



DARING CITIES 2026 BONN DIALOGUES

FIVE SHIFTS FOR URBAN CLIMATE ACTION

"How do we deliver?"

As climate action enters its implementation era, this question defined the **Daring Cities 2026 Bonn Dialogues**, held alongside the **UN Climate Change Bonn Talks (SB64)** from 10-12 June. Bringing together local and regional leaders, national governments, financial institutions, researchers and key actors in the urban climate space, the dialogues identified five shifts that are shaping the next phase of urban climate action.

1 FROM RECOGNITION TO IMPLEMENTATION

Governance gaps, limited capacity, fragmented financing, and weak coordination continue to slow progress on multilevel implementation of national commitments.

Eighty percent of NDCs 3.0 now include well-developed urban content - up from 49% in the previous cycle. That is a significant political achievement, driven in part by sustained advocacy from the urban community. But recognition on paper does not guarantee delivery on the ground. City climate action plans must now function as local delivery mechanisms for national commitments: Explicitly aligned to NDC targets, structured around implementable project pipelines, and built with monitoring systems from the start. The question every city plan must answer is which national commitments it delivers. The question every national government must answer is which cities are helping it meet its own targets. With 50 NDCs still to be finalized, the window to embed this logic at the heart of national climate planning remains open, and the urban community must use it.

2 FROM CLIMATE SCIENCE TO REAL-WORLD ACTION

The window to shape the impact of the IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Cities is open now, presenting a once-in-a-generation moment to catalyze momentum on local climate action.

The upcoming IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Cities (SR-Cities) is the most significant scientific opportunity for urban climate governance in a generation. The SR-Cities has the potential to reshape what national governments, financial and multilateral institutions do for and with cities. But evidence does not automatically become policy. The translation products, institutional interfaces, and political relationships that will determine whether the report drives real change must be built before the report lands in March 2027. Findings need to be turned into tools cities can use, products national governments can act on, and funding proposals financiers can evaluate. Daring Cities 2026 has begun building them. The work must continue and every city, network, partner, and support of science has a role to play before the report is approved.

3 FROM FINANCING GAPS TO INVESTABLE PROJECTS

Cities and states around the world are setting bold climate targets, yet many still struggle to access the capital needed to deliver them. Stronger governance, clear project pipelines, and institutional capacity are key.

Cities receive less than 5% of global climate finance despite accounting for 70% of emissions. But the primary barrier is not volume, it is structure. The disconnect between what cities consider a good idea and what financial institutions require to invest is the most significant bottleneck in urban climate delivery today. Well-prepared projects get financed, but most city climate

projects are not yet well-prepared. What makes this harder is that cities experience mitigation, adaptation, and just transition simultaneously, they cannot separate climate streams the way national governments do. Closing the gap requires national technical assistance facilities, fiscal decentralization, and blended finance instruments that reflect the complexity of integrated urban projects. When the conditions are right, finance stops being a blocker and becomes an enabler. The goal of every multilevel governance arrangement must be to create those conditions. Critically, 80% of climate projects reported through CDP-ICLEI Track come from CHAMP endorser countries, proof that political commitment to multilevel partnerships directly unlocks the finance pipeline.

4 FROM EMISSIONS FIRST TO WELLBEING FIRST

Cities and states have spent a decade counting what they emit. Now they must design for the quality of lives they make possible.

A climate agenda defined by net-zero compliance alone retrofits old, static systems rather than building the dynamic, people-centered ones that generate genuine political will. The dominant model of urban climate action has been problem-oriented: Identify emissions, reduce them, report the result. That model was necessary, but as the Sustainable Development Goals framework reaches its 2030 deadline, cities and states face the question, what comes next? Designing climate action around human needs first - health, affordability, safety, jobs - rather than emissions targets alone lays the foundation for lasting climate action. It means building innovation ecosystems rather than isolated projects and developing new metrics that capture flourishing alongside emissions. The upcoming IPCC Special Report's chapters already reflect this shift: From cities as problem-solvers to cities as possibility-builders.

5 FROM CITIES AS IMPLEMENTERS TO EQUAL PARTNERS IN CLIMATE ACTION

Multilevel governance is the Paris Agreement's most resilient implementation architecture, and it is time global processes reflected that.

Climate action does not flow top-down or bottom-up. At its most effective, it moves horizontally across national, regional, and local governments working as equal partners, each bringing what the others cannot. With 78 national endorsers, including the European Union, the Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships (CHAMP), has emerged as the clearest political framework for institutionalizing this approach, now backed by a multi-year implementation roadmap. In an era of increasing geopolitical fragmentation, empowered cities and regions have demonstrated they can sustain climate momentum even when national governments shift priorities. Multilevel action is therefore not only the fastest route to delivery; it is a source of resilience for the climate agenda itself. Town Hall COPs are deepening this architecture from the ground-up, evolving from one-off engagement events into sustained two-way mechanisms linking community priorities directly to national and global processes. And the LGMA Constituency is advancing a central structural ask at COP31 to embed subnational governments into the climate finance and multilateral climate agendas.