



GLOBAL COVENANT
of MAYORS for
CLIMATE & ENERGY

THE MULTILEVEL CLIMATE ACTION PLAYBOOK

FOR LOCAL & REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS



An all-in-one resource for local and regional governments,
with guidance for national governments, GCoM alliance partners,
and practitioners to facilitate the integration of Regional and
Local Contributions into Nationally Determined Contributions

TOWARDS A
1.5 °C
FUTURE

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Setting Up the Playbook	4
Critical Opportunity: Integrating RLCs into Party NDC and Climate Policy Developments	5
Pathways and Catalysts: Enabling RLC Integration Into NDC Development	10
Stronger Together	28



Executive Summary

Under the Paris Agreement, ratifying Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) are tasked with submitting credible, just, and ambitious climate commitments within their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)¹. The Paris Agreement also recognizes the important role of subnational governments and other stakeholders in tackling climate change. This presents a two-fold opportunity for national governments and the European Union (hereafter ‘Parties’) to ratchet up their climate ambition and action while ensuring credibility and motivation – both at home and abroad.

Local and regional governments – together with their contributions to climate planning and action – hold the key to unlocking more ambitious Party commitments, as reiterated in the European Committee of the Regions opinion on [Stepping up Europe’s 2030 climate ambition towards COP26](#) and by the [Local Government and Municipal Authorities \(LGMA\) Constituency](#) at the UNFCCC. More than 11,000 cities and local governments have committed to climate action under the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy (GCoM). Others are setting robust, ambitious, and increasingly science-based emissions reduction targets – alongside risk and vulnerability assessments and plans to adapt to the worst effects of the climate crisis. Local and regional government implementation of priority climate actions is well underway. Working with and supported by GCoM alliance partners, local and regional governments have established themselves as hotbeds of innovation and action that can be scaled within and across countries around the globe.

Critical to achieving the credible, just, and ambitious commitments required to avoid a climate catastrophe is effective multilevel governance and coordination: collaboration, communication, and engagement among all levels of government in a process led by Parties. The Multilevel Climate Action Playbook for Local and Regional Governments recommends key elements of an enabling environment that can weave climate ambition and action of local and regional governments into Party policy developments to accelerate vertically integrated NDC implementation and investment plans. This enabling environment can help produce *Regional and Local Contributions (RLCs)*, which are complementary to – and designed for integration with – Nationally Determined Contributions². RLCs are:

/// The climate commitments, actions, and achievements of local and regional governments – across mitigation, adaptation, and energy access and poverty – whose value in bolstering Nationally Determined Contributions is formally acknowledged by the UNFCCC and its Parties. RLCs are designed to be integrated into the development of each Party’s NDC in a process of complementarity with existing commitments, with the potential to strengthen their ambition and robustness.

Successful integration of RLCs into Party climate and NDC policy developments will also rely on scaled access to robust and compatible data. As the critical thread for effective multilevel governance, data at national, regional, and local levels hold the key to visualizing potential impact, realizing planned action, and financing implementation within and across countries.

Underpinned by robust data, effective RLCs should include at least the following elements:

- **A baseline level of ambition**, including a minimum target in line with current NDCs, geographically differentiated commitments to mitigation and adaptation reflecting the local context and capabilities, and a five-yearly review process.
- **Mitigation and adaptation commitments and actions**, addressing key sectors and synergies, driven by data, using monitoring and evaluation processes, with resilience and equity outcomes (e.g. facilitating renewable energy access, reducing energy poverty, and ensuring energy affordability for all).
- **Institutional set-up / implementation parties**, addressing government operations as well as the whole territory / jurisdiction – in part facilitated by relevant national-level focal points and technical working groups.
- **Transparency, measurability, and aggregation** to facilitate collaborative and complementary contributions to national policies, including global reporting, advocacy, science-based targets, and inclusion in reports to the UNFCCC.
- **Compatibility with NDCs** to facilitate incorporation into vertically integrated national policy developments, inclusive of NDC implementation and investment plans.
- **Alignment with existing nationally recognized commitments**, including GCoM, the Cities Race to Zero, and the Cities Race to Resilience.
- **Consultation and dialogue** to facilitate co-creation and co-ownership of vertically aligned climate and sectoral policies and plans that enable alignment of effort, stakeholder participation and tracking impact.

Grounded in research and multilevel government practitioner experience, the Playbook sheds light on the barriers to effective multilevel climate collaboration, recommends the enabling activities necessary to bolster Party climate commitments through the integration of local and regional government ambition and action, and provides a curated repository of publicly available resources geared towards executing these activities at scale. Through policy-oriented recommendations, the Playbook serves as a reminder that national governments – leveraging the contributions of their regional and local counterparts – can meet the ambition of the Paris Agreement when fostering multilevel collaborative spaces and developing capacity with GCoM alliance partners, the private sector, and civil society.

¹ The Playbook refers to ‘Parties’ as the 190 national governments and the supranational European Union (EU) which have ratified the Paris Agreement, specifically in the context of integrating RLCs into Party policy developments for the NDC Cycle. The Playbook acknowledges that the EU is permitted to enter into – and implement the obligations of – international agreements on behalf of its member-states, in accordance with Articles 191-192 TFEU. The Playbook also acknowledges that other UNFCCC Parties who have yet to ratify the Paris Agreement may choose to do so in the future, and that non-Paris Agreement Parties may submit an NDC.

² A. Cooper, “–Climate governance after 2020: a European and global perspective a contribution to the UNFCCC COP24”, CDR 923/2018 “Calls for NDCs to include an aggregation of regionally and locally determined contributions to recognise the role of subnational authorities in the achievement of the international climate commitments and considers that, provisions should be enshrined in the Regulation on the Governance of the Energy Union, notably as regards the participation of LRAs in the preparation of the Integrated National Energy and Climate Plans. Calls for the transparency framework to include in the national inventory reports a dedicated section on mitigation actions undertaken at the subnational levels of governments as a way to help track the progress towards achieving the NDC (and R/LDCs).”

