



Global Mayors Task Force on Climate and Migration



Side Event of the UN High Level Political Forum

# Climate Change and Human Mobility

Working with mayors to advance SDGS 10 and 13

**Climate and Human Mobility:**  
WORKING WITH MAYORS TO ADVANCE SDGS 10 AND 13

**10** REDUCED INEQUALITIES  
**13** CLIMATE ACTION

OFFICIAL SIDE EVENT TO THE UN HLPF

HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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**6 JULY 2021**  
13:00-14:30 EDT  
18:00-19:30 BST  
19:00-20:30 CEST

Uniting Mayors: Local Solutions to Global Climate Challenges

BRITISH COUNCIL | C40 CITIES | Global Mayors Task Force on Climate and Migration | Global Parliament of Mayors | IOM UN MIGRATION | UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency

High Level Side Event by the British Council, the C40 Cities-Mayors Migration Council Global Mayors Task Force on Climate and Migration (C40-MMC Task Force), the Global Parliament of Mayors (GPM), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)

6 July 2021

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## **Working with Mayors to Advance SDGs 10 and 13**

The British Council, the C40 Cities-Mayors Migration Council Global Mayors Task Force on Climate and Migration (C40-MMC Task Force), the Global Parliament of Mayors (GPM), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) joined together to host an official side event on climate change and human mobility at the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).

The event highlighted that environmental migration is complex and multifaceted, and most people's journeys will lead them to cities in the future. Migration and climate change issues are core concerns for current and future sustainable development, which cannot be addressed in silos.

The UN High Level Political Forum side event on 'Climate and Human Mobility' served as a bridge between the review of SDGs 10 (reduced inequalities) and 13 (climate action) taking place at the HLPF, and also looked forward to COP26 in Glasgow, 2021.

## **2. Event Outline**

### **2.1 Welcome and Opening Remarks**

#### **Welcome - Dr. Shipra Narang Suri, Chief Urban Practices Branch, UN-Habitat**

The 2019 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) special report reveals that land degradation is already negatively impacting the livelihoods and well-being of at least 3.2 billion people while rising sea levels could submerge the homeland of 280 million people by the end of this century. These climate change challenges will reflect on internal and international population movements. While it is today widely recognised that environmental migration is complex and multifaceted, we also know that most people's journeys will lead them to cities.

Cities deal with the realities of climate change and human mobility on a daily basis - from protecting residents from extreme heat and fires, flooding, and landslides, to welcoming people displaced by the effects of climate change domestically or abroad, to promoting climate justice and leaving no one behind in the green transition. In cities, the local-level implications on planning, service provision, and access to resources and opportunities - or lack thereof - will be felt most acutely.

Climate and migration are core concerns for current and future sustainable development and sustainable urbanisation, and thus, must be addressed in an integrated fashion. Hence, there is a need for significant collaboration and partnership across different levels of government. Whether it be local, including cities and counties to regions to provinces, even up to the national level, no government level can handle this challenge alone.

## Opening Statement by Michele Klein-Solomon, Regional Director for Central and North America and the Caribbean, International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Ms Klein-Solomon emphasised the growing awareness of the complex links between climate change and human mobility. That is why the collaboration between the growing number of partners is essential. Climate change and environmental degradation are profoundly reshaping contemporary migration patterns worldwide in a multitude of ways. Hence people engage in different forms of mobility within their countries and across borders, but it is a necessity to grow from forced displacement to more voluntary forms of migration. The dilemma is that many people in rural areas who are affected by changing climate and weather patterns are drawn to the promise of cities that offer better economic conditions. Some are displaced by environmental disasters and settle in cities in the hope of finding stability and protection there. However, unplanned rapid urbanisation increases local vulnerability, and population growth puts additional pressure on the environment, infrastructure and critical services. Furthermore, cities might also face critical environmental risks such as flooding, storms, and may be ill equipped to cope with these challenges. Migrants from lower-income groups are especially vulnerable to these challenges and cause informal settlements at the periphery of cities. Accordingly, the international community needs to take action to empower migration diplomacy and policymaking and to connect this with inclusive climate action strategies and policies.

