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WORLD SCIENTISTS, LOCAL LEADERS MAP RESEARCH AGENDA FOR CITIES AND CLIMATE CHANGE FOR COMING YEARS

The CitiesIPCC Cities and Climate Change Science Conference, hosted by the City of Edmonton, culminated today with the establishment of a global blueprint to better understand climate change, its impacts on cities, and the critical role localities play in solving this challenge. Over the course of three days, scientists, policymakers, researchers and development experts worked to assess the current state of academic and practice-based knowledge related to cities and climate change, identify key knowledge priorities, and chart a course forward for academic, practitioner and urban policy-making communities.

The conference agreed that transformation needs to happen now. Specifically, conference participants coalesced around the need for:

- **Inclusion and social transformation**, focusing on:
  - Justice, equity
  - Power asymmetries and structural barriers
  - Most vulnerable populations & ecosystems
  - The challenges and opportunities of informality
  - Innovative forms of governance and institutions

- **Improving evidence-based information**
  - Boundaries of urban systems
  - Exploring trade-offs and synergies of climate change mitigation & adaptation
  - Data, scenarios and modelling at the city level
  - Robust climate and urban information
  - Inequity in data gaps; mapping informal settlements
  - Potential and benefits of Nature-Based Solutions

- **Funding & finance**
  - Role of banks, insurance companies & developers in climate action/inaction
  - Translation of costs & benefits of climate actions across multi-economic sectors (e.g. private/finance)

“The impacts of climate change are already being felt in our urban areas, and the next few years are critical for determining how effectively we will rise to the challenge of protecting our cities. However, we can’t undertake this work blindly. At this conference we have been able to coalesce around the most important areas of inquiry so we can use precious time and resources in the most efficient and targeted way possible. And this research won’t just help save our cities – it will
also improve them for generations to come,” said Seth Schultz, Director of Science and Innovation, C40 Climate Leadership Group, and one of the co-chairs of the conference’s Scientific Steering Committee.

The conference, the first of its kind, was co-sponsored by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), with nine partners - C40 Cities, Cities Alliance, Future Earth, ICLEI, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment), UN-Habitat, and the World Climate Research Programme (WCRP).

“Years from now we will look back at this conference time in Edmonton and celebrate how the collaboration between the scientific community, policymakers and practitioners helped initiate positive change at the local level. I’m so proud that Edmonton was able to play host to some of the brightest minds on our globe and I’m committed to furthering the efforts that came out of this conference,” said Don Iveson, Mayor of Edmonton.

The CitiesIPCC conference helped forge stronger partnerships among the 750 leaders, innovators, and influencers who registered, and cultivated a collaborative environment among academics, policymakers and practitioners to share new findings, initiatives and programs. Over 6,000 others from more than 30 countries followed the conference online.

"The unprecedented engagement we have seen over the past three days at the highest levels of leadership from around the globe means that this meeting does not end with our departure from Edmonton. We now travel home with a new responsibility to create modalities of science that open the ivory towers of the academic establishment towards more engaged, accessible and actionable knowledge for cities,” said Diana Ürge-Vorsatz, Vice-Chair of IPCC Working Group III and one of the co-chairs of the conference’s Scientific Steering Committee.

“Business-as-usual will not save the world. This conference disrupted the traditional story of the world’s cities to show how science can partner with policy and practice to transform the world’s cities into climate-smart, equitable and sustainable homes for all,” said Debra Roberts, Co-Chair of IPCC Working Group II, and a member of the conference’s Scientific Steering Committee.

“With the contributions of cities and the risks to cities in the context of climate change loud and clear, solution-oriented knowledge is a must. This conference was a milestone on the way to a collective effort by the science, policy and practice communities to co-create and co-design a global research agenda for the future and for forging partnerships among them,” said Shobhakar Dhakal of the Asian Institute of Technology and one of the co-chairs of the conference’s Scientific Steering Committee.

“This conference is not just a milestone for how the research community thinks about co-designing its priorities with diverse voices from across society. It has also issued a call to strengthen the social sciences so that we can better understand complex questions like the role of informal settlements in addressing climate change. We can only create real transformative changes in cities through research focusing on issues of equity, power distribution, integration of values, and human behaviour,” said Anne-Hélène Prieur-Richard, Global Hub Director,
Montreal, of Future Earth and one of the members of the conference’s Organizing Committee.

The three-day conference, organized by a Scientific Steering Committee made up of engineering, natural and social sciences, humanities, and urban development experts, focused on four major themes:

- **Cities and Climate Change** – Global commitments like the Paris Agreement, Sustainable Development goals, New Urban Agenda, and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction require cities to implement new sustainable development plans to adapt and respond to climate change. This theme explored gaps in knowledge of climate mitigation and adaptation in the context of meeting these global commitments, including the costs of climate action/inaction, equity and justice issues related to climate change, and the imperative for actions resulting in low-carbon, climate-resilient, sustainable development.

- **Urban Emissions, Impacts, and Vulnerabilities** – Cities are some of the largest contributors to global greenhouse gas emissions, and as such, experience some of the worst effects of climate change. This theme explored current and future urban emission drivers, urban climate impacts, and climate risks and vulnerabilities to provide science-based pathways for cities to pursue emissions reductions and resilience strategies.

- **Solutions for the Transition to Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Cities** – With the advent of advanced technological and scientific solutions to climate change, this session explored the transformative nature of cutting-edge sustainable development strategies. The theme included discussions about disruptive technology, urban infrastructure and design, and institutional innovation.