Setting Up the Playbook

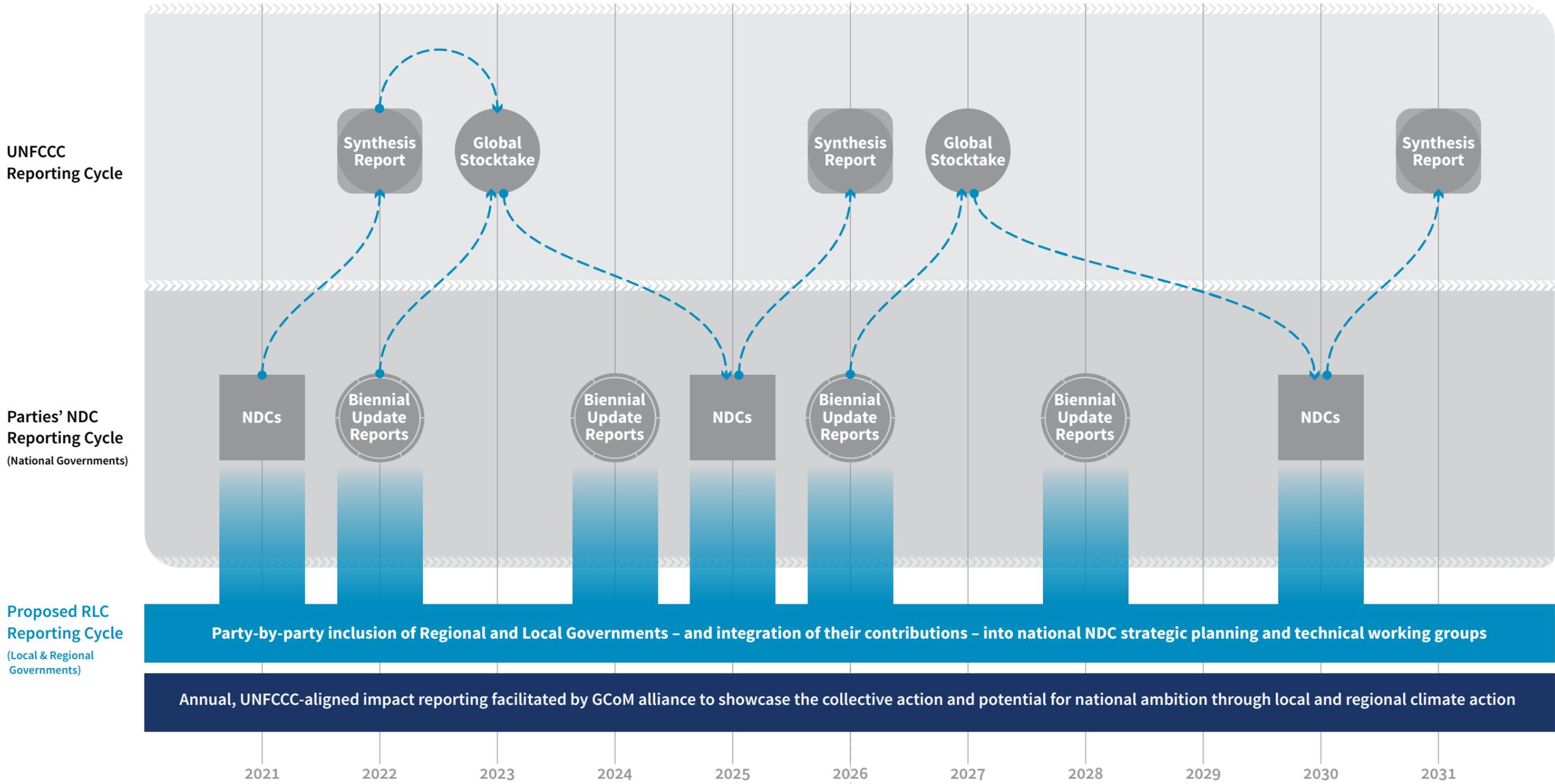
By recommending the enabling environment for robust RLCs, the Multilevel Climate Action Playbook seeks to help facilitate the development and implementation of climate action plans across national, regional, and local government. Its ultimate aim is to support the creation of credible climate commitments and accelerated action – manifested in high quality, ambitious, and feasible NDCs. To do this, the Playbook seeks to:

- 1 Understand** the barriers to multilevel climate collaboration on Paris Agreement implementation;
- 2 Identify** the mechanism for integrating RLCs into Party policy developments for the NDC Cycle;
- 3 Recommend enabling activities** which advance multilevel climate governance and coordination, as well as enable the development of RLCs;
- 4 Highlight ‘assists’ from GCoM alliance partners*, Parties, and the private sector** that can further unlock opportunities to strengthen NDC policy and implementation via integration of RLCs; and
- 5 Share resources** (research, tools, and case studies) for use with select enabling activities of local/ regional and national governments, and city/ country network partners.

The Playbook is intended to serve as an all-in-one resource for local and regional governments, with guidance for national governments, GCoM alliance partners and practitioners who aim to support multilevel collaboration. It is accompanied by an annex of research papers and practical resources, as well as a repository of multilevel case study examples on the [GCoM website](#). This accompanying suite of resources and examples are intended to provide additional detail and help facilitate the recommended activities contained within the Playbook.

* The GCoM alliance is composed of more than 100 global, regional, and national partners focused on strengthening climate-related coordination, collaboration, and advocacy together with – and behalf of – local and regional governments. Learn more about the GCoM alliance [here](#).

Critical Opportunity: Integrating RLCs into Party NDC and Climate Policy Developments



Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and the NDC cycle

Recognizing the individual and collective efforts required to live and prosper on Earth, the Paris Agreement aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change – specifically by limiting the increase in the world’s mean temperature to well below 2 degrees Celsius (°C) and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C, increasing adaptive capacity in line with the global goal on adaptation, and securing finance flows that are consistent with these needs. To meet its ambition, the Paris Agreement requires UNFCCC Parties to submit Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) every five years³ – with the expectation of greater ambition, action, and quality of data after each round of submission (more information on NDCs [available here](#)). Through NDCs, national governments communicate their committed actions to:

- **Reduce their fair share⁴ of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions** relative to the goals of the Paris Agreement
- **Build resilience** to adapt to the impacts of climate change

To facilitate a stepwise process for Parties as they craft or update NDCs, the Paris Agreement also requires the submission of both a [National Inventory Report](#) (NIR) of their GHG emissions and a [Biennial Update Report](#) (BUR). The BUR contains GHG inventories, mitigation actions, and support needed or received. Factoring in this reported information, the UNFCCC performs a ‘[Global Stocktake](#)’ (GST) every five years that aggregates national commitments against the best available science to assess global progress towards achieving the objectives of the Paris Agreement. As an aggregation effort, the GST focuses on the key messages, policy recommendations, best practices, new opportunities, and lessons learned across sectors and thematic areas – including an equity lens – required to propel greater ambition and action.

The first GST will be published in 2023 and again every five years, intended to provide a two-year lead time in advance of the next NDC submission deadline. As NDCs account for specific circumstances across Parties, the GST timeline is established in a complementary manner to allow consideration of its outputs ahead of the next NDC deadline.

³ Due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the deadline for the submission of the first NDCs as part of the five-year cycle was moved from 2020 to 2021. Subject to further notice, the UNFCCC expects the NDC Cycle to retain its original five-year timeline, with the next round of NDCs expected by 2025.

⁴ The concept of fair share, and specifically each Party’s fair share of global GHG reductions is introduced in the Paris Agreement, but not as yet articulated in the Paris Rulebook. See this [fair share technical background](#), developed to help interpret the meaning of fair share in Canada, as developed by Christian Holz, an academic and global authority on carbon budgeting and burden sharing as well as a co-creator of the Stockholm Environment Institute’s’ [Climate Equity Reference Calculator](#) for more information.

The status of NDCs

The September 2021 [UNFCCC Synthesis Report](#)⁵ finds that the updated and current NDCs “imply an urgent need for either a significant increase in the level of ambition of NDCs between now and 2030 or a significant overachievement of the latest NDCs, or a combination of both.” Based on the latest NDCs received in September 2021 and in the context of the global carbon budget required to limit warming to 1.5 °C, the Report finds that:

- ⦿ Cumulative CO₂ emissions in between 2020-2030 are likely to use up 89% of the global carbon budget.
- ⦿ The post-2030 carbon budget remaining will be approximately 55 GtCO₂e, an amount equivalent to the average annual CO₂ emissions for 2020-2030 based on the latest NDCs.



[Climate Action Tracker](#) (CAT) is one of the initiatives that assesses NDCs for their sufficiency in comparison with the goal of keeping global warming to 1.5 °C. As of September 2021, CAT’s analysis finds only one Party – The Gambia – whose NDC is compatible with the Paris Agreement. See CAT’s rating methodology [here](#)⁶.

⁵ Published September 17, 2021, the latest NDC Synthesis Report previewed 164 of the latest available NDCs recorded in the interim NDC registry as of 30 July 2021. These NDCs cover 93% of total global emissions in 2019 and represent all 191 Parties to the Paris Agreement (the European Union’s NDC includes information on its 27 member-states). A subsequent update to the key findings of the September 2021 report is slated for October 2021, covering new or updated NDCs submitted between 31 July and 12 October 2021.

⁶ While there is no authoritative nor exhaustive methodology to assess or rank NDCs, third-party assessments like Climate Action Tracker (CAT) can provide an indicative snapshot of Party progress. In addition to countries assessed by CAT, there are others with ambitious NDCs (e.g. Bhutan). Think tank Climate Analytics’ [1.5 °C National Pathway Explorer](#) provides an additional third-party look at up-to-date calculations of ambition gaps for different countries.

