



2020 International Mayors Forum Preparatory Webinar Series #2: "Local Governments, the Climate Crisis, and a Green Recovery from COVID-19"

Date: 24 September 2020
4:00pm (Republic of Korea), 12:30pm (Delhi), 9:00am (Geneva)

Concept Note

"We need to turn the recovery into a real opportunity to do things right for the future"
– United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres

Registration Link: <https://bit.ly/3mmYEih>

Background

Across the globe, local governments and local actors are on the frontline in preparing for and responding to the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as multiple challenges from the climate crisis. In the past 20 years, 90% of major disasters have been climate related.ⁱ Wildfires, hurricanes, typhoons, floods, droughts, and other disasters are linked to the effects of a rapidly changing climate as a result of human planetary impact. These hazards and disasters increase the risks and challenges of advancing on sustainable local development, while stalling progress on the 2030 Agenda. In addition, how local governments respond to the COVID-19 recovery amid the climate crisis is linked to the feasibility of meeting the Paris agreement's targets of remaining at a global temperature increase of 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels.

The UN Secretary-General has underscored that local governments are already taking action to recover better from the pandemic, but more must be done to strengthen the capacities of local governments for a "green, inclusive and resilient economic recovery that will transform cities and address the climate and pollution crises".¹ Today, experts point to a temporary reduction in carbon emissions, thanks to lockdowns and reduced economic activities, but in some cases the Pandemic has also led to reduced environmental management.ⁱⁱ As the pandemic has raged in Brazil, illegal logging in the Amazon has soared with 64% more land cleared in April 2020 than the same month last year, and sadly 2019 was the biggest year for deforestation in more than a decade.ⁱⁱⁱ These trends will impact the possibility of achieving environmental targets especially under Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 13 and 15. Current data also shows that SDG 7 on access to affordable and clean energy, will also see negative impacts.

¹ "By focusing on high ecological transformation and job creation, stimulus packages can steer growth towards a low-carbon, resilient pathway and advance the Sustainable Development Goals." United Nations Secretary-General (2020) Accessed at: <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/covid-19-urban-world>



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Due to the economic impacts of COVID-19, the world is seeing a reduction of 20% in energy investment (almost US\$ 400 billion), the largest decline ever recorded.^{iv} In addition, as household incomes decline, it can be expected that access to renewable energy options or even basic public electrification expenditures to expand energy access will decline across the developing world, leaving many with basic energy access and opting for subsidised brown energy options. These energy options have knock-on effects on air quality and other environmental and health targets under the 2030 Agenda as well.

As urbanization has increased in many parts of the world, it has often been accompanied by significant environmental challenges. The increasing intensity and frequency of extreme weather and climate impacts globally suggest that urgent efforts are needed to better assess and manage climate risk, especially among local governments, who often have neither the human and financial resources nor the necessary expertise to address adequately those issues. The climate crisis is occurring in tandem with global mega-trends marking the unsustainability of cities in the business as usual. These mega-trends include a growing urban population, declining biodiversity, resource depletion, environmental degradation, the unpredictability of climate-related disasters and more. Local officials can play a central role in ensuring a swift and sustainable recovery from COVID-19 that can address these mega-trends and accelerate progress in delivering the Sustainable Development Goals during the coming decade.

Objective and Content

This webinar is part of a series of online webinars exploring specific sessions under the 2020 International Mayors Forum. The 2020 International Mayors Forum examines the ecological and socio-economic impacts of the current crisis on cities and how local governments and local actors can work together for an inclusive resilient recovery and sustainable urban future. Local governments are currently facing multiple hazards and risks – including from the COVID-19 pandemic its complex impacts, as well combatting disasters linked to the climate crisis.

In accordance with a policy brief launched by the [UN Secretary-General on COVID-19 in an Urban World](#), this second webinar for the 2020 International Mayors Forum focuses on strengthening the capacities of local governments for a "green, inclusive and resilient economic recovery that will transform cities and address the climate and pollution crises". It aims to provide local governments and local actors with some knowledge to help them go in that direction, while supporting a swift recovery from COVID-19 and advancing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.

Speakers

Moderator: Mr. Jean D'Aragon, Officer-in-Charge, UNOSD

- Dr. Marco Martuzzi, Head of Office, Asia-Pacific Centre for Environment and Health in the Western Pacific Region, World Health Organization
- Hon. Mayor Noel E. Rosal, Legazpi City, Philippines
- Dr. Soojeong Myeong, Senior Research Fellow, Korea Environment Institute (KEI)
- Ms. Taeko Yokota, Programme Expert on DRR and Water, United Nations Center for Regional Development (UNCRD)

Organizer



International Mayors Forum 2020

The United Nations Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)

Speaker's Agenda

The webinar will last for 1 hour:

- **Opening (2 minutes)**
- **Presentations (40 minutes)**
(10 minutes per speaker, with pause for questions after each speaker)
 - Dr. Marco Martuzzi, Head of Office, Asia-Pacific Centre for Environment and Health in the Western Pacific Region, World Health Organization
 - Hon. Mayor Noel E. Rosal, Legazpi City, The Philippines
 - Dr. Soojeong Myeong, Senior Research Fellow, Korea Environment Institute (KEI)
 - Ms. Taeko Yokota, Programme Expert on DRR and Water, United Nations Center for Regional Development (UNCRD)
- **Question & Answer and Discussion (15 minutes)**
- **Final reflections from the speakers (2 minutes)**
- **Closing wrap-up (1 minutes)**

Target Audience

This webinar aims to engage sub-national government representatives, local government leaders, and national institutions across the UN Member States. The webinar will also be open to non-government experts working in the areas of national to local SDG implementation. Experts working on all related areas such as climate adaptation and mitigation, nature-based solutions, sustainable cities and similar areas are also invited to join.

The webinar is also open to academia, youth, and other interested stakeholders to ensure an inclusive and integrated discussion on accelerated local solutions for the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda.

Contact Information

For any questions or comments please contact Ms. Sara Castro-Hallgren, Programme Management Expert, UNOSD at sara.castrohallgren@un.org

The webinar will be conducted in English.

ⁱ International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Retrieved from: <https://www.iucn.org/resources/issues-briefs/nature-based-solutions-disasters>

ⁱⁱ Hockney, Marc et al, 2020. Editorial Essay: Covid-19 and Protected and Conserved Areas. Parks Journal. Vol 26.1 May 2020, 7. International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Geneva. doi: 10.2305/IUCN.CH.2020.PARKS-26-1MH.en

ⁱⁱⁱ Gardiner, Beth, 18 June 2020. Why COVID-19 will end up harming the environment. National Geographic. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/06/why-covid-19-will-end-up-harming-the-environment/>

^{iv} United Nations, 2020. Policy Briefs In Support of The High-Level Political Forum 2020 on „Accelerating SDG 7 Achievement in The Time of COVID-19” <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26235UNFINALFINAL.pdf>