EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

31 October 2021
Virtual Event

Partners:

www.bridgeforcities.org
This report summarizes the discussions held at UNIDO’s “Bridge for Cities 2021” event, which took place virtually on 31 October 2021. The event explored the role of cities in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and how measures taken at the local level can have an impact on enhancing environmental protection, innovation, inclusiveness and economic recovery.

The organization of the event was undertaken by UNIDO’s Regional Coordination Division for Asia and the Pacific, under the supervision of the Managing Director of the Directorate of Programmes, Partnerships and Field Coordination. UNIDO’s Technical Departments managed the organization and design of the two Mayors Roundtable. The Directorate of Environment and Energy led the session titled “Green recovery and climate action”, while the Directorate of Digitalization, Technology and Agri-Business was responsible for the session titled “Inclusive recovery and technological innovation”. UNIDO partnered up with AIG, Wood and the Institute of Future Cities at the University of Strathclyde to organize the Business Roundtable, which highlighted practical ways in which cities are enhancing resilience and expediting the transition to net-zero carbon.

The event would not have been possible without the strong support and involvement of UNIDO staff, consultants and interns, from headquarters and field offices. UNIDO gratefully acknowledges the support of the event’s co-hosts, City of Vienna and the Finance Center for South-South Cooperation (FCSSC). UNIDO also sincerely thanks all activity-level partners: AIG, Eurocities, Wood, Institute of Future Cities at the University of Strathclyde, and Resilient Cities Network. Special thanks goes to the Government of China for their strong and continuous support to the organization of the event, as well as to all participating city leaders for their substantial contribution to the discussions.
As the socio-economic crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated existing challenges in many cities, local governments have been called upon to act as first line responders and to lead the process towards resilient, inclusive, and green economic recovery for the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Conducted for the sixth consecutive year, Bridge for Cities 2021 provided a forum for Mayors and urban stakeholders to discuss and exchange views on relevant experiences, innovative solutions and to form new partnerships. This year’s event placed particular emphasis on innovations employed by cities along the Belt & Road and beyond to advance recovery and build resilience in the context of COVID-19, including those employed to accelerate climate action at the city-level.

The discussions built upon the main findings of the 2020 edition – the first conducted during the pandemic – and they were tailored around three major themes:

- **Inclusive Recovery and Technological Innovation**
- **Green Recovery and Climate Action**
- **Public-Private-Partnerships for a Resilient Economic Recovery**
Besides straining the capacities of health and economic systems worldwide, the pandemic has had a disruptive impact on how citizens move, interact, work and ultimately live in cities. Already during Bridge for Cities 2020, discussions with experts and Mayors confirmed that in the midst of lockdown and social distancing measures, digitalization is instrumental to overcome some of these difficulties, helping local governments to respond to ever-changing exigencies in terms of governance, social services, commerce, work and health. Promoting behavioural shifts and applying technology-based smart city solutions to managing the effects of COVID-19 are of continued importance to the urban economy, even beyond the crisis.

This year’s discussions explored to what extent the technological innovations that cities enacted on an “emergency basis” became structural, and which measures have been most effective to kickstart inclusive recovery at the urban level and to foster social resilience.

Cities are engines for growth, as they are home to the great majority of countries’ productive, industrial and manufacturing activities. At the same time, they are paying the highest toll in terms of pollution and environmental degradation, especially when they undergo rapid and often under-regulated expansion processes. The cities of tomorrow must balance economic and geographic pressures with sustainability considerations. Mayors and experts joining this session therefore discussed how measures taken now to respond and recover from the pandemic served the dual purposes of supporting local environmental action and global climate action to guide the transition towards a greener future and environmental resilience.

Resilient economic recovery needs to be based on a whole-of-society approach, including at the urban level. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), if implemented well, have a potential to accelerate recovery, triggering investments in sectors heavily hit by the crisis.

While PPPs have usually targeted hard infrastructure investments, smaller-scale, quick-impact interventions have been spurred by the pandemic. They have supported local governments in devising technology-based tools that help citizens navigate e-government services – for example – or providing services remotely. PPP models could be applied more systematically to drive economic recovery as well as to support resilience of cities and to guard for future external shocks.
Given their key role in the recovery process, the event provided space to municipal leaders and thus featured two Mayors roundtables. Mayors from cities along the Belt & Road and beyond, both from developed and developing countries, were invited to exchange knowledge, concrete actions and success stories, with the aim to ultimately facilitate city-to-city networking. The event also featured a business roundtable to provide innovative businesses and other stakeholders with an opportunity to share their solutions on urban resilience and recovery. During the event the ‘Bridge for Cities Knowledge Platform’ was launched, an online repository of innovative urban-industrial solutions.

