender, but can only happen through strategic thinking, needs assessment, and political support to include a life-cycle perspective.

**Helsinki, Finland**, another [member of GLCN](#), aims to be carbon neutral by 2035 and reduce direct carbon emissions by 80 percent. To achieve this ambitious goal, the city leverages procurement as a key mechanism. *"If the market is not ready yet, collaboration between public buyers at different levels of government is key. Because if only Helsinki is asking for specific machinery, it will negatively affect the offers we can get for the tenders. So communication with the market and others is key. It is better to communicate too early and too much. Even if we do not know everything yet. We are running out of time. We do not have the luxury to waiting for the perfect solutions. So, move with what you have."* Kaisa-Reeta Koskinen, Project Director, Carbon Neutral Helsinki City of Helsinki, Finland. Mayor of Helsinki, Jan Vapaavuori, adds the critical point that *"GHG emissions decline by actions, not by writing reports or strategies."*

The **City of Buenos Aires** aims to be carbon neutral by 2050. The energy sector accounts for 55 percent of the city's emissions, thus creating a need to advance energy efficiency of public buildings. María Celeste Lemos, Environmental Policy and Strategy Directorate of the Environmental Protection Agency, City of Buenos Aires, points out the benefits of adopting sustainable construction practices using procurement. Among them are health and well-being, lowering emissions, economic savings, uptake of renewable energy solutions and optimized use of resources. However, those benefits can only be achieved if sustainable procurement is mainstreamed by the city administration throughout the construction sector. Thus, María emphasizes the need to train all the executing units in charge of public procurement, especially those responsible for infrastructure and maintenance. *'For the city government, the network is a unique space for the cities of the world to be able to cooperate with each other in the matter of sustainable public procurement, to exchange knowledge and good practices and to make public policies and the commitments that the city has to promote inclusive development and sustainable procurement through the Global Lead City Network. The prioritized sectors and the diversity of the profiles of its members consider that the GLCN is a very important space to stay at the forefront of sustainable public procurement and is a pillar to strengthen the social impact in public procurement and the fight against climate change'* said Lemos. Learn [more](#).

The **City of Malmö, Sweden** aims for climate-friendly, organic and fair food for the city. With 65,000 lunches per day or 21 million a year, procurement of sustainable ingredients has a significant impact. The city's ambitions are high: a 40 percent reduction of GHG emissions from 2002 to 2020. For implementation on those targets, the city worked a lot on the procurement processes. *"And of course, as a city to do this, we need to work with sustainable businesses that can deliver on the ambitions"*, Gunilla Andersson, Project Manager, Environmental Department. In addition, Andersson describes how it is key to get education for cooking staff, teachers, health care staff. Looking at a recent school lunch menu, each day has two options: always a plant-based meal and twice a week meals sourced from left-overs.

Latha Swamy, Food Policy Director, **City of New Haven, Connecticut, USA** described that *"Only four years ago a new division with a focus on food policy was established in the city. Back then none of the pre-existing plans such as the Food Action Plan or Climate Strategy mentioned procurement."* With a view to establish the mechanism of sustainable food procurement, the division takes a coalition-building approach that looks at involving residents, various city departments, local organizations and businesses as well as international networks such as ICLEI.

In 2009, **Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA** initiated a food system program to address racial inequities in employment, education, healthy food access and obesity. *"The aim was for us as a city to expand everyone's ability and access to sustainably grown and healthy food."* Tamara Downs Schwei, Food Policy Coordinator, City of Minneapolis. Over the years, key roadmaps such as the climate action plan referred to the program 'Homegrown Minneapolis'. Whilst the city's direct procurement of food is limited, the city works with the school district and farms - this resulted in the school district signing on to the Good Food Purchasing Program. Downs Schwei described how the pandemic, the rise in unemployment together with the tragic killing of George Floyd and the connected unrest, challenged communities' food security. The city faced and still is navigating Covid-19 crisis, racial crisis and an acute hunger crisis. As a response the city experienced major support from various communities and partners, establishing local food links and providing hunger relief. These experiences of structural racism i.e. barriers to access healthy food, will feed into the ongoing process of developing a food action plan that aims for a more resilient and equal access driven city.

#### Expert voices on administration, circularity and food systems

**Paulo Magina, Head Public Procurement, Infrastructure and Public Procurement Division, OECD**, emphasized that procurement is an administrative process. 90 percent of OECD countries have included green procurement in their policy making - recognizing that sustainability policy priorities can be achieved through procurement. *"We need to mainstream procurement practice that connects its administrative function with the impact the function has for citizens, for their well-being"* says Magina.

**Machiel Crielaard, Senior Advisor on Resource Efficiency to the Dutch Ministry for Infrastructure and Water Management**, and co-lead to the [One Planet Network Sustainable Procurement Programme](#), applies a circular perspective to procurement of infrastructure and emphasises that it is crucial to get the buy-in of the right people, internally and externally. For example, the Ministry developed a concept for a circular bridge together with engineers and the different suppliers. They tap into a government program that financially supports carbon neutral, circular infrastructure. *"Circular procurement is not*

*only about procurement. It is about understanding the full life-cycle, including design and disposal, as well as engaging relevant stakeholders at the right time for the required expertise,” says Crielaard.*

**Chantal Clément, Deputy Director, IPES-Food** offers us *“a final reminder, tackling climate change and increasing our resilience to shocks such as Covid-19, is tied to our capacity to develop more sustainable food systems.”* Food system innovation is happening at the local level, enabled through procurement and through support of all levels of government. IPES-Food together with ICLEI and other partnering organisations has launched the [Glasgow Food Declaration](#): A commitment by subnational governments to tackle the climate emergency through integrated food policies and a call on national governments to act.

Looking ahead, ICLEI will continue to work with its members, and specifically through the Global Lead City Network to strengthen the connection between procurement and climate action. In this time of a climate crisis as well as a global pandemic and economic turmoil, it matters more than ever to make deliberate choices on if, how and what we consume and produce.

## NOTE TO EDITORS

### About ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability

ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability (known as "ICLEI") is a global network of more than 1,750 local and regional governments committed to sustainable urban development. Active in 100+ countries, we influence sustainability policy and drive local action for low emission, nature-based, equitable, resilient and circular development. Our Members and team of experts work together through peer exchange, partnerships and capacity building to create systemic change for urban sustainability.

For more information about ICLEI, please visit: <https://iclei.org/>.

### About Global Lead City Network on Sustainable Procurement (GLCN)

The GLCN is a group of 16 cities committed to drive a transition to sustainable consumption and production by implementing sustainable and innovation procurement. The network is coordinated by [ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability](#). Learn more about the GLCN [here](#) and explore [Pittsburgh's sustainable procurement profile](#).

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