This third party assessment of the latest NDCs is consistent with a [2020 UNEP report](#), which highlighted that there are critical **ambition gaps** – the differences between Parties’ current NDC commitments and the 1.5 °C degree pathway dictated by science and the Paris Agreement – and **implementation gaps** – the progress still required of Parties on executing mitigation, adaptation, and international cooperation action. In other words: more ambitious goals and more action are needed, now.

Recognizing these gaps, the [UN High-Level Climate Champions](#) launched the [Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action](#) (hereafter ‘Marrakech Partnership’), which supports Paris Agreement implementation by enabling collaboration on climate between national, regional, and local governments, as well as business and investors. The Marrakech Partnership focuses on accelerating ambition by aligning subnational actors with Paris Agreement mechanisms, facilitating compatibility and integration between climate planning and action across national, regional, and local government. Moreover, its support of the UNFCCC’s Global Climate Action Portal has introduced transparent and robust methods to track the contributions, progress, and impact of all levels of government as well as the private sector. Actively identifying opportunities to help strengthen NDC ambition and accelerate implementation, the Marrakech Partnership is an active agent working to convene government stakeholders, identifying pathways for collaboration, and supporting efforts to integrate RLCs into Parties’ climate policy and implementation developments.

RLCs: bolstering national plans and actions

The [GCoM alliance](#) estimates that its cities and local governments alone could comprise 3.8 GtCO₂e of annual emissions abatement potential by 2030 – equivalent to four years of CO₂ emissions from global commercial aviation⁷.

It is feasible to reduce GHG emissions from urban areas globally by 90% by 2050 using existing and proven technologies.

It is clear that a critical opportunity to address the climate crisis lies in the RLCs. Local and regional leaders can not only focus on achieving local benefits but can help their national governments achieve more ambitious NDCs – a joint national goal – and meet the global aims of the Paris Agreement.

Complementing [key policy recommendations and resources](#), the Multilevel Climate Action Playbook proposes a NDC Cycle strengthened by the ambition and action of RLCs. To do so, the Playbook recommends:

- **Inclusion of Regional and Local Governments - and integration of their contributions – in their country’s NDC strategic planning and technical working groups.** As a nationally-led process, NDC policy and implementation development can be strengthened by ensuring subnational government representation and integrating localized data, policy, and programmes into the national policy framework.

⁷ CO₂ Emissions from Commercial Aviation 2013, 2018, and 2019. The International Council on Clean Transportation, 2020.

Vertical inclusion can help foster deeper policy alignment across all levels of government in a collaborative process grounded in experience, capacity, and ambition.

- **Comprehensive, annual, and UNFCCC-aligned impact reporting facilitated by the GCoM alliance.** Leveraging the foundation of reported data from its 11,000+ cities and local governments, the GCoM alliance can strengthen its annual aggregation report to highlight aggregate information on GHG inventories; climate risk and vulnerability assessments (CRVAs); local renewable energy potential assessments; priority mitigation and adaptation actions, identified needs to scale up action, reporting and evaluation; and support received.

Annual impact reporting through the GCoM alliance represents the official cumulative potential, action, and support that local and regional governments can provide at a global scale. Through further partner and resource mobilization to improve data availability, robustness, and technical capacity across local governments at scale, the quality and impact of RLCs will rise. National governments whose decision-making bodies and NDC development processes are inclusive of regional and local government stakeholders – and integrate their contributions – are accelerating progress towards the ambitious commitments required by the Paris Agreement.

Leveraging [existing publicly available reporting platforms](#), support from GCoM alliance partners, and continued advocacy across levels and sectors, this roadmap charts a pathway for the integration of RLCs into both national government policy and their NDC commitments and plans.

Recognizing that no two cities or countries are identical, further development is needed to highlight regionalized and context-specific pathways for RLC integration into Party NDC policy development. A dedicated, GCoM-convened [RLC Expert Group](#) is actively reviewing opportunities for RLC-NDC integration pathways and aims to provide additional guidance and communication in 2022.

• **Immediate opportunities:** • **2021 NDC implementation plans and budgets**

• While Parties have either submitted or are finalizing their NDCs for the 2021 deadline, there remains an immediate opportunity for local and regional governments to inform and guide their respective national governments' policy developments: implementation plans and budgets. With the NDCs finalized and Parties setting out to operationalize their commitments, local and regional governments – together with support from their network partners – are today ready to engage in dialogue to highlight the value of their contributions and capabilities towards strengthening nationwide implementation and budget allocation efforts.



Pathways and Catalysts: Enabling RLC Integration Into NDC Development

Alignment among national, regional, and local governments towards ambitious NDCs and climate policy requires strong and integrated RLCs. To increase the robustness, ambition, and inclusion of RLCs, a broad range of stakeholders need to capitalize on critical levers in this current window of opportunity. These are:

- **Pathways** that local and regional governments can pursue to foster an enabling environment through which they can craft credible climate commitments and work with national governments to weave them into NDC development processes; and
- **Catalysts** that GCoM alliance partners, Parties, and other societal stakeholders can support to facilitate multilevel governance structures and processes, integrate RLCs, and boost the ambition, robustness, and inclusiveness of their NDCs and climate actions.



While the Playbook predominantly focuses on pathways involving local, regional, and national governments, it also recognizes the critical role of cross-sectoral capacity-building and finance in accelerating the development of an enabling environment for RLCs and their integration into Party climate policy and implementation developments.

Through these pathways and catalysts, the Playbook aims to highlight the sheer potential for stronger, credible, and more ambitious climate commitments from Parties when creating the space for multilevel collaboration and impactfully integrating the contributions of local and regional governments into policy.

Pathways at a Glance

Pathway #1: Learn and link up on science and policy

- **Align local climate plans with the latest science, the Paris Agreement, and your country's NDC.**
 - Take data-driven, policy-targeted inspiration from the [Summary for Urban Policymakers](#) (SUP) and [For Cities, by Cities](#);
 - Get to know the [Paris Agreement](#), your country's NDC, and how they match up;
 - Align your climate action plan with your country's NDC – and find ways to increase ambition together.
- **Link local officials, best practices, and emerging insights – and weave them into national-level plans.**
 - Join and/or strengthen your commitment to knowledge and advocacy mobilization with peers through GCoM alliance partners.

Pathway #2: Partner with national government to integrate Regional and Local Contributions

- **Engage national government ministries, commissions, and task forces focused on climate to secure integration of local and regional perspectives.**
 - Connect with the national government bodies tasked with crafting your country's NDC and highlight the opportunity to strengthen country-wide commitments through RLCs;
 - Coordinate with the GCoM alliance and subnational government associations to make the case *en masse* for increased national impact on mitigation, adaptation, and energy when engaging local and regional governments as distinct policy partners and integrating RLCs.

Pathway #3: Commit to strong and robust targets

- **Take stock of your footprint by developing a community-scale greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions inventory and assessing the climate risks and vulnerabilities you face.**
 - Coordinate across local, regional, and national government to understand the emissions generated in your city/region, by sector;
 - Assess the risks, vulnerabilities and hazards your community faces – integrating both local and national data, where available.
- **Set strong and robust targets that are at least as ambitious as your country's NDC.**
 - Engage elected local officials and/or city council to evaluate, agree, and implement a target;
 - Where possible, establish ambition based on fair-share, science-based targets.

Pathway #4: Act, measure, and report

- **Via the GCoM alliance, report GHG inventories, risk & vulnerability assessments, targets, plans, actions and finance needs on a regular basis (as capacity permits).**
 - Use a standardized, global framework and/or protocol to structure your climate data;
 - Use an established, publicly accessible platform for reporting your climate data.
- **Mainstream climate into core financial processes to inform budgeting and strategic decision-making.**
 - Use a standardized, global protocol for climate-related reporting in your annual financial reports;
 - Prepare for reporting that is compliant with Recommendations from the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD).