The event was held in a virtual format, with remote interventions of selected speakers.
Establish an online knowledge depository where substantive initiatives and best practices of participating cities and businesses will be systematized for increased knowledge sharing;

- Facilitate networking and partnerships, resource flows and investments among cities beyond their participation and match-making in the annual forums;

- Ensure deep linkages to UNIDO’s technical interventions targeting sustainable and smart city initiatives, so to tap into all available expertise and provide case cities with a range of opportunities to benefit from UNIDO’s technical assistance.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Opening Ceremony

Master of Ceremonies:

KAI BETHKE
Director
Department of External Relations
UNIDO

Statements by:

ANTÔNIO GUTERRES
Secretary-General
United Nations

LI YONG
Director General
UNIDO

H.E. WANG WENTAO
Minister of Commerce
China

MAIMUNAH MOHD SHARIF
Executive Director
UN-Habitat

ERNST WOLLER
First President of the Provincial Parliament
City of Vienna
Austria

LAUREN SORKIN
Executive Director
Resilient Cities Network

SAMEH WAHBA
Global Director
World Bank
Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations opened proceedings by commenting on the pandemic’s impact on cities and noted how their resilience, creative problem solving, and strong partnerships will help them to deliver on SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement. Many cities are rethinking their urban spaces to become more inclusive, sustainable and safe areas to live and work, and investment in recovery will provide a generational opportunity to put climate action at the heart of cities. The Local2030 coalition has been launched to identify innovations and localise the UN’s SDGs, and the UN is working with organisations like UNIDO to help foster collaboration between cities and encourage inclusive, sustainable recovery and clean, green cities for all.

Global alliances and platforms to exchange experiences, as outlined by Mr. LI Yong, Director General of UNIDO, are required to meet the need for stronger partnerships and innovative actions, with a potential investment of $7 trillion available. Up to 144 million new jobs could be created and 1.5 billion tons of CO2 emissions could be reduced by 2030 if the cities across 21 emerging markets prioritise climate-smart growth within their recovery plans. After an overview of the day’s agenda, Mr. LI Yong thanked the event’s partners, including the City of Vienna, Eurocities, Finance Center for South-South Cooperation, ALG, Wood, Resilient Cities Network, and the Institute of Future Cities at the University of Strathclyde.

H.E. Mr. Wang Wentao, Minister of Commerce of China, commented on the success of the Belt and Road Initiative in China with $1.3 trillion generated this year. China now stands ready to cooperate with all parties in achieving greener global development. China is now looking to become a market for the world that can be shared by and is accessible to all. H.E. Mr. Wang highlighted the need for an innovation-driven development and deepening cooperation in green development and the digital economy. China supports a global response to the pandemic in ensuring accessible and affordable vaccines across developing countries and wants to stand alongside all parties in developing resilient recovery.

Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director of UN-Habitat, noted how COVID-19 funding has presented an opportunity for integrated green and resilient solutions, and that technical innovation is being used to help engage local communities and integrate local climate action planning. The Block by Block initiative has been developed to help encourage participation in public space upgrading projects across the world with residents able to develop and visualise climate adaption strategies. This is just one example of how the pandemic response can integrate local climate action planning. Action plans that are community-led and actively engage residents in data collection and decision making are vital in transitioning to a green and resilient future, and cities need to rethink social cohesion mechanisms to ensure equitable distribution of resources.

Mr. Ernst Woller, First President of the Parliament of the Vienna Province, noted Vienna’s long-standing relationship with UNIDO, highlighted the integral role played by local governments and noted the opportunity to make urban policies more inclusive. Current global challenges provide a valuable opportunity to make urban policies and recovery more inclusive and future-oriented whilst also focusing on addressing climate change.
Ms. Lauren Sorkin, Executive Director of the Resilient Cities Network, highlighted technological innovation, green recovery and climate action, and public private partnership as the 3 key areas in building a world of resilient cities. The world is digitising at a rapid rate and, by 2030, 9 out of 10 jobs will require digital skills, which will require cities to continually innovate and ensure that technology acts as a levelling agent to facilitate equitable access to information and services rather than drive marginalised groups further into vulnerability.