Significant progress has been made since 2015 by integrating climate migration and environmental degradation into key international frameworks and commitments, e.g.

- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (today review on points 10 and 13) shows for the first time that global migrations is explicitly addressed in the global development agenda.
- The Paris Agreement on climate change in 2015 led to the formation of the UNFCCC taskforce on displacement and development of several important recommendations. This was the first time within a climate change agreement that the movement of people was addressed as a key issue.

These are important advances, but there is a need to push the discussion forward. 2021 is a crucial year for climate action, including COP26 as a key political moment to reassure the ambition to fully operationalise the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. Cities are particularly vulnerable and are also representing the first line of action and key decision-makers to address these challenges.



## 2.2 Roundtable Discussion and Question and Answers

### 2.2.1 Round 1 Questions

**Fiona Clouder, COP26 Regional Ambassador for Latin America and the Caribbean, Government of the United Kingdom**

**How will the issue of climate change and human mobility be addressed at COP26 in Glasgow this November 2021?**

COP26 Regional Ambassador Clouder said that the climate challenges are no longer something theoretical. She noted, “We need to move from thinking to actually doing and it is through partnerships like the COP26 campaign [Race to Resilience](#), where we can put people and nature first, that will actually make the difference.”

Ambassador Clouder shared the official key goals for [COP26](#):

- Mitigation – How can we ensure that countries come forward with ambitious 2030 emission reduction targets? It is about changing the way that economies are working towards renewable economic activities (e.g., electric vehicles). Such positive economic activities are also important for creating opportunities for jobs and growth within the context of mobility.
- Adaptation and resilience – Countries, regions, cities, and communities have to think about how to adapt constantly. Measures such as building coastal defences or investing in sustainable infrastructure are crucial.
- Finance - To implement such measures, funding is necessary. Hence, besides mobilising developed countries to fulfil their promise of climate financing, multilateral organisations, banks and the private sector must be integrated.
- Collaboration – It is essential to build an understanding between all stakeholders and to clarify how we can help each other to move this agenda forward. Several campaigns, like the [Race to Zero](#) or the [Race to Resilience](#), incorporate that collaborative spirit and are opportunities for cities to get involved.

**Mayor Yvonne Aki-Sawyers, Freetown, Sierra Leone; Founding Member of the Mayors Migration Council’s Leadership Board, Co-Lead of the C40-MMC Global Mayors Task Force on Climate and Migration and Member of the Global Parliament of Mayors (GPM)**

**Why have you taken the role as co-lead of the C40-MMC Taskforce and what do you need as a mayor to better address the impact of climate change on human mobility?**

Mayor Aki-Sawyers answered that the vision of the [C40-MMC Task Force](#) is to address the impact of the climate crisis on migration in cities. This commitment

to act now is crucial because climate impact is increasingly a key driver of rural-urban migration into cities like Freetown and there is a complex interplay between the two phenomena. She offered the example of deforestation and



destruction of mangroves along coastal areas in Freetown, where people are desperately searching for places to live, impacting the environment negatively. She emphasised that a key driver of this type of environmental degradation, which has not received enough attention, is the role of urban planning, and specifically the lack of it, particularly in the Global South. This is especially important given that 75% of the world's population will be

living in cities by 2050, with the main growth happening in the Global South. She stressed that if we don't want hundreds of millions of people living in informal settlements in the next 25-30 years, it is critical that we address the issue of urban planning and that cities are given the mandate and the authority to plan. She pointed out that effective urban planning is an enormous challenge in many parts of the Global South, and is not an issue that can be addressed from the central government. It is best managed in a decentralized way through local government actions. She also emphasised that significant investment in housing is an important part of addressing these challenges but that more needs to be done to finance urban adaptation. She affirmed that the C40-MMC Task Force will tackle the challenge of access to finance . "We need new ways for cities to access finance for adaptation where it is most needed. As the C40-MMC Global Mayors Task Force on Climate and Migration, we are holding ourselves accountable by defining concrete recommendations for national governments, multilateral banks, and the private sector to expand both our mandates and financial capacity."

