

MEDIA RELEASE

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## Daring Cities 2021: Urban leaders define their demands in tackling the climate emergency ahead of COP26

Bonn, Germany (11 October 2021) - Daring Cities 2021, the virtual forum for urban leaders boldly tackling the climate emergency, has concluded with an action-oriented [Call for Transformation](#) by local and regional governments in the run-up to UNFCCC COP26 in Glasgow.

More than 1500 urban leaders, practitioners and partners from 100 countries joined the five-day Daring Cities forum, co-designed by ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) and the City of Bonn, to set out an action plan to tackle the climate emergency. Urban leaders that are already actively embracing the change delivered a Call for Transformation for effective and transparent collaboration to tackle the crisis.

*“Cities and regions are uniquely positioned for the implementation of critically needed local climate action. However, no city, town or region is - nor can be expected to be - capable of tackling the climate emergency on their own,”* declares the Call for Transformation.

To bring urban leaders’ demands to the international decision-making level, ICLEI will convey the Call for Transformation to various international processes throughout Urban October and UNFCCC COP26 in Glasgow, and beyond.

*“Daring Cities 2021 continues to act as “the” space for local and regional governments to make their voices heard, capacities advanced, and experiences shared,”* said **Gino Van Begin**, ICLEI’s Secretary General. *“The only way forward is to urgently and collectively reverse this dangerous trend in global warming and drastically re-orient the economic and social patterns of our daily lives, re-design our built environment, align with nature and restore the natural systems in and around our cities. Through our Call for Transformation and the collection of best ‘daring’ practices, we will link and present these outcomes of Daring Cities 2021 to the Climate COP26 in Glasgow and beyond,”* he continued.

Representatives from nearly 300 local and regional governments participated in the event and shared their global, diverse experience of bringing bold climate action to their cities, towns, and regions as a response to the climate crisis.

Daring Cities 2021 is supported by Bonn, the Federal State of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), the Foundation for International Dialogue of the Savings Bank in Bonn, the Ministry of the Environment of the Government of Japan, and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) of Germany.

*“As we have demonstrated over the past few days, we are all building and witnessing a new surge globally; more and more cities and regions are stepping up on climate emergency, and national governments are finally starting to incorporate them into the design of national climate plans. This surge is the biggest source of hope for current and future generations to prove that transformation of our societies have already started, and the outcomes from COP26 can only strengthen this,”* highlighted **Frank Cownie**, Mayor of Des Moines, USA, and ICLEI President.

**Katja Dörner**, Mayor of Bonn, ICLEI Global Executive Committee Member and Co-Chair on Climate and Low Emissions Portfolio introduced a special final guest at Daring Cities 2021, **Annika Zeyen**, a Bonn-based two-time Paralympic gold and three-time silver medalist in wheelchair basketball and in handbiking.

Drawing parallels with Ms. Zeyen’s experience, Mayor Dörner said, “You’ve been introduced to our Call for Transformation, I would like to now address our ambitions and the challenges we are facing. The best metaphor for this is sports. My fellow leaders, we need to adopt a very specific attitude – that of a true athlete. We must show discipline, passion, endurance and strength. We want to bring home the medal ... This is a race we must win.”

Annika Zeyen closed the session by saying, “Leaders have to be comfortable to take the less comfortable option. But it will be worth it when you reach your climate goal and get that medal. Only you will know how much work goes into achieving that, just like we athletes. So in that spirit, I wish you, us, the best of luck working towards those goals.”

Among other announcements at the event was the launch of **RegionswithNature**, a dynamic online space where regional governments and their partners can connect, demonstrate their commitment to biodiversity goals, and access resources to enhance their landscape and territorial actions for nature.