- **Enabling Transformative Climate Action in Cities** – City climate action takes place in the context of diverse social, environmental, economic, and developmental realities. This theme explored new and existing avenues for enabling climate action that addresses poverty and inequality, re-shapes power relations, and re-conceptualizes our vision of what cities are, could be, and should be.

The findings from these sessions on recent advances in knowledge will stimulate timely publications to be assessed in the IPCC’s ongoing Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), scheduled to be completed in 2022. The menu of global and regional research inspired by the conference will also help inform a special IPCC report on cities, as well as support the implementation of the Paris Agreement, the New Urban Agenda, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the local level.

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For Information about The CitiesIPCC Cities and Climate Change Science Conference visit: https://citiesipcc.org/

About C40 Cities
C40 Cities connects more than 90 of the world’s greatest cities, representing 650+ million people and one quarter of the global economy. Created and led by cities, C40 is focused on tackling climate change and driving urban action that reduces greenhouse gas emissions and climate risks, while increasing the health, wellbeing and economic opportunities of urban citizens. The current chair of the C40 is Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo; and three-term Mayor of New York City Michael R. Bloomberg serves as President of the Board. C40’s work is made possible by our three strategic funders: Bloomberg Philanthropies, Children’s Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF), and Realdania. To learn more about the work of C40 and our cities, please visit www.c40.org, follow us on Twitter @c40cities or Instagram @c40cities and like us on Facebook at http://www.facebook.com/C40Cities.

About Cities Alliance
Cities Alliance is the global partnership supporting cities to deliver sustainable development. Working in cities where it matters most, the Brussels-based organisation promotes long-term programmatic approaches that are focused on strengthening local skills and capacity, developing national urban policies, investing in infrastructure, enabling strategic city planning, and engaging citizens. Its diverse membership includes multilateral organisations, national governments, international associations of local government, international NGOs, private sector, foundations, and academia.

About City of Edmonton
Nestled on the banks of the North Saskatchewan River, Edmonton is home to nearly one million people from all walks of life including Indigenous people and new Canadians. Our city’s strength is founded in this diversity and the varied languages and traditions that create our cultural fabric. Home to six post-secondary institutions, humming research parks and creative start-up organizations, Edmonton is an international destination for advanced technologies, healthcare and green energy. Edmontonians enjoy a strong connection with nature and work together to adapt to the reality of climate change and create environmental sustainability and resilience for future generations.

About Future Earth
Future Earth is an international platform of research, innovation and collaboration to support and accelerate transformations to a sustainable world. It operates from five global hubs – in Montreal, Stockholm, Colorado, Paris and Tokyo – and is connected to over a dozen regional and national offices across the globe. The Governing Council of Future Earth is composed of the International Council for Science (ICSU), the International Social Science Council (ISSC), the Belmont Forum of funding agencies, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations University (UNU), Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), the STS forum and the World Meteorological Organization.

About ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability
ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability is the leading global network of more than 1,500 cities, towns and regions committed to building a sustainable future, impacting over 25 percent of the global urban population.

About Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)
The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is a partnership of scientists and policymakers. It is the international body for assessing the science related to climate change. The IPCC was set up in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to provide policymakers with regular assessments of the scientific basis of climate change, its impacts and
future risks, and options for adaptation and mitigation. IPCC assessments provide a scientific basis for
governments at all levels to develop climate-related policies.

About United Cities and Local Government (UCLG)
United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) is the world organization of local and regional governments
and their associations, representing and defending their interests on the world stage. UCLG’s network of
members represents 70% of the world’s total population and is present in all world regions: Africa,
Asia-Pacific, Europe, Eurasia, Latin America, the Middle East and West Asia, and North America; organized
into 7 regional sections, 1 metropolitan section and 1 Forum of regions. This network includes over 240,000
towns, cities, regions and metropolises, and over 175 associations of local and regional governments in 140
countries. Among UCLG’s key areas of political interest are: local democracy, climate change and
environmental protection, the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, local finance, urban
development and city diplomacy in peace building.

About UN Environment
UN Environment is the leading global voice on the environment. It provides leadership and encourages
partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to
improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations. UN Environment works with
governments, the private sector, the civil society and with other UN entities and international
organizations across the world.

About UN-Habitat
UN-Habitat is the United Nations programme working towards a better urban future. Its mission is to
promote socially and environmentally sustainable human settlements development and the achievement
of adequate shelter for all.

About the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)
The UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) mobilizes scientific and technical expertise
from academia, civil society, and the private sector to support practical problem solving for sustainable
development at local, national, and global scales. The SDSN has been operating since 2012 under the
auspices of the UN Secretary-General. The SDSN is building national and regional networks of knowledge
institutions, solution-focused thematic networks, and the SDG Academy, an online university for sustainable development.

About World Climate Research Program (WCRP)
World Climate Research Programme (WCRP) – co-sponsored by the International Council for Science (ICSU), the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) – is the primary coordination mechanism for international climate research. WCRP focuses on fundamental and underpinning cutting-edge climate science where international coordination enables scientific advances that would not happen otherwise; its research and climate modeling efforts provide the foundation for national and international climate assessments. WCRP serves as the community’s preferred voice advocating the importance of climate research; for use in an increasing range of practical applications of direct relevance, benefit and value to society.