PATHWAY #1: Learn and link up on science and policy

Science informs us that we are likely to reach or exceed 1.5 °C (2.7 °F) of warming within the next two decades⁸. Every additional 0.5 °C of warming results in rising intensity and frequency of extreme weather and slow-onset events - including heat waves, heavy precipitation, and drought. Preventing the most severe climate impacts requires more ambitious emissions cuts that align with limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 °C, and securing the livelihoods of vulnerable populations requires innovative, scalable, and affordable adaptive action today. Tackling this challenge requires alignment with the latest science and linkages of local and regional governments through their networks to propel best practice.

➤ **Align local climate plans with the latest science, the Paris Agreement, and your country's NDC**

→ **Take data-driven, policy-targeted inspiration from the [Summary for Urban Policymakers \(SUP\)](#) and [For Cities, by Cities](#).** Both summarize the feasible emissions pathways ahead and the most actionable information for local governments based on the latest available science⁹.

For in-depth scientific analysis of the pathways to a 1.5 °C-world, check out the [IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 °C](#).

→ **Get to know the [Paris Agreement](#), your country's NDC, and how they match up.** With countries submitting updated – and more ambitious – Nationally-Determined Contributions (NDCs) every five years, cities and local governments can play a key role in facilitating local emissions reduction and resilience-building efforts. The most current NDCs of all Parties are available in the [UNFCCC Online NDC Registry](#). [ClimateWatch](#) and [ClimateActionTracker](#) provide third-party summaries, comparisons, and assessments.

→ **Align your climate action plan with your country's NDC – and find ways to increase ambition together⁹.** Identify and evaluate where challenges you face can be mitigated by regional and/or national support. Collaboration and accelerated action across levels of government can also be facilitated via Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) or similar processes. [C40's Vertically Integrated Assessment guide and suite of tools](#) – designed specifically for local and regional government practitioners – helps assess alignment between local climate plans and NDCs, as well as response strategy development.

⁸ IPCC Working Group I Sixth Assessment Report (AR6)

⁹ The schedule of upcoming AR6 Reports is available [here](#), including Working Group 1's 'Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis, published in August 2021.

¹⁰ See B. Brighenti, Covenant of Mayors post 2020 (CDR 1804/2019) “reiterates support for a system of Regionally and Locally Determined Contributions (RLDCs) as a way to formally acknowledge, monitor and encourage the reduction of carbon emissions by cities, local governments and regions globally. The European Commission is asked to work with the CoR to explore how SECAPs or equivalent plans could act as RLDCs providing local contributions to the UN Paris Climate Agreement.”

➤ **Link local officials, best practices, and emerging insights – and weave them into national-level plans**

- ➔ **Join and/or strengthen your commitment to knowledge and advocacy mobilization with peers through GCoM alliance partners.** While there are many, working with a city network partner facilitates access to peer local governments, libraries of best practice, and networking opportunities with cross-sector stakeholders – all of which can help bolster your climate plans, actions, and efforts to collaborate at national level.
- Counting more than 100 organizations, [the partners who form the Global Covenant of Mayors alliance](#) are an ideal place to start.
 - Key elements of a strong network include stable core funding, adequate staffing, and established connections across levels of government and sectors. Access the [network building resources](#) shared by the Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN), a municipal practitioner member-led network from 250+ cities in Canada and the USA.

TRAILBLAZERS [Case studies of learning and connecting](#)

Flanders, Belgium: Facilitating local, regional, and national collaboration to collectively support mitigation and adaptation measures

Established in 2019 by the Flanders Regional Government in Belgium and having entered force in 2020, the Flemish Climate Pact encompasses nearly 300 municipalities and revolves around four key action pillars:

- **Nature-based solutions, with a focus on urban greening**
- **Mitigation policies, with a focus on energy efficiency and RES**
- **Mobility and development of shared, active, and sustainable solutions**
- **Water management, including re-use and up-use**

These four pillars chart a pathway for Flanders – as a region and through each of its ~300 municipalities – to align with the 55% emissions reduction requirement set by the European Union and the Covenant of Mayors in Europe, as well as a 1.5 °C trajectory.

The Flemish Climate Pact holds a stakeholders’ climate dialogue every two years inclusive of cities, local governments, and citizens’ organizations to co-design climate objectives and actions - facilitating broad inclusivity at a grassroots level. Dialogue is also backed by deeds: as part of the mitigation pillar, local governments have signed up to the Covenant of Mayors – Europe commitments for 2030 as the basis for climate and energy action.

From here, the Flemish Regional Government engages biannually with the Belgian National Government to assess, evaluate, and integrate local and regional plans. The Flemish Climate Pact now aims to leverage MyCovenant, one of the official GCoM reporting platforms, to help feed locally reported climate data into biannual progress reports that can inform national policy and NDC development.

To see more examples, visit the Annex.



TRAILBLAZERS Case studies of learning and connecting

South Africa: Establishing an Intergovernmental Committee on Climate Change (IGCCC) and leveraging vertical integration to accelerate climate action planning and implementation

To operationalize its constitutionally-mandated cooperative governance model, South Africa established the IGCCC to enable vertical collaboration on climate change through information exchange, consultation, and collaboration among local, regional, and national governments.



Ministerial political and technical structures – alongside several multi-stakeholder technical working groups – were established to guide climate change work, enhance government coordination and policy alignment, and strengthen provincial-to-local government assistance in line with the Intergovernmental Relations Act. The South African Local Government Association (SALGA) represents local governments in this intergovernmental system, supporting local Integrated Development Plans.

[South Africa's 2021 NDC update](#) makes note of a Climate Change Bill to be adopted by 2021, aiming to strengthen its political infrastructure to plan, implement, and monitor action.

Alongside the IGCCC, four municipalities in South Africa – Cape Town, Johannesburg, Tshwane, and eThekweni – are following a standardized, evidence-based process to develop local Climate Action Plans through vertical integration:

- a) **Climate action planning** – Includes appraisal of powers and national policy and action, reviewing and aligning local with national datasets, strategically aligning local plan actions and targets with national policy.
- b) **Response strategy development** – Intended to accelerate implementation by mainstreaming local climate plans and integrating them into national plans, thereby impacting budgets and financing, policy frameworks and mechanisms, and the distribution of powers.
- c) **Ongoing monitoring and evaluation** – Enhancing data and data sharing between local/national, and developing processes for local metrics and action tracking to be included within national reporting.

Among other resources, these municipalities are using [C40's Vertically Integrated Assessment suite of tools](#) to help facilitate data transformations and craft powerful narratives that can further integrate their contributions to South African NDC development.

As a UNDP Climate Promise participating country, NDC Partnership country, and IKI V-LED Project participant (see [Global initiatives](#) for more information), South Africa is leading by example on comprehensive vertical integration as a means for achieving ambitious NDCs that can meet Paris Agreement goals.

To see more examples, visit the Annex.

PATHWAY #2: Partner with national government to integrate regional and local contributions

More than 11,000 cities and local governments representing over 1 billion people have committed to ambitious, planned, and measurable climate action through the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy (GCoM). As local and regional governments publicly report better quality data and more cities – especially of small and medium sizes – commit to climate action, they can join forces with their respective national governments at strategic and technical levels to boost NDC ambition and implementation.

➤ Engage national government ministries, commissions, and task forces focused on climate to secure integration of local and regional perspectives

➔ **Connect with the national government bodies tasked with crafting your country's NDC and highlight the opportunity to strengthen country-wide commitments through RLCs.** As the NDC is a nationally-led process, local and regional governments have a unique, necessary, and nimble role to play in bolstering NDC planning and implementation. Ensuring representation of local and regional voices at both strategic and technical levels is a key step towards integrating the subnational data, policies, and programs that boost national commitment and action on climate.

- Where further work is needed to foster vertical integration of climate action in your country, advocate for an official agreement or partnership-focused approach (e.g. Memorandum of Understanding) with national government ministries to outline the process for weaving local and regional plans and actions into NDC policy and implementation developments.