### **Mayor Peter Kurz, Mannheim, Germany; Chair of the Global Parliament of Mayors**

**What avenues do you see for your coalition to create a united front with the C40-MMC Task Force, IOM, and UNHCR and, together, partner with national governments to jointly address climate change and its impact on human mobility?**

Mayor Kurz highlighted the important role of cities for developing global solutions. He spoke for example about the Global Parliament of Mayor's work

ahead of COP26, highlighting the upcoming [Call to Action](#) on climate-related migration, which he invited mayors and city networks to join in the months ahead. Kurz noted: “We need a coalition of city leaders committed to action. And we need national governments and multilateral institutions to acknowledge the effective contributions made by the cities. We need them to open their systems for equal participation and stand together with us.” He also said that city leaders have a stronger sense of urgency, and if they are supported, they have a chance to affect real change on the ground. By working together, mayors can make the voices of cities heard. They must demand inclusion in policy debates and decision-making mechanisms at the national level and international institutions.

**Brigid Shea, Commissioner of Travis County, Texas; Chair of ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability USA (ICLEI USA)**

**What action do you want President Biden to take and why was it important for you as the leader of Travis County to join this effort?**

Commissioner Shea mentioned that in April 2021 she joined the Mayors Migration Council and 14 American mayors and county leaders in releasing an open letter to President Biden urging him to take action on climate-related migration. Among the actions she expects from the Biden Administration, she highlighted the following:

1. Partner with localities in proactively preparing for the reception and inclusion of those who are forced to move due to climate-related reasons.
2. Apply a local lens to US foreign assistance priorities, extending support to cities in the most climate vulnerable countries and regions so they can adapt in place.
3. Put people at the centre of climate policy to ensure equity and inclusion at home.

She further emphasised that climate change is already affecting American cities today – people will be displaced and forced to move. “Huge portions of the United States, much of the South and West of this country will become uninhabitable because of climate change.” Commissioner Shea described the impact of Winter Storm Uri in Texas, which caused 4 million people to lose power and cost \$50 billion USD in damage. She argued: “A whole-of-government approach is only the starting point. We need to ensure that the impacts of this breakdown are addressed in an equitable fashion.”

## **Marta Youth, Deputy Assistant Secretary Bureau of Population, Refugees, And Migration, State Department, United States**

### **What opportunities do you see for the US government to work with local governments at home and abroad to prepare for and to manage the realities of climate migration?**

Deputy Assistant Secretary Youth referred to President Biden's executive order on: "rebuilding and enhancing programs to resettle refugees and planning for the impact of climate change for migration". She said that the tasks outlined in that order carry particular weight, as climate change is one of the four main crises President Biden identified when he took office. The climate crisis requires urgent and ambitious action from numerous stakeholders, including of course, local governments.

Furthermore, she emphasised that the US recognises the need of a comprehensive whole-of-society strategy to ensure that everyone has a voice in the solutions. Solutions must be global, while at the same time rooted in what is local and what is personal. National leaders must recognise that collaboration across all government levels is crucial.

Only through such multi-level collaboration can urban planning and climate adaptation can be addressed adequately.

"We are committed to working globally locally and collaboratively to confront the crisis. We are committed to working across all levels and with all stakeholders to address the climate crisis. Groups such as the C40-MMC Global Mayors Task Force on Climate and Migration can often bridge the divide between governments, private sector, and civil society."



## **Anare Leweniqila, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Fiji to the United Nations in Geneva and Chair of the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD)**

Moderator Shipra Narang Suri noted that when we look at the global climate risk landscape, as a small island state, Fiji is highly susceptible to the adverse impacts of climate change and natural disasters - particularly sea-level rise, cyclones and flooding events - which are increasingly a direct cause of displacement in Fiji. Acknowledging climate change as a key driver of human mobility, Fiji was the first country in the world to ratify the Paris Agreement and to open a Relocation Trust Fund for People Displaced by Climate Change - partially funded by a new Environment and Climate Adaptation Levy.