Mr. Sameh Wahba, Global Director of the Urban, Disaster, Risk Management, Resilience and Land Global Practice at the World Bank, commented on how the pandemic exposed inequalities within cities, and that recovery must tackle this. The pandemic caused cities to lose 15-30% of its municipal revenues and up to 60% of capital investment budgets, and local government and mayors had to look to deliver emergency interventions and innovative solutions. Cities now need to look to implement green and inclusive recovery that tackle the pandemic, climate change and inequality. Mr. Wahba noted examples of how this was already being done in cities across the world.
Mayors Roundtable 1 – Green Recovery and Climate Action

Moderator:

STEPHAN SICARS
Managing Director
Directorate of Environment and Energy
UNIDO

Panellists:

MANAL AWAD MIKHAIL
Governor
Damietta Governorate
Egypt

ATIQUL ISLAM
Mayor
Dhaka North City Corporation Bangladesh

HUA ZHANG
Vice Mayor
City of Shenzhen
China

ALIREZA ZAKANI
Mayor
City of Tehran
Iran

ANUELA RISTANI
Deputy Mayor
City of Tirana
Albania

MINNA ARVE
Mayor
City of Turku
Finland

ATSAPHANGTHONG SIPHANDONE
Mayor
City of Vientiane
Laos
The first Mayors Roundtable brought together representatives from Damietta, Dhaka, Shenzhen, Tehran, Tirana, Turku and Vientiane, to discuss how cities are responding to climate change through green recovery measures.

Ms. Manal Awad Mikhail, Governor of Damietta Governorate, Egypt, explained how the Furniture City project has brought local products to the global market as well as transforming workshops into environmentally friendly spaces that utilise resources in a sustainable way.

Mr. Atiqul Islam, Mayor of Dhaka North City Corporation, Bangladesh, described the challenge of climate action in a city of 10 million people and how a 5-year plan has been developed to deliver green growth and conserve natural resource through building 24 parks as well as regeneration of the canal system, trees planted for every baby born, and 10% tax breaks for those who developed rooftop gardens.

Four comprehensive measures were outlined by Ms. Zhang Hua, Vice Mayor of the City of Shenzhen, China, as the source of increased sustainable growth, decreased energy consumption and lower environmental costs, which are weaving green components into urban development and prioritising high-level protection of nature and the environment.

Mr. Alireza Zakani, Mayor of the City of Tehran, Iran, focused on the challenges and opportunities the pandemic presented and that collaboration amongst countries and cities has been essential in sharing best practices and experiences, which must now continue at a global level.

Ms. Anuela Ristani, Deputy Mayor of the City of Tirana, Albania, described how the city’s urban development plan focused on developing vertically to ensure that services remain easily accessible and move away from separate commercial and residential districts. A physical wall of trees will be built around the city to both improve air quality and create a physical barrier to control city sprawl, along with the introduction of cycle lanes and increased pedestrian spaces.

Ms. Minna Arve, Mayor of the City of Turku, Finland, outlined the work that the city has done in supporting adoption of renewable energy, promoting sustainable transport and urban development, and developing circular economy practices. A former oil refinery site is being developed into a green industry park, and circular solutions are being introduced to help make the city a better and safer place to live.

Looking at clean energy investment, Mr. Atsaphangthong Siphandone, Mayor of the City of Vientiane, Lao’s People Democratic Republic, outlined the development of a low-carbon demonstration zone in the city to highlight innovative energy products and demonstrate clean and resilient recovery.

Representatives then discussed more broadly the need for collaboration, public and private sector partnerships and ensuring citizen engagement in working towards the same goals. The discussion then moved to the COVID-19 crisis, the need for a global solution to ensure affordable vaccines and that the world needs to come together in an equitable way to tackle both the pandemic and climate crisis by moving away from a siloed approach.
Mayors Roundtable 2 – Inclusive Recovery and Technological Innovation

Moderator:

BERNARDO CALZADILLA SARMIENTO
Managing Director
Directorate of Digitalization, Technology and Agri-business
UNIDO

Panellists:

JOE COSTELLO
Deputy Mayor
City of Dublin
Ireland

MARIA ISABELLE CLIMACO
Mayor
City of Zamboanga
Philippines

ERNST WOLLER
First President of the Provincial Parliament
City of Vienna
Austria

ROSY SENANAYAKE
Mayor
City of Colombo
Sri Lanka

JANET ÅGREN
Deputy Mayor
City of Umea
Sweden

NUON PHARAT
Deputy Governor
City of Phnom Penh
Cambodia

ERIC HUBBARD
Senior Technical Advisor
City of Freetown
Sierra Leone
(on behalf of the Mayor)
The second Mayors Roundtable brought together representatives from Colombo, Dublin, Freetown, Phnom Penh, Umea, Vienna and Zamboanga, to discuss concrete actions in support of inclusive recovery and technological innovation.

