



Better Climate Governance Matters! Conference 2024

Conference Report

December 10, 2024

Contents

Executive Summary	2
Words of Welcome	3
Opening Speakers	3
Breakout Session: Climate Smart Cities	5
Lightning Talks: Successful Climate Action in Challenging Environments	5
Closing Keynote Address	8
Conclusion & Acknowledgements	9

Executive Summary

The Better Climate Governance Matters! Conference 2025 convened experts, policymakers, and practitioners to explore actionable strategies for accelerating local climate action. Hosted by Newcastle University in collaboration with the Better Climate Governance Network, the event provided a platform for knowledge exchange, showcasing best practices, and fostering partnerships to enhance multi-level governance for climate resilience.

The conference addressed the guiding question: **How can local climate action be accelerated?** Through keynote speeches, panel discussions, and lightning talks, participants examined the critical role of cities, emerging technologies, innovative financial models, and grassroots initiatives in advancing climate governance.

Key highlights included:

- Opening Remarks by Mr. Afan Adriansyah Idris (Jakarta Capital City Government) and Ms. Lea Ranalder (UN-Habitat), who emphasised the importance of integrating climate policies into urban planning and ensuring equitable access to climate finance.
- Climate Smart Cities Discussion, led by Professor Katharine Rietig, which explored how new technologies, data-driven policies, and multi-stakeholder engagement can drive sustainable urban transformation.
- Lightning Talks, featuring Dr. Jecel Censoro, Ms. Melissa del Canto, Malang Sambou, and Ms. Marga Witteman, highlighting successful community-led climate initiatives, water resource management projects, and nature-based solutions that promote environmental restoration.
- Closing Keynote by Mauricio Rodas, former Mayor of Quito, Ecuador, who shared insights from his leadership in urban sustainability and called for greater collaboration between local and national governments to unlock climate finance and implement scalable climate solutions.

Throughout the discussions, key themes emerged:

- Cities as Climate Leaders: Urban centres must take a proactive role in implementing climate policies, integrating sustainability into infrastructure planning, and adopting climate-smart technologies.
- Multi-Level Governance: Effective climate action requires stronger coordination between national governments, local authorities, international organisations, and grassroots movements.
- Financial Barriers and Solutions: Local governments face significant challenges in accessing climate finance, necessitating innovative funding mechanisms and streamlined processes.
- Community Engagement and Inclusion: Climate policies are most effective when co-designed with communities, integrating local knowledge and empowering citizens to drive change.

The Better Climate Governance Matters! Conference 2025 successfully reinforced the urgency of climate action and the need for continued collaboration across sectors and governance levels. As cities navigate the challenges of climate resilience, the insights from this event serve as a roadmap for practical, scalable, and inclusive solutions to accelerate local climate action.

Words of Welcome

The Better Climate Governance Matters! Conference 2025 commenced with a warm welcome from Professor Katharine Rietig, representing Newcastle University and the Better Climate Governance (BCG) Network. In her opening remarks, she emphasised the urgency of accelerating local climate action and the importance of fostering collaboration between different levels of governance, from local to international stakeholders. She highlighted that the conference aimed to provide a platform for sharing lessons, showcasing innovative solutions, and exploring opportunities for cities and local communities in addressing climate change.

The central question that guided the discussions throughout the conference was: **“How can local climate action be accelerated?”** This question served as the foundation for the event, drawing insights from experts, policymakers, and practitioners actively working on climate action at various levels.

Opening Speakers

Keynote Speaker 1: Mr. Afan Adriansyah Idris

Mr. Afan Adriansyah Idris, Undersecretary of the Jakarta Capital City Government for Development and Environment, provided a comprehensive overview of Jakarta’s climate action initiatives. He outlined the city's transition into a global hub with a strong emphasis on sustainability while addressing the challenges of greenhouse gas emissions and urban air pollution. He spoke about Jakarta’s policy framework, particularly the Regional Low Carbon Development Plan established under Governor Regulation No. 90 of 2021. This regulation aligns with Indonesia’s Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and sets ambitious targets for greenhouse gas reduction, including a 50 percent reduction by 2030 and a commitment to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.