## **Could you share more about these best practices and whether there is an explicit urban/local component in your strategy other States could learn from?**

“One thing is to have a good strategy, but a good strategy needs a funding mechanism”, Mr. Leweniqila stated. He explained that the trust fund is a proactive tool to allow governments to make decisions regarding people who are likely to be displaced. Building resilient urban infrastructure is an important component of Fiji’s climate strategy. Currently, the country is implementing a program that is aimed at improving housing conditions for people living in Fiji working directly with mayors. Such initiatives allow local governments to play an active role in building sustainable solutions. Furthermore, he highlighted that Fiji’s climate strategy is people-centred. It is good to focus on infrastructure, but in the end, solutions need to be for the people, noting that the funding for the strategy and the infrastructure that is built needs to positively impact people’s lives.

### **2.1.2 Round 2 Questions**

#### **Fiona Clouder, COP26 Regional Ambassador for Latin America and the Caribbean, Government of the United Kingdom**

#### **What opportunities could cities in Latin America and the Caribbean potentially tap into to ensure they can support those internally displaced by climate and prevent future forced displacement?**

Ambassador Clouder pointed out that Latin America is disproportionately affected by the pandemic as well as the consequences of climate change. These two challenges are causing economic instability and social inequalities. People and cities must be at the heart of efforts to move towards a green recovery. She highlighted two campaigns that are part of COP26, ([race to zero](#) and the [race to resilience](#)), to which she urged others to commit. Only a collective approach has real power in addressing these issues, she affirmed. Furthermore, she reiterated that we need to integrate a greater sense of urgency and look at rural areas in Latin America, thereby embedding solutions in a national strategy and empowering local communities.

#### **Mayor Yvonne Aki-Sawyers, Freetown, Sierra Leone; Member of the Mayors Migration Council’s Leadership Board, Co-Lead of the C40-MMC Global Mayors Task Force on Climate and Migration and Member of the Global Parliament of Mayors (GPM)**

## **How do we make international funding opportunities easier for local governments to access and what opportunities do you see to localise climate and develop funding?**

Mayor Aki-Sawyerr stated that funding comes from a variety of sources - noting the importance of traditional donors, such as the EU and philanthropists. However, city-to-city cooperation has become increasingly important. She emphasised the need to leverage city relationships, just as Freetown did with Mannheim and Zurich. Furthermore, for sustainable development, private sector involvement is important, as well as thinking of new ways to support climate adaptation in areas that are most exposed. Hence, we need new ways for cities to access finance for adaptation. This includes unlocking financing directly from multinational organisations such as the World Bank and building direct funding lines from the bank to local governments.

### **Mayor Peter Kurz, Mannheim, Germany; Chair of the Global Parliament of Mayors**

#### **What actions are you taking to meet SDG 10 and 13 together?**

Dr Kurz highlighted local self-government and financial self-sufficiency as enablers to take action. He said that the City of Mannheim localised the SDGs in a two-year participatory process. That process enabled the city to gain a new understanding of the needs, priorities and passions of the residents while they also harnessed the ideas, commitment and creativity of the people. The mission statement of Mannheim “Mannheim 2030” is based on seven strategic goals, each of which is connected to several intersecting SDGs. SDG 10 is, for example, a core part of the goal to achieve equality, diversity and integration, along with SDGs 1, 5, and 11. It is also part of other key goals of the City of Mannheim, such as global responsibility and consumption, which is a top priority for the city. He emphasised that these goals cannot be addressed in silos. Furthermore, he pointed out that Mannheim is one of the first cities to develop a local green deal in order to localise the European green deal and address the 2030 Agenda and in particular SDG 13: “In the context of Mannheim, which is an industrialised city this means true transformation”. He concluded by stressing that the old top-down system of policies is no longer fit for purpose. There is a need for multilevel collaboration spanning across the vertical and horizontal levels to solve global problems in a more interdependent world.