➔ **Coordinate with the GCoM alliance and subnational government associations to make the case *en masse* for increased national impact on mitigation, adaptation, and energy when engaging local and regional governments as distinct policy partners and integrating RLCs.** With GCoM alliance partners actively facilitating structured conversations, this is an opportunity to highlight the benefits of horizontal integration at local level to mobilize knowledge, data, and best practice – as well as collaboration on policy and implementation delivery.

- Data visualizations – paired with a strong narrative and strategic, targeted engagement – are impactful and accessible means for evidence-based arguments focused on how cities can enhance national climate ambition and implementation effectiveness.

TRAILBLAZERS Case studies of local and regional government advocacy

National Urban Policies as a lever for centering and recognizing LRG climate action



The 100+ [National Urban Policies](#) (NUPs) in existence today demonstrate a model for recognizing the unique and critical importance of cities and local governments for socioeconomic and climate transformation. At their core, NUPs set a cross-sector engagement roadmap towards transformative, productive, inclusive, and resilient urban development for the long term.

NUPs set a common strategic vision, foster multi-sectoral policy coordination, and enhance integrated territorial perspective. National governments leverage multi-ministerial platforms and formal bilateral coordination mechanisms to collate cross-sector insights.

Acutely aware of its climate risks, **Costa Rica's** NUP anchors all levels of government on a pathway towards “resilient infrastructure and sustainable communities.” Together with its corresponding Action Plan 2018-2022, the country has set “effective and efficient urban planning” as its first core pillar – both signalling and implementing systemic cross-sector engagement.

The development of NUPs in many instances has been supported by the [Urban-LEDS](#) project, which is funded by the European Union and jointly implemented by ICLEI and UN-Habitat. The Urban-LEDS project aims to make Low Emissions Development Strategies a key part of urban policy and planning in cities. By relying on a multilevel model in each country, as well as transboundary peer-to-peer exchange, the Urban-LEDS project is bringing low emissions development strategies to scale and facilitating a transformation of how urban infrastructures and services, such as transport, energy, water, waste and urban space, are planned, delivered, and maintained.

To see more examples, visit the Annex.

Tunisia: tackling the energy transition through national-local collaboration

Like mitigation and adaptation, the transition to clean, secure, and affordable energy cannot succeed without the comprehensive engagement of cross-sector stakeholders – particularly national and local governments. Recognizing this in the unique Tunisian context, the National Agency for Energy Management (ANME) has spearheaded deployment of the Alliance of Municipalities for Energy Transition (ACTE) program, which aims to strengthen Tunisian municipal capacity to contribute their fair share to the national energy transition by exploiting energy efficiency deposits and renewable energy use.

Facilitated in partnership with the Ministry of Local Affairs and Environment, the Local Authorities' Loans and Support Fund, and the Training and Assistance Center for Decentralization, ACTE also seeks to align municipal energy management practices with European Energy Award principles across planning, project set-up, feasibility studies, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

Funding from the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs helps ensure experienced and targeted support, and a newly-opened credit line for local governments in 2018 has since helped finance studies and other investments on energy management.

As local climate action plans are prerequisites for program eligibility, efficient and innovative use of MyCovenant – one of the official GCoM reporting platforms – to visualize critical data among local and national governments can help inform and strengthen Tunisia's climate and NDC policy developments. With an unconditional NDC emissions reduction target of 45%, Tunisia's local and national governments are coordinating hand-in-hand to meet their shared ambition through proven practice on energy management and the implementation of renewable energy and energy efficient technologies.

To see more examples, visit the Annex.



PATHWAY #3: Commit to strong and robust targets

Robust emissions reduction targets and resilience planning goals are among the strongest climate-forward signals in the local and regional government arsenal. Setting a target can motivate other local governments to take action – especially when planned in close coordination, for example in a region or subnational state (known as horizontal cooperation). Taken altogether, robust subnational targets can provide Parties with the long-term visibility needed to bolster NDC and climate policy ambition.

➤ Take stock of your footprint by developing a community-scale greenhouse gas emissions inventory and assessing the climate risks and vulnerabilities you face

- ➔ **Coordinate across local, regional, and national government to understand the emissions generated in your city/region, by sector.** Engaging with national bodies focused on NDC and climate policy – already tasked with submitting biennial reports inclusive of a national inventory and progress-tracking – can help support local inventory development and increase the ambition and robustness of nationwide inventory reporting.
 - Inventories that are consistent with IPCC¹¹ framework methodologies – namely, the [2006 Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories](#) – provide the baseline against which targets are set and evaluated in the short, medium, and long term.
 - The GCoM [Common Reporting Framework](#) (CRF) streamlines the format of GHG inventories under the overarching 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories. Producing inventories that meet CRF requirements can prepare RLCs for integration into national policy developments.
 - Where capacity and resources are a challenge, local inventories can be estimated through a variety of data sources. These include the [Data Portal for Cities](#) (global), [Snapshot](#) (Australia), [MEED](#) (Canada), and [Google's Environmental Insights Explorer](#) (global) – all of which can help produce estimates of activity and provide an evidence base for IPCC-consistent inventories.

- ➔ **Assess the risks, vulnerabilities and hazards your community faces – integrating both local and national data, where available.** The impacts of climate change are felt in all parts of the world and by all levels of government. Research finds that cities with a climate risk and vulnerability assessment (CRVA) take up to six times more adaptation action than those who don't, suggesting that understanding can propel implementation of critical resilience measures¹². Connect with national climate bodies to understand the data they have on-hand, and check out the tools and resources from GCoM alliance partners [here](#) to help you get started.

¹¹ The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the UN body for assessing the science related to climate change. It was established by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in 1988 to provide political leaders with periodic scientific assessments concerning climate change, its implications and risks, as well as to put forward adaptation and mitigation strategies.

¹² [Cities at risk: dealing with the pressures of climate change](#), CDP 2018.

➤ **Set strong and robust targets that are at least as ambitious as your country's NDC**

➔ **Engage elected local officials and/or city council to evaluate, agree, and implement a target.** Facilitate dialogue in relevant local committees and working groups using the best available science and in-depth understanding of your local government capacity. In partnership with national government and city networks, local and regional governments can gain access to best practice, support, and amplification of ambition to highlight progress.

- There is strength in numbers. Local and regional governments, collaborating with each other and on representative national climate policy bodies, can together set coordinated and robust targets grounded in the best available data and activity at both local and national level.

➔ **Where possible, establish ambition based on fair-share, science-based targets.** Local and regional governments are encouraged to set targets in line with their respective willingness and capacity. Some set targets for net-zero by 2050, while others set them in line with their NDCs.

- Robust targets & capacity-building programs have recently emerged, leveraging [guidance from the Science-based Targets Network](#) and carving out a home for credible commitments at local and regional government level. These include the [Race to Zero](#), [Race to Resilience](#), and the [Covenant 2050](#).
- Interim targets (i.e. by 2030 and by sector) can help unpack the technical feasibility of climate ambition, especially when taken in the context of your country's and community's fair share of emissions reduction.



TRAILBLAZERS Case studies of strong and robust inventories, assessments, and/or targets

Chile: generating critical datasets through coordinated subnational climate action

Recognizing the need for provision of GHG emissions inventory datasets across its local and regional governments, Chile has introduced a two-fold approach to meet the moment – especially for small and midsize municipalities with limited capacity. These include:

a) **Establishing Comités Regionales de Cambio Climático (CORECC) or Regional Committees on Climate Change**, which aim to identify climate planning, action, and policy synergies based on the capacities of local and regional governments; and

b) **Regionalizing the creation of GHG emissions inventories** using relevant sectoral proxies to disaggregate national inventory figures and make datasets more accessible to local and regional governments. This provides each Chilean region with access to GHG emissions estimates, split into sectors that remain aligned with IPCC methodologies.

Leading the process of strengthening regional and local coordination now allows the Chilean national government to provide regionally disaggregated data for each biennial national GHG emissions inventory update, clearly signalling the value of identifying synergies between local, regional, and national level datasets.

To see more examples, visit the Annex.