During his address, Mr. Idris highlighted several major climate initiatives underway in Jakarta. The city has implemented a green building policy, retrofitting public schools and mandating green building standards for high-rise buildings. Efforts to expand renewable energy are also in progress, with solar panels installed on 156 public buildings and investments made in waste-to-energy initiatives. Urban greening programs have seen over 200,000 trees and 143,000 mangroves planted to improve urban biodiversity. Sustainable transport remains a key focus, with 300 electric buses currently operational and a target to increase this number to 10,000 by 2030. Jakarta has also introduced innovative waste management solutions, including the use of Refuse-Derived Fuel (RDF) technology, which processes 2,500 tons of waste per day. Additionally, major flood mitigation infrastructure projects and reservoir expansions are being developed to enhance the city’s resilience to climate-related risks.

In closing, Mr. Idris showcased Jakarta’s leadership in urban climate governance and its recent global recognitions, such as being honored in the One Planet City Challenge 2024. He stressed the need for increased financial support and international collaboration to sustain these initiatives and accelerate climate action.

Keynote Speaker 2: Ms. Lea Ranalder

Ms. Lea Ranalder, representing the UN-Habitat Climate Change and Urban Environments Team, provided an international perspective on the critical role of cities in achieving global climate targets. She discussed the progress that has been made in urban climate action, noting that over 13,000 cities worldwide have committed to reducing emissions and are increasingly recognised as key actors in implementing the Paris Agreement. However, she also acknowledged the challenges facing local climate action, including limited financing, gaps in multi-level governance, and equity issues that disproportionately affect vulnerable populations.

Ms. Ranalder elaborated on the financial constraints that hinder local climate efforts, explaining that only 10 percent of climate finance reaches local governments, with just one percent allocated to urban climate adaptation. She pointed out that national climate policies often overlook the urban dimension, creating barriers for city-level implementation. Furthermore, vulnerable populations in cities face greater climate risks, making the need for inclusive and equitable climate policies even more urgent.

Despite these challenges, Ms. Ranalder also highlighted emerging opportunities to strengthen urban climate action. She spoke about the Coalition for High Ambition Multi-Level Partnerships (CHAMP), launched at COP28, which now includes 74 countries committed to integrating cities into national climate plans. She emphasised the role of city networks such as C40 Cities, the Global Covenant of Mayors (GCoM), and ICLEI in fostering peer learning and collaboration. Additionally, she discussed the need to enhance urban climate finance mechanisms to support localized climate adaptation and mitigation projects.

Concluding her presentation, Ms. Ranalder called for greater urban inclusion in international climate negotiations and urged stakeholders to leverage the momentum from COP discussions to strengthen multi-level climate action frameworks.

Q&A Session with Opening Speakers

Following their presentations, Mr. Idris and Ms. Ranalder engaged in a moderated Q&A session, addressing key concerns from participants. One of the first questions raised was how Jakarta aligns its sustainability strategies with Indonesia's national climate goals. Mr. Idris explained that Jakarta's Regional Low Carbon Development Plan aligns with Indonesia's Enhanced NDCs by setting more ambitious reduction targets. The city aims for a 30 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, surpassing the national goal of 31.89 percent. However, he noted that securing adequate climate financing remains the most significant challenge in meeting these objectives.

Another question focused on how cities can accelerate access to climate finance. Ms. Ranalder emphasised the importance of local governments gaining direct access to climate adaptation funds. She suggested that cities should collaborate with development banks, city networks, and private investors to diversify their funding sources and increase financial support for climate projects.

The discussion also explored ways to improve the integration of cities into national climate policymaking. Both speakers agreed that multi-level climate governance should be prioritized in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and COP negotiations. They emphasised that stronger data-sharing platforms could enhance local-level decision-making and that establishing mandated city participation in UNFCCC processes would improve policy alignment.

The session concluded with reflections on the urgency of scaling local climate action. Both speakers reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening city-national partnerships and called for increased collaboration to enhance climate resilience.

Breakout Session: Climate Smart Cities

Following the opening discussions, the conference transitioned into an exploration of Climate Smart Cities, a topic introduced by Professor Katharine Rietig. She outlined the pressing need for urban areas to develop smarter, more sustainable solutions to address climate change, improve resilience, and optimise resource use. She highlighted various innovative approaches cities are implementing worldwide, including the integration of artificial intelligence, the development of smart grids for energy efficiency, and the expansion of digital government services to enhance accessibility and accountability.

During this session, participants reflected on three critical questions. First, they examined which policies cities are currently using to mitigate and adapt to climate change, considering both effective strategies and existing limitations. Next, they explored the role of new technologies in shaping climate action, particularly in terms of how smart city applications can enhance environmental management. Finally, they discussed opportunities, challenges, and lessons learned from different urban initiatives, identifying best practices that could be scaled to other regions.