**Brigid Shea, Commissioner of Travis County, Texas; Chair of ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability USA (ICLEI USA)**

**What are you pushing for at COP and what action do you want other partners to take in partnership with local governments?**

Commissioner Shea stated that the impacts of climate migration are already having a destabilising effect globally. As was reported by The New York Times and ProPublica, huge portions of the US, including where Travis County is, will become uninhabitable because of climate change. Recognizing that this is a reality that cannot be ignored, her organization, ICLEI, made climate and migration a priority for the engagement at COP26. She asserted that there is an urgent need to start having concrete discussions within our own communities and with national and global organisations by asking the question: “How do we begin to prepare for this in an equitable fashion?” She emphasised that, as a global body, we need to put a system in place to address this now and that the problem will not get easier if we ignore it. This must involve candid and clear conversations with our populations and involve the finance and insurance sectors.

**Marta Youth, Deputy Assistant Secretary Bureau of Population, Refugees, And Migration, State Department, United States**

**What should we expect from the Administration’s forthcoming report on the impacts of climate change and migration and how will the US share these new priorities at COP26?**

Deputy Assistant Secretary Youth pointed out that the report focuses on four aspects: (1) international security implications of climate-related migration, (2) protection and resettlement considerations, (3) foreign assistance, and (4) multilateral and other stakeholder engagement. She said it is still a ‘work in progress’ and they are looking at how best to use multilateral engagement to address migration and displacement coming from climate change. Furthermore, she emphasised that development assistance and other climate-related financing are necessary to address the challenges at hand. Therefore, the US needs to expand support, both financially and technically, to build resilience for climate impact. That is especially important because improving the abilities of governments enhances the capacity to address migration issues.

## **Anare Leweniqila, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Fiji to the United Nations in Geneva and Chair of the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD)**

Moderator Shipra Narang Suri noted that the Government of Fiji has been very active in international advocacy, for instance, chairing the Steering Committee of the Platform for Disaster Displacement.

They also recognise the importance of the urban level and the inclusion of mayor-led organisations like the Mayors Migration Council as part of its Advisory Committee. **What priorities are you advocating for in that forum? What should local governments be aware of and what actions are you planning to take on climate and migration in the lead up to COP26?**



Mr. Leweniqila said that the priority should be to support integrated approaches to disaster displacement in global policy frameworks. Furthermore, he pointed out that there is a need to ensure that disaster displacement is prominent in the discussion, e.g., by preparing side-events for COP26 that highlight issues of the disaster displacement. He also stressed that it is important to include urban and global perspectives. “We will work at all levels of governments, including with the Mayors Migration Council, to ensure disaster displacement is part of the COP26 agenda.”

### **2.1.3 Open questions**

The moderator welcomed special guest Karina Izquierdo from Mexico, a young Future Leader from the British Council programme, to the Roundtable and invited her to put her question forward. Karina Izquierdo asked the panel the following questions:

**What role should the Global South be playing in international negotiations when it comes to recognising the interconnectedness of historic inequalities and the danger of reproducing injustices? How can we move forward to a justice-based approach and effective policymaking that acknowledges this interconnectedness, when the mechanisms that we currently have are not fit for purpose?**

#### **Mayor Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr**

Mayor Aki-Sawyerr emphasised that there is no simple answer. The battle to shift inequalities is an ongoing one that cannot relent and that 2020 with the

Black-Lives-Matter Movement highlighted how far we still have to go. She noted, however, that there has been important progress, for example in the great steps women have made in the midst of so much inequality all over the world. She underlined that statement by highlighting the election of Kamala Harris as Vice President of the United States and of Jacinda Ardern as the Prime Minister of New Zealand.

Furthermore, Mayor Aki-Sawyerr said that you can only go forward with as many disruptions as possible. Only by disrupting the predominant system and making all voices heard is it possible to fight inequality. Structural factors that cause migration need to be addressed. The discussion needs to be more about the changes that need to happen in the countries where migration begins rather than focusing on welcoming and inclusive policies in the host countries to migration. She finished by saying that it will be a constant fight against inequalities and for this particular issue, more voices from the Global South need to be present and speak up.