Mr. Joe Costello, Deputy Mayor of the City of Dublin, Ireland, outlined the work with a broad range of stakeholders to create and maintain a smart, inclusive and sustainable city, such as the Dublin Cycling Buddy app, which has helped improve city planning and cycling infrastructure and mobility. This has led to developing the 15-minute city, which has helped reopen businesses, increase footfall and create a more open and safer place to live and work.

Representing Freetown on behalf of the Mayor, Mr. Eric Hubbard, Senior Technical Advisor at the City of Freetown, Sierra Leone described the “Freetown the Treetown” campaign, which has focused on building resilience through a clear target of increasing tree and vegetation cover by 50% in 3 years. This has brought investment into communities and green technologies and has resulted in 533 direct and 1,000 indirect jobs along with 251,000 trees now being tracked and growers receiving an income every 2 months that then goes back into communities.

Mr. Nuon Pharat, Deputy Governor of the City of Phnom Penh, Cambodia, presented how the city has recovered from the pandemic through a strong vaccination programme, the adoption of the Cambodian Digital Economy and Social Policy Framework 2021-2035, and embracing new opportunities, such as online schooling and utilising ICT for healthcare.

A multi-faceted approach to address challenges posed by the pandemic was described by Ms. Rosy Senanayake, Mayor of the City of Colombo, Sri Lanka, who looked at how technology was utilised to manage vaccination appointments and how digital solutions have promoted sustainable local recovery and become more effective in ensuring services delivered to the public.

Ms. Janet Årgen, Deputy Mayor of the City of Umea, Sweden, outlined the help given to the tourism and hospitality industry with a support centre and a cut in taxes. Gender equality is a key focus by guaranteeing full-time employment in the female-dominated care sector and offering more secure jobs for women. Recovery measures are funded from the standard budget, and it is felt that investing in bringing about behavioural change is as important as introducing new technologies.

Ms. Maria Isabelle Climaco, Mayor of the City of Zamboanga, Philippines, described how technology was used to respond to the pandemic and how an online system was introduced to manage business registrations to ensure the survival of the local economy. The digital economy is on the rise and a unified approach is being taken to include the whole city and ensure its success and widespread benefits.

Mr. Ernst Woller, First President of the Provincial Parliament, City of Vienna, Austria, reported on the city’s framework strategy that addresses the attainment of the UN’s SDGs as well as the City’s response to crises. The city will now build on its strong history by focusing on increasing resilience and closing the remaining gaps in climate actions.

The discussion then moved to making cities more flexible and how a hybrid approach to remote working can promote gender equality and provide greater flexibility to everyone. Homes and offices will need to adapt to meet these challenges and cities will need to react to the change in footfall and public transport use. The pandemic has presented an opportunity for businesses to adapt digitally, and it is also vital for residents who require information and access to services.
Business Roundtable – Connecting Cities in the Pursuit of Climate Goals

Moderators:

PAUL DIPAOLA
Vice President for Strategy & Innovation
AIG

RICHARD BELLINGHAM
Director Sustainable Cities
University of Strathclyde

HIROSHI KUNIYOSHI
Deputy to the Director General
UNIDO

Welcome Remarks:

Panellists:

SUSAN AITKEN
Leader
Glasgow City Council
United Kingdom

GAVIN SLATER
Chief Sustainability Officer
Glasgow City Council
United Kingdom

JOHN CHOME
Chief Executive Officer
Lilongwe City Council
Malawi

ILARIA GIULIANI
Deputy Chief Resiliency Officer
Milan Municipality
Italy

GREG CLARK
Group Advisor
Future Cities and New Industries
HSBC

HEATHER TAYLOR
Chief Financial Officer & Treasurer
City of Toronto
Canada

JENNIFER WALDNER
Chief Sustainability Officer
AIG

ANN ROSENBERG
Senior Vice President Sustainable Development
Wood
Cities are central to the achievement of the 17 SDGs with each target relying on local action and cities taking a lead in pushing for fast recovery, developing innovative solutions, and tackling climate change. The business sector plays a crucial role, and partnerships that link municipalities with solution providers can help face challenges that the public sector can’t manage alone.

Mr. Kuniyoshi Hiroshi, Deputy to the Director General, UNIDO, presented how UNIDO collaborates with the private sector to deliver technical assistance to its Member States. He further noted that the global need for urban infrastructure investment amounts to over $4.5 trillion per year and that up to 25% of this amount is required to make this infrastructure climate resilient. Given that significant proportion of this investment demand comes from cities in the developing world, UNIDO’s technical assistance will remain a key instrument to tackle such challenges.