The Cities Race to Zero, Cities Race to Resilience, and Covenant 2050: critical commitments with ambitious and robust targets

The impacts of COVID-19 have impacted communities of all shapes and sizes around the world. [Thousands of cities and local governments around the world](#) have called for a global green recovery that emphasizes the greener, healthier, more equitable, and more resilient growth for current and future generations.

As part of this green recovery, GCoM alliance partners have mobilized a series of game-changing initiatives to collate the critical commitments and targets required to meet the moment, including:

– [The Cities Race to Zero \(CRTZ\)](#), a global campaign run by the COP26 Presidency and High-Level Climate Champions to rally leadership around a zero-carbon transition that prevents future threats, creates decent jobs, and unlocks inclusive, sustainable growth. Core to the CRTZ is a pledge to reach net-zero by 2050 or sooner;

– [The Cities Race to Resilience \(CRTR\)](#), CRTZ’s sibling campaign that aims to catalyze city action to build the resilience of 4 billion people from vulnerable groups and communities to climate risks;

– The Covenant of Mayors – Europe has called on [signatories to step up their climate ambitions](#), committing to achieving climate neutrality by 2050 and engaging cross-sector stakeholders towards a local climate pact and coordinated actions.

In the United States and Canada, mayors have kickstarted the movement to strengthen their commitments through these initiatives. Examples include:

– The US Conference of Mayors – a coalition of more than 1,400 cities in the United States – adopted a [resolution](#) 04 September 2021 endorsing and encouraging localized climate commitment through the UNFCCC’s Cities Race to Zero campaign.

– In Canada, Halifax Mayor and Big Cities Mayors Caucus Chair Michael Savage shared a recruitment letter to peer mayors along with a template motion to council that each mayor could customize and utilize for simultaneously signing their local government to the Cities Race to Zero and Race to Resilience.

To see more examples, visit the Annex.



PATHWAY #4: Act, measure, and report

Transparency and accountability are key elements of credible climate commitments. Measuring and reporting climate action to recognized, UNFCCC-affiliated organizations places local and regional contributions in a strong position for integration into national policy developments. Reports include GHG inventories, various assessments, targets, and plans in initial phases to actions, evaluations and increasingly robust periodic assessments down the road. Thanks to efforts of partners in the Marrakech Partnership, as well as collation by the UNFCCC's Global Climate Action Portal, local and regional governments can report via globally accepted frameworks, protocols, and reporting mechanisms that help bolster visibility and accelerate integration of local action and impact.

- **Via the GCoM alliance, report GHG inventories, risk & vulnerability assessments, targets, plans, actions and finance needs on a regular basis (as capacity permits)**
 - ➔ **Use a standardized, global framework and/or protocol to structure your climate data.** For example: the GCoM [Common Reporting Framework](#) (CRF) streamlines measurement and reporting procedures to ensure robust climate action planning, implementation, and monitoring in line with IPCC guidelines. The CRF facilitates opportunities for global aggregation of data to advocate for local action integration into national climate policy planning, while retaining the flexibility needed to meet specific local and regional circumstances.
 - Moreover, local government reports that have been validated by GCoM reporting platforms can be used to inform engagements with your respective country NDC focal points and decision-making bodies, furthering integration of your contributions.
 - ➔ **Use an established, publicly accessible platform for reporting your climate data.** The GCoM alliance recognizes several reporting platforms that accept, process, and provide feedback on local and regional government data. These include [MyCovenant](#) (Europe, European Neighbourhood, Latin America and other select regions), the [CDP-ICLEI Unified Reporting System](#) (globally available), and [PCP/BARC](#) (Canada only). Because GCoM reporting platforms are affiliated with the [UNFCCC's Global Climate Action Portal](#) (GCAP), your data, policies, and programs will be visible globally to help make the case for weaving RLCs into Party climate and NDC policy developments.

➤ **Mainstream climate into core financial processes to inform budgeting and strategic decision-making**

→ **Use a standardized, global protocol for climate-related reporting in your annual financial reports.** The Recommendations of the [Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures](#) (TCFD) provide globally recognized and increasingly implemented recommendations on climate-related financial risk¹³. Critically, national governments are beginning to recognize the value of these recommendations for their own policy processes – presenting a key opportunity to engage NDC focal points on climate-related implications of your budget.

→ **Prepare for TCFD-compliant reporting.**

- Phase the approach to TCFD implementation. Given its broad scope and the stakeholder engagement required for administrative buy-in, consider a multiyear plan beginning with qualitative assessment, measurement, and disclosure of risk.
- Assess internal capacity needs and the TCFD timeline to prepare staff in anticipation of implementation requirements.
- Engage with TCFD peer networks. Communities of practice can help phase-in TCFD implementation and enhance climate-related financial disclosures.
- Advocate for city-specific resources. Together with GCoM alliance partners, highlight key needs – including technical guidance, tools/resources, and training that can boost implementation.



¹³ Established by the Financial Stability Board, the TCFD develops recommendations for more effective climate-related disclosures that could promote more informed investment, credit, and insurance underwriting decisions and, in turn, enable stakeholders to understand better the concentrations of carbon-related assets in the financial sector and the financial system's exposures to climate-related risks.

TRAILBLAZERS Case studies of action, measurement, and disclosure

MyCovenant and the CDP-ICLEI Unified Reporting System: producing evidence-based climate insights at local, regional, and national levels by reporting to global data platforms



MyCovenant is the dedicated virtual space for the entire Covenant of Mayors – Europe community, the European Neighbourhood, Latin America, and other regions where the platform is coming online. Paired with the CRF, MyCovenant's reporting functionalities are used by more than 10,000 cities and allows for the structured and systematic capture of signatory commitments, progress, and monitoring reports – inclusive of GHG emissions inventories, CRVAs, and other critical elements of their Covenant commitment. Signatory achievements are immediately made available on dedicated online profiles.

The platform also provides a dedicated space for signatories, coordinators, and supporters to share and exchange

knowledge, experiences, and best practices – helping build a qualitative evidence base alongside the quantitative mitigation and adaptation indicators required by the CRF.

The **CDP-ICLEI Unified Reporting System** provides a platform for more than 1,000 cities globally to measure, manage, and report their climate data. Leveraging an 'open' data platform, its datasets are open to national governments, GCoM alliance partners, academics, and the private sector to produce in-depth analysis. From 2022-onwards, the platform will also allow local and regional governments to report on TCFD recommendations – creating an open, transparent space for finance-related disclosure.

Growing data visualization tools are also allowing the creation of powerful narratives that can help drive broader community engagement on climate. Leveraging open data on the CDP-ICLEI Unified Reporting System, **Climate Data Insights for Net Zero Cities and Commitments** was created by the Canadian Urban Sustainability Practitioners (CUSP) to ease the integration of local government-reported data with Parties' annual reporting requirements through the National Inventory Reports (NIRs) in Canada. Replicable in other national contexts, resources that transform complex climate data into accessible and verifiable information are essential to multilevel climate communication – and an enabler for the integration of RLCs into NDC developments.

To see more examples, visit the Annex.

Canada: gathering leading cities and accounting experts around a framework to disclose climate-related financial risk

In 2019, Chartered Professional Accountants (CPA) Canada convened the cities of Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver – together with the Public Sector Accounting Board, C40, ICLEI Canada, and other partners – to contextualize the recommendations of the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) for Cities.

As a result of this effort, the four cities mentioned above are actively incorporating TCFD disclosures and recommendations into their annual reports – providing valuable insight into the financial impact of climate risk.

The full set of resources and successive annual disclosures by Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, and others are available [here](#).

This cross-sector pilot also provides two additional resources from the uniquely Canadian context:

— A [guide to adopting TCFD recommendations for cities](#), highlighting the actions that leading Canadian cities have taken to demonstrate the climate adaptation leadership necessary in the context of the Paris Agreement – and ensuring

inclusion of financial reporting and capital planning; and

— [Technical guidance for adopting TCFD](#) from the Public Sector Accounting Board, which helps accounting and auditing professionals understand the impact of climate-related issues on financial statements and associated disclosures.