### Martha Youth

In her answer, Martha Youth spoke about how the Global North needs to listen, creating the space to let voices from the Global South be heard. They need to address the root causes of climate migration as it endangers the future of all countries, and providing people with opportunities at home. Also, she said that President Biden has put forward yet another executive order to establish a collaborative migration management strategy. Part of the focus is to work locally and to mediate humanitarian assistance. It is essential that those who are being displaced have the opportunity to reintegrate. Lastly, alliances need to be built to address root causes.

## 2.3 Closing Remarks

### Closing Statement by Andrew Harper, Special Advisor on Climate Action, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

In his closing remarks, **Andrew Harper** highlighted the importance of hearing from mayors at the event. He noted, “We should listen more to the communities on the ground. It is only when you speak to the people on the front line of the emergency

that you get a feeling of the urgency. I hope at COP26, and at other discussions, that we do understand that it is real. What we are talking about is the human face of climate emergency.” He continued, “It is not only climate change, but how climate change is exaggerating other mega trends, including urbanisation and changes in livelihoods.”



### Moderator Dr. Shipra Narang Suri

“Human dignity, people-centred, local action, sustainable urbanisation, community-oriented, urgency and empowerment ....this is what we need. We need more and more and more and more alliances.”

### GPM Call to Action

The mayors' leadership on climate-forced migration will continue after the event. Members of the Global Parliament of Mayors are currently drafting a Call to Action, which they will invite other city leaders around the world, as well as global city networks, to sign ahead of COP26 held in Glasgow in November 2021. Building on this momentum, the C40-MMC Task Force is developing a mayor-led Action Agenda with ambitious city actions to actualise the GPM's Call to Action, and concrete policy recommendations for national and regional governments, central banks and international financial institutions to support cities in this effort.

**#UnitedMayors** demand - and deserve - a seat at the table where policy and investment decisions around climate migration are made. Only through a real multilevel governance and specific financing mechanisms will the international community be able to address these pressing challenges.

## 3. Annexes

### I. Speaker profiles



#### **Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr, Mayor of Freetown, Sierra Leone**

Founding Leadership Board Member of the Mayors Migration Council, Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr was sworn in May 2018 with a commitment to transform the city of Freetown using an inclusive, data-driven approach to address challenges in the city. The 3-year' Transform Freetown' plan details

19 concrete targets across 11 sectors and covers issues ranging from tackling environmental degradation to facilitating the creation of jobs in the tourism sector. She is a finance professional with over 25 years of private sector experience in strategic planning, risk management consulting and project management and holds a MSc in Politics.

Her public sector engagement began with her work during the 2014-2015 Ebola epidemic and her subsequent role as Delivery Team Lead for the second phase of a multi-stakeholder programme to drive socio-economic recovery in Sierra Leone post Ebola. Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr is member of the Global Parliament of Mayors.



**Fiona Clouder, COP26 Regional Ambassador for Latin America and the Caribbean, Government of the United Kingdom**

Fiona Clouder was appointed as the UK Government's Regional Ambassador for Latin America and the Caribbean, COP26 in March 2020. More information about COP26, the UN Climate Change Conference is at <https://ukcop26.org/>.

Fiona Clouder joined the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (now FCDO) in 2001, from the Research Councils (now UKRI) to build and lead the FCO's global Science and Innovation Network (UKSIN). In 2006 she went to India as Director of Corporate Services, returning to London in 2009 to work on Migration issues. From 2011, as Deputy Director, Americas, Fiona led the FCO's strategy on Latin America (the Canning Agenda). She served as Her Majesty's Ambassador to Chile from Feb 2014 to Jun 2018. On return her work included Americas, Overseas Territories, Climate Diplomacy and preparations for COP26.



