

From Diplomacy to Delivery: Why COP30 Matters for Cities

For decades, climate summits have revolved around the drama of negotiations where the fate of the planet seemed to hang on a single comma or a well-timed walkout. But as COP30 opens in Belém, that solo storyline no longer fits the moment.

COP30 is still a crucial stage for national negotiations, but this time it's giving equal weight to the Action Agenda – a framework that draws in the “whole of society” to deliver climate solutions. While diplomats push for bolder targets, thousands of actors – governments, businesses, cities, Indigenous groups, investors – are driving implementation on the ground.

COP30 signals the beginning of a new era of implementation. Paris gave us the roadmap. The Global Stocktake showed us where we stand. The COP30 Action Agenda is the delivery mechanism tying all this together, aligning investment, technology and policy into tangible wins: cleaner energy, restored ecosystems, transformed food systems, and climate finance that actually flows where it's needed.

Cities and Regions as Drivers of Change

Cities and regions have shown what true leadership looks like: grounded in science, built on implementation, and driven by action. In Quezon City, Philippines, [e-vehicles will cut 1.5 tons of CO₂](#) and nearly all PM2.5 and NOx emissions by the end of 2025. Since London expanded its ultra-low emission zone, the city's poorest communities have experienced the biggest air quality benefits. In Cape Town, a solar farm will power up to 28,000 homes, cutting 114,000 tons of CO₂ annually. Bogotá's Bus Rapid Transit system created over 2,000 jobs, and Paris added more than 300 km of new bike lanes, reducing air pollution by 40 per cent over the last decade.

The Action Agenda: Organizing Engine for Cities

The Action Agenda organizes global action across six axes. Each axis represents both a system transformation and a clear investment opportunity. Initiatives in the real economy are structured into Activation Groups – coalitions of partners working toward the same sectoral goals. These feed into the UNFCCC's Global Climate Action Portal (formerly NAZCA), which tracks commitments and progress. The portal has significantly scaled-up in size since the COP30 Activation Groups kicked off this year, meaning a boost in tracking and accountability with the coordination of more than 400 major climate initiatives worldwide participating in the Activation Groups. These groups are now working to channel new investment and generate concrete delivery plans for Belém – many of which will be unveiled during COP30.

Below are a few examples of early “big plays” that signal where momentum is heading.

Axis	The Opportunity	Example “Big Play”
Transitioning energy, industry and transport	Accelerate clean transport, low-carbon industry, and urban energy systems	Belém 4X Pledge on Sustainable Fuels , which aims to expand sustainable fuel use by at least fourfold compared to 2024 levels
Stewarding forests, oceans and biodiversity	Protect urban ecosystems, green corridors, and sustainable resource management	Tropical Forest Forever Facility (TFFF) – \$125B pipeline protecting 1B hectares of forest
Transforming agriculture & food systems	Link urban agriculture, food security, and resilience	RAIZ expands the reach of programs focused on soil restoration and rural development.
Building resilient cities, industries & water	Urban adaptation, sustainable construction, resilient infrastructure	Scaling the Buildings Breakthrough Initiative to make climate-resilient and near-zero emission buildings a standard practice worldwide.
Fostering human and social development	Resilient health, education, and employment, with equity at the center	Training programs for green jobs in emerging markets
Finance, tech and capacity building	Align public and private capital, technology, and skills for local delivery	Open coalition for carbon market integration focusing on the interoperability of regulated carbon markets

Why Cities Engage with the Action Agenda

The Action Agenda is structured to help subnational governments translate global ambition into local delivery:

- **Scale investment and support for local projects:** The Action Agenda provides clear channels for cities and states to partner with national governments, businesses, and investors to attract investment into urban and regional projects.
- **Supporting global agreements that influence national policies:** Engagement with the Action Agenda allows subnationals to anchor commitments in local delivery while reinforcing international agreements.
- **Cities and regions support international cooperation:** Over the past decade, subnational actors have increased collaboration across borders, and the Action Agenda has become a valuable space to connect local governments with national and global climate initiatives.



Find out more about the Action Agenda:

bit.ly/AA-COP30