To see more examples, visit the Annex.

CATALYSTS: Capacity-building and climate finance

The Playbook’s enabling activities are blanket recommendations that, if adopted by local and regional governments in partnership with national government and with support from city networks, can unlock unprecedented multilevel collaboration by weaving RLCs into national climate policy planning. However, each local and regional government is endowed with specific circumstances that can facilitate or hinder the integration of their contributions into Party policy developments for the NDC Cycle. **To help eliminate these barriers, GCoM alliance partners and Parties can provide catalysts in the form of constructive dialogue, capacity-building, and climate finance.**

➤ Learn and link up on science and policy

GCoM alliance partners	Parties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Facilitate political and technical dialogues across local, regional, and national governments to advocate for vertically integrated NDCs, inclusive Global Stocktakes, and localized NDC implementation plans and budgets. ➔ Sharpen tools across the city climate action journey – from data collection and risk assessment to policy prioritization and evaluation – to boost local and regional capacity. ➔ Coordinate with network partners and Parties, including via the Marrakech Partnership, to mobilize knowledge. This can include joint policy research, program design and delivery, data and tool development, and reporting and measurement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Continuously engage with local and regional governments through facilitated political and technical dialogues to understand subnational synergies and integrate RLCs into NDCs, NDC implementation plans and budgets, and Biennial Update Reports. ➔ Engage with GCoM alliance partners to gain insight into the aggregate plans, actions, and support that local and regional governments can provide to boost NDC policy development and implementation.

➤ Partner with national government to integrate Regional and Local Contributions

GCoM alliance partners	Parties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Advocate for the recognition of local and regional governments as distinct policy partners for Parties, the private sector, and civil society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Designate – or where existing, strengthen – a dedicated focal point at national level to engage local and regional governments and facilitate inclusion of RLCs into country-wide climate and NDC policy processes.

- **For regional/national coordinator partners:**
Advocate for national legislation and/or Memoranda of Understanding committing to vertical integration of RLCs into the Party’s official NDC and the NDC Cycle, inclusive of Biennial Update Reports.
- **For global partners:**
Collaborate with the UNFCCC, through the Marrakech Partnership, for a formal process that integrates RLCs into Parties’ NDC policy developments – accelerating the transition to just, rapid, and scaled climate action.

- **Recognize local and regional governments as distinct policy partners** – engaging them on national strategic and technical bodies to discuss, evaluate, and capture RLCs en route to developing inclusive, ambitious, and robust NDCs.
- **Commit, via legislation or policy engagement, to integrating local and regional government targets and planned actions** into the NDC policy development process beginning with Biennial Local and Regional Update Reports in 2023 and the first fully-integrated NDCs in 2025.
- **Engage local and regional government partners** in a feedback process to strengthen NDCs via the Global Stocktake.

➤ **Commit to strong and robust targets**

GCoM alliance partners	Parties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Communicate clear, translated information around the requirements for strong targets and the commitments entailed in the process for local and regional governments → Facilitate capacity-building activities that enable local and regional governments to measure their impact, set targets, plan, and act. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Access to quality data; ● Knowledge and best practice sharing; ● Matchmaking opportunities across levels of governments, the private sector, and civil society; ● Streamlined reporting processes to reduce local and regional government burdens. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Facilitate local and regional government access to climate data across mitigation, adaptation, and energy – including, where relevant, via downscaled datasets available at national/supranational government level. → Foster an enabling environment for the growth of intragovernmental networks to support knowledge exchange and effective multilevel engagement across policy domains. → Commit, via legislation or policy engagement, to integrating local and regional government targets and planned actions into the NDC policy development process beginning with Biennial Local and Regional Update Reports in 2023 and the first fully-integrated NDCs in 2025.

➤ **Act, measure, and report**

GCoM alliance partners	Parties
<p>➔ Communicate and provide support on reporting platforms, including via GCoM and compatible with the UNFCCC Global Climate Action Portal</p> <p>➔ Co-create, support, and scale local and regional climate action financing initiatives to transform early-stage plans into strategic opportunities and finance-ready projects. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The City Climate Finance Gap Fund, focused on helping cities in developing and emerging countries turn low-carbon, climate-resilient ideas into finance-ready projects; ● ICLEI’s Transformative Actions Program (TAP), supporting subnational governments and their partners to develop priority climate actions into mature, robust, and bankable projects with transformative impacts; ● This repository of funding opportunities for cities and local governments in Europe, hosted by the EU Covenant of Mayors; and ● The Cities Climate Finance Leadership Alliance, a coalition of leaders committed to deploying finance for city level climate action at scale by 2030. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ CCFLA hosts the Green City Finance Directory, which directs subnational governments and stakeholders to project preparation facilities that can support them in developing green and resilient infrastructure, including implementing more efficient heating and cooling systems, building renewable energy, setting up sustainable transit, or climate-proofing resilient infrastructure. ➔ CCFLA also hosts the Leadership for Urban Climate Investment (LUCI), a framework where member initiatives – including the Gap Fund and TAP – set ambitious targets aiming to fill gaps in 	<p>➔ Generate opportunities to fund local and regional government climate planning and implementation by opening channels for climate finance across:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Levels of government; ● International cooperation agreements (e.g. fair share investments, official development assistance obligations, and adaptation-focused funding); ● Private philanthropy; ● Private finance. <p>➔ Co-create, fund, and scale subnational climate financing as well as NDC implementation initiatives across the project preparation timeline, spanning conceptualization and pre-feasibility to implementation and monitoring and evaluation. A few initiatives have started to support cities – particularly in pre-feasibility stages – including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The City Climate Finance Gap Fund, supported by the Governments of Germany and Luxembourg and focused on helping cities in developing and emerging countries turn low-carbon, climate-resilient ideas into finance-ready projects; and ● ICLEI’s Transformative Actions Program (TAP), supported among others by the Government of Germany and established to support the transformation of clean infrastructure concepts into mature, robust, and bankable projects; and ● The World Bank Group’s NDC Support Facility supports implementation of the climate change targets set out in the NDCs of client countries at national level – including NDC-related policy, strategy and legislation, budgeting and investment, as well as monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

... Act, measure, and report

GCoM alliance partners	Parties
<p>the value chain of subnational climate finance by 2025.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Communicate and provide support on the implementation of TCFD recommendations into annual financial reports of local and regional governments via advocacy, outreach, and awareness-building. → Develop, formalize, and establish – together with the UNFCCC – opportunities at scale to integrate RLCs into Party NDC policy developments. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Leverage the GCoM-convened RLC Expert Group to continuously refine and improve IPCC-aligned definitions, technical procedures, and reporting mechanisms. → Develop capacity building programs and resources to enable robust and TCFD-aligned reporting of local climate action and adaptation plans and progress. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure synergy between the Common Reporting Framework and TCFD Recommendations, inclusive of critical financial disclosures and streamlining reporting requirements. ● Support the development of context-based TCFD guidance for local/ regional governments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Strongly encourage local and regional climate reporting via GCoM reporting platforms, inclusive of targets, assessments, plans, actions, as well as funding and financing information in-line with TCFD Recommendations. → Vertically integrate the measurement, reporting, and verification (MRV) systems of GHG emissions by facilitating a national system that enables data aggregation, transparency, and robustness on country-wide carbon footprint and reduction potential. → Develop local and regional capacity for action, measurement, and disclosure via the development and deployment of tools, resources, and communities of practice.



