Cities have their say at UN Climate Summit in Paris

Fighting climate change only possible with strong local level involvement

Frankfurt/Paris, 4 December 2015. Climate Alliance, the world’s largest city network dedicated to climate action, is carrying the voices of 1,700 cities and towns to the climate negotiations in Paris with the help of five local leaders from across Europe. Acting as official ambassadors for the local level, these elected representatives are transporting a clear message: there can be no successful Paris agreement without the recognition, involvement and input of local governments. This message will prove especially relevant today, at the Climate Summit for the Local Leaders, as well as in the wake of an array of other Paris events centring on the local and regional level. The contributions of the ambassadors will articulate the perspectives of an important group of stakeholders without a seat at the official negotiating table.

Ambassador Mercè Conesa i Pagès, President of Barcelona Provincial Council, Spain sees the Climate Summit in Paris as “an opportunity to say loud and clear that we, the local governments, are a major player in the struggle against climate change.” “Cities can make a difference,” stresses Ambassador Julie Laernoes, Vice-President of Nantes Métropole, France. “Their action should be recognised on the international level and their achievements should encourage a more ambitious international climate agreement in Paris.” Ambassador Joost Venken, Deputy Mayor of Hasselt, Belgium, highlights how the local level is the level most directly affected by climate change. “The floods, forest-fires and storms — also in the ‘wealthy North’ — teach us two things: climate change is happening here and it will be the local authorities that have to deal with it... consequences of climate change are felt locally and have to be dealt with locally.” Yet “even though cities are part of the solution when it comes to taking action against climate change, they cannot deal with this problem alone,” stresses Ambassador Tine Heyse, Deputy Mayor of Ghent, Belgium and Climate Alliance President, calling on “international negotiators taking part in the COP21 in Paris to take responsibility” for “ambitious and binding agreement.” “...It is crucial that the voices of local authorities be heard at the Climate Summit. Then we can act globally, locally,” asserts Ambassador Boris Palmer, Lord Mayor of Tübingen, Germany.

Municipalities often lead the way in taking ambitious action to mitigate and adapt to climate change, acting with a flexibility unmatched by national governments. As
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the level of government closest to the people and the one responsible for actually implementing climate action on the ground, it is essential that they not only be heard, but also help shape the discussion. Towards this aim, Climate Alliance is bringing eight take-home messages to the international process. The network is calling on national, European and international decision makers to recognise the role and efforts of local and regional authorities in climate mitigation and adaptation in the Paris agreement and to adapt both financial and legal framework conditions in partnership with local actors. Climate Alliance is also pushing for the up-scaling of the Covenant of Mayors to the global level – an impressive EU initiative with over 6,500 signatories committed to a common greenhouse gas emissions reduction target and solid reporting.

The Climate Alliance ambassadors have been highlighting these and other messages in Paris. With the Climate Summit for Local Leaders taking place today, Climate Alliance’s special side event dedicated to taking the Covenant of Mayors global on 7 December and the Lima Paris Action Agenda Cities and Sub-nationals Day coming up on 8 December, these ambassadors will have ample opportunity to contribute to the discussion, showing global leaders how local and subnational governments are already taking climate action seriously and acting on it.

Further information and photos

- Get photos, quotes and bios of Climate Alliance’s Ambassadors
- View Climate Alliance’s activities at COP21
- View Climate Alliance’s eight messages for COP21
- View the agenda for the official Global Covenant of Mayors side event
- Find out more on Climate Summit for the Local Leaders
- Find out more on the Lima Paris Action Agenda

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THE CLIMATE ALLIANCE
For more than 25 years, Climate Alliance member municipalities have been acting in partnership with indigenous rainforest peoples for the benefit of the global climate. With over 1,700 members spread across 26 European countries, Climate Alliance is the world’s largest city network dedicated to climate action and the only one to set tangible targets: each member city, town and district has committed itself to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 10 percent every 5 years. Recognising the impact our lifestyles can have on the world’s most vulnerable people and places, Climate Alliance pairs local action with global responsibility. climatealliance.org