RegionsWithNature is building on the success of CitiesWithNature – which has grown to 190 cities and 17 partner organisations since its launch in 2018 – and will follow a similar model. RegionsWithNature is a partner initiative and as ICLEI we are proud to be collaborating with founding partners Regions4, IUCN, the Group of Leading Subnational Governments toward Aichi Biodiversity Targets and others, as well as the founding regions such as Yucatan State in Mexico, Sao Paulo State and Pernambuco in Brazil, Goa State in India, the Western Cape in South Africa, the Community of Madrid in Europe and others, in co-developing RegionsWithNature for regional governments.

“Subnational governments are well-placed to work across the urban-rural continuum, to advance integrated territorial development and to make impactful landscape-scale interventions for

nature-positive development. To amplify their work and achieve even more, subnational governments around the world also need to connect more with each other,” said **Kobie Brand**, Deputy Secretary General of ICLEI and Regional Director of ICLEI Africa.

The outcomes from Daring Cities 2021 will be presented and shared throughout the events of Urban October, including the Innovate4Cities Conference, UN25 in Bonn, G20 Summit, World Cities Day, and then as part of COP26 in Glasgow.

## KEY QUOTES FROM DARING CITIES 2021

**Johan Rockström**, Director, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research; Professor in Earth System Science, University of Potsdam, Germany: *“There is no safe landing if cities throughout the world do not start taking integrated approaches to decarbonization. Cities are fundamental.”*

**Anna Reynolds**, Lord Mayor of the City of Hobart, Australia; Chair of Council of Capital City Lord Mayors: *“We are the last generation of mayors that can take action against climate change. Instead of fear, we need courage. Instead of despair, we need hope. Instead of powerlessness, we need action. Action is what cities are able to deliver. When it comes to climate change, it’s not game over, it’s game on.”*

**Maimunah Mohd Sharif**, Executive Director, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat): *“We have intensified our partnerships across the UN system, the private sector and city networks like ICLEI to support international local climate action. Daring Cities and World Habitat Day are milestones on the road to COP26.”*

**Susan Aitken**, Leader, Glasgow City Council, Scotland, United Kingdom: *“Success at COP26 cannot be measured solely by nation states introducing new policies, but also practical solutions at the local level. Cities have to be involved in shaping these solutions.”*

**Dr. Rudiger Ahrend**, Head of the Economic Analysis, Data and Statistics Division, OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions & Cities: *“Multilevel governance is a key factor for cities to reduce carbon emissions. They can only do one third by themselves, meaning that two thirds of the work is dependent on national governments.”*

## MEDIA PARTNERS

Daring Cities 2021 is supported by official media partners including All Things Urban, EKOİQ, İKLİM HABER (Climate News), Impakter, Shareable, TheMayor.EU, URBANET, urbanNext, World Architecture Community, and WRI Ross Center for Sustainable Cities.

## DARING CITIES CORNERSTONE PARTNERS

Daring Cities is supported by major contributions from the Federal City of Bonn, the Federal State of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), the Foundation for International Dialogue of the Savings Bank in Bonn, the Ministry of the Environment of the Government of Japan, and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) of Germany.

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## NOTE TO EDITORS

### About Daring Cities 2021

Daring Cities is the global virtual forum for urban leaders boldly tackling the climate emergency. Created by ICLEI and the Federal City of Bonn, Daring Cities is a virtual, action-oriented forum to recognize and empower courageous urban leaders – including mayors and other decision-makers, technical staff, researchers, private sector representatives, and community organizers – to disrupt business-as-usual and shift towards business-as-possible. Daring Cities showcases and catalyzes exemplary local climate action to tackle the climate emergency, including ambitious resilience-building and climate mitigation efforts.

For more information about Daring Cities 2021, please visit <https://daringcities.org/>.

Full event program is available here: <https://daringcities.org/program/>.

Video recordings of the virtual forum are available. Registration as part of the Daring Cities Community is required to view recordings: <https://daringcities.org/register/>. Sessions from Daring Cities 2021 will be available one week after they were first broadcast.

### About ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability

ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability (known as "ICLEI") is a global network of more than 2,500 local and regional governments committed to sustainable urban development. Active in 125+ 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/>.

# CONTACT

For further information: <https://daringcities.org/media>.

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