Global initiatives geared towards generating capacity for multilevel collaboration

In addition to the aforementioned recommendations, there are several initiatives meriting inclusion as opportunities and resources from which all levels of government – local, regional, national, and supranational – can benefit and catalyze greater collaboration, especially in regions most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change¹⁴. These are:

1 **The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Climate Promise**, which supports 119 countries – including 39 least developed countries, 28 small island developing states and 14 high emitters to enhance their NDCs under the Paris Agreement by supporting the following five core areas of need:

- Building political will and societal ownership
- Reviewing, aligning, and updating existing targets, policies, and measures
- Incorporating new sectors and/or GHGs
- Accessing costs and investment opportunities
- Monitoring progress and strengthening transparency

Helpful resource: The Climate Promise's Quality Assurance Checklist for revising NDCs supports government, civil society, and others by guiding the NDC revision process. The checklist is currently in use by UNDP Country Offices, the NDC Partnership's CAEP, and other programs delivering NDC support. The checklist can be used by local and regional governments to help boost alignment of RLCs that can ultimately be integrated into Party NDC policy and implementation developments.

2 **The NDC Partnership's Climate Action Enhancement Package (CAEP)**, which delivered targeted, accelerated support to Parties by enhancing the quality, ambition, and implementation of second-round NDCs. The CAEP was a short-term technical support instrument for updating and implementing NDCs, driving climate action while supporting Party efforts to tackle socioeconomic inequality and inequity.

Half of the 65 countries receiving support from CAEP are actively involving local and regional governments in their NDC policy developments: a strong signal for the optimal path forward towards ambitious, feasible, and inclusive Party commitments on climate.

A total of 46 partners are providing financial and technical support through CAEP, complementing other offerings like the UNDP's Climate Promise, the EU Technical Assistance Facility, and the World Bank's NDC Support Facility. Critical support in the form of CAEP is not only enabling more ambitious and robust NDCs; its inclusion of local and regional governments in a holistic process covering data collection, planning, and implementation is accelerating integrated climate action across levels, at scale.

3 **Multilevel Climate Action Plan implementation and integration with NDCs facilitated by the GCoM Global Secretariat**. Commencing with the content of this Playbook, the GCoM Global Secretariat aims to further support both local and national governments (e.g. line ministries and institutions) by initiating a select, country-based process for the multilevel implementation of climate action plans (CAPs) from 2022 to 2024. Among other steps, this process will involve comprehensive reviews of CAP and NDC components among selected local and national government pairings.

¹⁴ Further examples of national and global initiatives are available in the Annex.

These components include:

- **Commitments, targets, and NDCs** – an opportunity to review opportunities for synergy and integration, both within NDCs and CAPs;
- **GHG emissions, climate risk and vulnerability assessments, and reporting** – focusing on the enabling conditions for transparency and compatibility of CAPs with national focal points, bodies, and processes centered on climate and the NDC;
- **Climate action plans, strategies, financing, and implementation** – including concrete local-level data, policies, actions, and investment plans that can be integrated into Party NDC development and implementation. There will also be a focus on localizing climate finance through firm collaboration mechanisms among public and private sector actors, as well as stronger finance strategies; and
- **Institutionalization of the NDC process beyond 2021** – cultivating a framework for sustained, inclusive, and effective multilevel collaboration to implement integrated CAPs and NDC commitments. This includes a review of the governance, CAP, and NDC landscape, as well as the establishment (or strengthening, where they exist) of coordination mechanisms to oversee holistic NDC development.

Beginning in 2022, GCoM Global Secretariat technical assistance activities for CAP, RLC, and NDC integration will include:

- **Guidance** for the development of vertically-integrated RLCs and CAPs;
- **Regional dialogues** to further define, guide, and recommend integration actions to GCoM alliance partners across Regional and National Covenants; and
- **Identification of countries and cities** to adopt CAP, RLC, and NDC recommendations in the medium-term. Assistance will consist of coordination of meetings and events that can help activate an effective country-based process for a) recognition/integration of CAPs as part of the institutional framework for implementation of multilevel climate action policies, and b) technical detailed alignment of CAPs with each country's NDC. A series of NDC Matchmaking Sessions will be organised in 2022 to facilitate multilevel governance dialogues and cooperation channels among cities and national governments.

4 The International Climate Initiative (IKI) **V-LED (Vertically Integrated Low Emissions Development)** and the European Union-funded **Urban-LEDS II Project**. V-LED supported national governments in Kenya, South Africa, Vietnam, and the Philippines to tap the full potential of local and regional climate action by strengthening vertical policy coordination processes and learning networks. Urban-LEDS II, jointly implemented by ICLEI and UN-HABITAT, focuses on accelerating the creation and implementation of urban low-emission development strategies in more than 60 cities across Brazil, India, Indonesia, South Africa, Bangladesh, Colombia, Lao PDR, and Rwanda. The project also explores enhanced multilevel governance, and draws on the experience and expertise of 16 European cities in a peer exchange and cooperation component.

Together, these multilevel initiatives collate technical expertise from 40+ organizations, frameworks and tools for assessment, and the additional capacity to facilitate multilevel dialogues to help demonstrate the immense value of integrating RLCs into more ambitious, higher quality national policy and NDC development. They are catalysts for transformative systems change – forging key relationships, knowledge and best practice exchange while developing a shared pathway with defined roles, responsibilities, and resources.

Stronger Together

The Multilevel Climate Action Playbook serves as concrete evidence that national government climate policy and their NDCs are significantly more successful when weaving in RLCs – through multilevel collaboration and capacity-building in partnership with city networks, the private sector, and civil society. The Playbook is a compilation of the challenges that Parties face, the enabling activities in tandem with local and regional governments that can help nations overcome those hurdles, and the resources that can carry the technical momentum needed to develop impactful RLCs.

Already, investments in the multilevel NDC-focused initiatives mentioned above are making an impact. In the face of an unprecedented global pandemic, all 191 Parties to the Paris Agreement have updated their NDCs – thanks in part to the capacity-building efforts of partners. Among updated NDCs demonstrating high levels of cross-governmental inclusion and integrated plans and actions are the countries who have leveraged the technical support and capacity of programs like UNDP’s Climate Promise and NDCP’s CAEP. Some Parties have ratcheted up their ambition a step further by legislating the involvement of local and regional governments in their climate policy governance – entrenching the inclusion and integration of RLCs into policy developments at home and for the planet, via their Nationally Determined Contributions.

In countries where the shift towards multilevel governance is gaining steam, the emerging formula is a combination of **shared space, time, and resource** – initiated by national governments, fueled by local and regional government engagement, and resulting in more robust, more ambitious, and more feasible NDCs. Combined with continued local and regional government planning and action, the systemic transformations that Parties need to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement are within reach.

Integrating RLCs into national climate policy and NDC developments is the first step towards realizing the safe, resilient, and sustainable future enshrined in the Paris Agreement. Local, regional, and national governments today have a critical, collective opportunity in the climate governance space to reinforce the fact that we are stronger, together.



Notes

The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy (GCoM) Secretariat would like to thank the RLC Expert Group and the partners whose time, expertise, contributions made this Playbook a reality.

Annex shares the resources and examples referenced throughout the Playbook. A growing online **repository** accompanies this Annex to provide a more detailed review of the initiatives, programs, and technical documents developed by the **RLC Expert Group**, GCoM alliance partners, and other invaluable organizations in the climate action space.

Note on the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples

While developed by and for local and regional governments and their network partners, the Multilevel Climate Action Playbook also recognizes the role of Indigenous Peoples, the climate risks and impacts they face, and the value in ensuring their inclusion across traditional knowledge, dialogue, planning, and action. Following recognition of this role in the Paris Agreement and by the Conference of the Parties, the Playbook welcomes amplification of existing UNFCCC commitments to Indigenous Peoples, further awareness of the resource mobilization activities supported by the **Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP)**, and the promotion of inclusive, equitable, and just consultation processes to integrate the knowledge and expertise of Indigenous Peoples.

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FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

The GCoM alliance also thanks the following organizations for their invaluable contributions to the RLC Expert Group:

- The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)
- The Joint Research Centre – the European Commission’s science and knowledge service
- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat
- World Resources Institute

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The Global Covenant of Mayors and its cities and local governments are supported by an alliance of partners. To learn more, please [click here](#).



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