Ms. Susan Aitken, Leader of Glasgow City Council, United Kingdom, reflected on how the SDGs drive much of the city’s actions and that partnership plays a critical role in achieving these goals. The process was accelerated during the pandemic and the city addressed long-standing challenges through collaboration, an approach that has now become mainstreamed across all relationships. Innovators and facilitators are needed alongside local government to create the foundations for change. Partnership building, innovation and financial sector and philanthropic organisations are all vital in developing opportunities. Glasgow is looking to invest £30 billion in its Green Deal, which will look to mitigate climate change, modernise systems and address social challenges to help stimulate recovery.

Mr. Gavin Slater, Chief Sustainability Officer, Glasgow City Council, UK, provided an overview of the city’s progress in recent years, with a net-zero carbon target set for 2030 and an aim to tackle issues such as heating and transport. A 25-year partnership between the City Council and Viridor has resulted in a £154 million investment into the Glasgow Recycling and Renewable Energy Centre and looks to reduce carbon by 90,000 tonnes per year and provide enough renewable electricity for over 22,000 homes.

Mr. John Chome, Chief Executive Officer, Lilongwe City Council, Malawi, noted the need for sustainable energy with 60% of the population having access to electricity but only 7% using it. Key areas of focus are making buildings and transport systems greener as well as improving waste management and ensuring urban food security. Partnerships must be “pro-poor” to empower communities and ensure opportunities bring benefits to the urban poor, such as working the public and private sector stakeholders to improve waste management that helped bring job and resources to local communities.

Ms. Ilaria Giuliani, Deputy Chief Resiliency Officer, Milan Municipality, Italy, described the city’s approach to mitigating climate change by aiming to plant 3 million trees by 2030 and looking at interventions to tackle social inequality. Partnership element comes from collaborations across different departments within the municipality as well as with other cities through the sharing of best practices and identifying common goals.

Looking at funding partnerships, Mr. Greg Clark, Group Advisor on Future Cities and New Industries, HSBC, outlined 5 ways to finance the decarbonisation and resilience of cities: (1) allow cities to generate their own revenues, (2) receive transfer payments
from higher tiers of government, (3) engage with development finance institutions, (4) develop a new generation of Public-Private-Partnerships, and (5) use the private sector to accelerate public sector innovation. These approaches, along with demonstrating the benefits of decarbonisation, will help bring in innovation and demonstrate sustainable returns.

**Ms. Heather Taylor, Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer, City of Toronto, Canada**, looked at the importance of municipalities demonstrating their commitments but also accountability to climate action. A social debenture framework gives investors the flexibility to support programmes with social or environmental outcomes. Climate change is also included within the city’s financial statement disclosure and $1 billion is spent annually each year on the debenture programme with a number of partnerships having been formed to tap into initiatives around climate change and looking beyond the traditional financing.

**Ms. Jennifer Waldner Grant, Chief Sustainability Officer, AIG**, noted the power of partnerships and the importance of resilience, with the need to now build on developments and scale solutions across cities globally.

**Ms. Ann Rosenberg, Senior Vice President for Sustainable Development, Wood**, concluded by stating the importance of building resilient cities around the world, which has taken on a new definition as the world now looks to recover from the pandemic.
In his closing remarks, Mr. Wu Zhong, Director General, Finance Centre for South-South Cooperation, thanked all guests and experts and delegates for their participation. Mr. Wu reflected on the importance of Public-Private-Partnership in sustainable urbanisation, particularly in developing countries, and the need to share best practices and innovative solutions. While governments are formulating economic recoveries and plans, the business sector is also showing strong leadership in financing and implementing these projects. The three main features of this year’s event included (1) participation by a wide range of representatives involved in urban development, (2) sessions addressed the most pressing concerns and issues, and (3) ample opportunities and activities to facilitate discussions, partnerships and collaboration.

Mr. Ciyong Zou, Managing Director, Directorate of Programmes, Partnerships and Field Coordination, UNIDO, confirmed that UNIDO remains firmly committed to supporting cities in their recovery, and global alliances and platforms are needed to share experiences and promote sustainable recovery. Sustainable and inclusive recovery will require stronger partnerships and more innovative actions than ever before. The Knowledge Platform launched during the event will become a useful repository of knowledge for all cities and urban stakeholders across the world. Participants were thanked for their involvement and invaluable insights and they were reassured that their contribution would result in concrete joint actions and stronger partnerships.

More information on the event, including videos, can be found at:

www.bridgeforcities.org
Vienna International Centre
P.O. Box 300, 1400 Vienna, Austria
Telephone: (+43-1) 26026/3436
E-mail: bri@unido.org
Website: www.bridgeforcities.org