Lightning Talks: Successful Climate Action in Challenging Environments

Four speakers shared their experiences and insights on implementing climate action in complex and challenging environments.

Dr. Jecel Censoro of Insights North East (<https://insightsnortheast.co.uk/>)

Dr. Censoro, Climate Action Lead at Insights North East and co-lead of the Better Climate Governance project, highlighted the necessity of cross-sector collaboration and adaptive governance approaches to ensure effective and inclusive climate solutions. She emphasised that addressing climate change requires multi-level engagement, particularly through knowledge-sharing between policymakers and local communities. Additionally, she discussed

the importance of embedding climate policies into long-term urban planning to create sustainable, resilient cities.

Dr. Censoro also stressed that the role of local governance should not be limited to policymaking alone, but should also include active participation from citizens and local organisations. She shared specific case studies illustrating how co-created climate initiatives have led to meaningful change such as the Food Waste Project with Newcastle City Council and the Greek Skills Project with the North East Combined Authority. She called for a more grounded approach that addresses the problems of the local community than just doing climate solutions that does fit to what the people needs.

Melissa del Canto – Mas Agua (<https://masagua.org/proyecto/>)

Ms. Melissa del Canto presented the "Más Agua" initiative, a project led by Corporación de Estudios y Desarrollo Norte Grande (CNG), which focuses on territorial water management in high Andean environments. She described how the initiative integrates traditional knowledge with modern water conservation techniques to improve water resilience. Through a participatory approach, the project empowers local communities to manage their water resources effectively and adapt to changing climatic conditions. She also highlighted the critical role of collaboration between regional stakeholders, including government agencies and indigenous groups, in ensuring the project's long-term success.

She further elaborated on how the initiative incorporates both technical innovation and local customs, making it a replicable model for other regions facing similar water scarcity challenges. Ms. del Canto explained that the success of "Más Agua" lies in its bottom-up approach, where communities take ownership of their water resources rather than being passive recipients of external interventions. She encouraged stakeholders in other parts of the world to consider this model as a way of strengthening local resilience against climate-related water crises.

Malang Sambou – Mbolu Association (<https://m-bolo.org/en/presentation-2/>)

Malang Sambou, a prominent leader in Gambia and Chairman of the Mbolu Association, discussed his organisation's work in sustainable development and climate resilience. He highlighted the Mbolu Association's efforts in promoting renewable energy, agroecology, and environmental education as key strategies for empowering local communities to adapt to climate change. He emphasised the importance of integrating climate action into national development strategies and ensuring that rural communities have access to adaptation funding. Drawing from his experience with Gambia's regional disaster management initiatives, he shared how community-driven solutions, such as agroforestry and sustainable land-use planning, are helping vulnerable regions mitigate the impacts of climate change. He called for stronger partnerships between national governments and grassroots organizations to scale up these efforts.

Mr. Sambou also highlighted the importance of community-led initiatives in bridging the gap between policy and action, particularly in resource-limited settings. He pointed out that access to climate finance remains a major challenge for many African nations, as bureaucratic hurdles often prevent funds from reaching the communities that need them most. Through the Mbolu Association, he has worked on advocating for more accessible and transparent funding mechanisms, ensuring that grassroots organisations play an active role in shaping climate policies. He advocated for greater transparency in funding mechanisms and for financial institutions to adopt simplified procedures for climate finance access. Additionally, he shared the successes of smallholder-led initiatives in Gambia, demonstrating how community mobilisation can drive effective mitigation strategies even in resource-constrained environments.

Marga Witteman – More Trees Now (<https://moretreesnow.eco/>)

Ms. Marga Witteman highlighted the work of More Trees Now, a grassroots reforestation movement dedicated to rescuing and redistributing surplus saplings to accelerate reforestation and restore biodiversity. She explained that the initiative works with volunteers, local authorities, and landowners to identify and relocate young trees from areas where they would otherwise be lost, such as construction sites or overgrown forests. By redistributing these saplings to areas in need, More Trees Now promotes a circular approach to reforestation that is both cost-effective and environmentally sustainable. She explained how the initiative rescues and redistributes saplings that would otherwise be lost, accelerating reforestation efforts across Europe. She emphasized the urgency of restoring degraded ecosystems, noting that the Netherlands has lost 85% of its biodiversity in the past century. By mobilizing volunteers and local governments, More Trees Now has successfully planted thousands of trees, demonstrating how citizen-driven climate action can have a meaningful impact. She urged policymakers to support similar initiatives by integrating nature-based solutions into climate policies and urban planning frameworks.

Ms. Witteman further emphasised that nature-based solutions go beyond simple tree planting; they are about fostering a cultural shift towards sustainable environmental stewardship. She highlighted successful collaborations with urban planners, demonstrating how integrating reforestation into city landscapes can create green corridors, mitigate heat islands, and improve air quality. She concluded by stressing the importance of public engagement in reforestation efforts, encouraging individuals, businesses, and policymakers to take an active role in restoring degraded landscapes for future generations. She highlighted successful partnerships between More Trees Now and urban planners, showcasing how reforestation efforts can be embedded into city planning to create green corridors, reduce heat islands, and improve air quality. In closing, she stressed that reforestation is an accessible and effective means for individuals to contribute to climate action and biodiversity restoration, inspiring more community-based initiatives worldwide.

Closing Keynote Address

The conference concluded with an inspiring keynote address from Mauricio Rodas, former Mayor of Quito, Ecuador, who shared his extensive experience in urban sustainability and climate governance. Drawing from his tenure as mayor, he provided a firsthand account of the challenges and opportunities cities face in implementing climate action. He highlighted Quito's transformative sustainability projects, including the development of Ecuador's first Metro system, which was designed to reduce urban congestion and lower greenhouse gas emissions significantly. Additionally, he discussed the city's innovative approach to integrating nature-based solutions into urban planning, such as expanding green corridors and enhancing biodiversity conservation efforts.

Mr. Rodas mentioned the importance of local leadership in driving climate action and emphasised that cities must act as the frontline actors in addressing climate change. He noted that while international agreements provide essential frameworks, real progress happens at the city level, where policies translate into tangible actions. One of the key messages from his address was the need for multi-level governance, advocating for stronger partnerships between national governments, local authorities, and international organisations to ensure climate policies are effectively implemented. He also highlighted the pressing need to unlock climate finance for cities, as access to funding remains one of the most significant barriers preventing municipalities from implementing ambitious climate projects.

Reflecting on his global leadership roles, including his tenure as Vice-Chair of C40 Cities and Co-President of UCLG, Mr. Rodas shared lessons from international urban networks that have successfully accelerated climate action. He pointed out that cities that collaborate, share knowledge, and engage in capacity-building initiatives tend to advance more rapidly in their climate goals. He urged city leaders worldwide to embrace innovation, invest in sustainable infrastructure, and prioritise social equity in their climate strategies.

Following his address, Mr. Rodas engaged in a lively question and answer session with participants, providing deeper insights into the key issues raised during his keynote. One of the primary concerns addressed was the challenge of securing adequate climate finance for cities. Mr. Rodas elaborated on the role of international financial institutions and multilateral banks in bridging this gap, advocating for simplified access to funds and stronger financial mechanisms that directly support local governments. He emphasised that cities must develop clear investment plans and demonstrate measurable impacts to attract funding from both public and private sectors.

Another question focused on how cities in developing nations can accelerate climate adaptation efforts given their resource constraints. Mr. Rodas pointed to successful case studies in Latin America, where cities have leveraged partnerships with academic institutions and civil society to design cost-effective, innovative solutions. He also stressed the importance of building local capacity and fostering leadership at the municipal level, ensuring that climate action remains a priority beyond political cycles.

In closing, Mr. Rodas issued a call to action, encouraging all participants to take the insights gained from the conference and translate them into practical solutions within their respective

local contexts. He stressed that the climate crisis demands urgency, and cities must continue pushing boundaries to develop bold, scalable climate initiatives.

Conclusion & Acknowledgements

The Better Climate Governance Matters! Conference 2025 provided a platform for insightful discussions, knowledge-sharing, and connections to acceleration of local climate action. Across keynote addresses, panel discussions, and lightning talks, the conference highlighted the pressing need for stronger multi-level governance, innovative climate solutions, and equitable access to climate finance. The contributions from diverse speakers and participants reinforced the critical role of local governments, civil society, and coordination with international organisations in the campaign to achieve the commitments to the Paris Agreement.

The organisers express their sincere gratitude to all keynote speakers, panellists, and participants for their invaluable contributions to the event. The conference would not have been possible without the dedication and commitment of climate leaders, policymakers, and advocates who continue to drive meaningful action for a more sustainable future. The conference concluded with a call for continued collaboration for immediate and sustained action for the people and the planet.