**Andrew Harper, Special Advisor on Climate Action, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**

Andrew Harper is the Special Advisor for Climate to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Geneva. He is responsible for providing strategic guidance, oversight and expertise to shape UNHCR's response to the climate emergency. Prior to

his current tasks, he was the Director of the Division of Programme Support & Management (DSPM) where he oversaw programme policy, planning and management, as well as technical support to field operations. He has led the innovation Service in UNHCR and was responsible for leading and coordinating the international response to the Syrian Crisis in Jordan. Some of the main achievements included responding to, at the time, the largest refugee crisis in the world, the establishment of the Zaatari and Azraq refugee camps, introducing biometric registration and linking that to the world's largest biometric based refugee cash assistance programme. He also served as the Head of Desk for UNHCR, covering the Iraq Situation, as well as the Emergency Focal Point for the Middle East and North Africa region for the Libyan crisis. Andrew Harper has previously worked notably for the Australian Embassy in Turkey and UNOCHA, and in various field locations with UNHCR, including Central and Southeast Asia, the Western Balkans, Islamic Republic of Iran and Ukraine.



**Michele Klein-Solomon, Regional Director for Central and North America and the Caribbean, International Organization for Migration (IOM)**

Michele Klein Solomon is Regional Director for Central and North America and the Caribbean for the International Organization for Migration (IOM), based in San Jose, Costa Rica. She provides advice to governments in all regions

of the world and to regional, intergovernmental and non-governmental entities on a wide range of migration policy matters.

Prior to her current assignment, Michele Klein Solomon served as the first Director of the newly established Policy Hub in the Office of the Director General at IOM. The Policy Hub is designed to draw together, and deliver, policy knowledge across the Organization. From 2016-18, she was Director, Global Compact for Migration at IOM, leading IOM's support to States and partners in the development and implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. From 2014 to 2016, she directed the Secretariat of the Secretariat of the state-led Migrants in Countries in Crisis Initiative. Michele Klein Solomon was IOM's representative to the United Nations in New York from 2010-2014, and previously was Director of IOM's Migration Policy and Research Department.

Michele Klein Solomon holds Juris Doctor and Master of Science in Foreign Service degrees from Georgetown University, and an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Colgate University.



**Dr. Peter Kurz, Mayor of Mannheim, Germany; Chair of the Global Parliament of Mayors**

Dr. Peter Kurz, has been the mayor of Mannheim, Germany since 2007. As mayor, he holds numerous positions in municipal subsidiaries and various honorary posts in European and international committees.

Mayor Kurz is one of the founding members of the Global Parliament of Mayors (GPM) in 2016. He held the position of vice chair of the GPM until he was

appointed chair of the organisation in November 2019.

Previously, he worked in a law firm, as a researcher at the University of Mannheim and as a judge at the Administrative Court of Karlsruhe. From 1999 to 2007, Peter Kurz served as Mannheim's Deputy Mayor for Education, Culture, Sports, and City Marketing.

From April 2018 to January 2020, Peter Kurz, represented the German Association of Cities and Towns at the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) and since January of 2020 he has actively continued his work as substitute member.

At the European level, Peter Kurz has also been a deputy member of the Main Committee of the German Section of the Council of European Municipalities and



Regions (CEMR) since 2010. He is also active with United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), where he is one of five German local representatives in the World Council and one of two German mayors in the Executive Bureau.



**Dr. Shipra Narang Suri, Chief Urban Practices Branch, UN-Habitat**

Dr. Shipra Narang Suri is an urban planner with a PhD in Post-War Recovery Studies from the University of York, UK. She leads UN-Habitat's Urban Practices Branch, which is the hub for UN-Habitat's normative work and the home of its portfolio of global programmes. The work of the Branch covers all major

areas of UN-Habitat's work such as national urban policies; policy, legislation and governance; urban planning and design; public space; urban regeneration; land, housing and shelter; urban economy and finance; urban basic services; safer cities; human rights and social inclusion, with extensive normative work and operational activities in nearly 80 countries. Shipra is also the senior advisor within UN-Habitat for local governments and their networks.

Shipra Narang Suri has extensive experience in advising national and local governments, as well as private sector organisations and networks, on issues of urban planning and management, good urban governance and indicators, liveability and sustainability of cities, urban safety, women and cities, as well as post-conflict/ post-disaster recovery. She is the former co-Chair of the World Urban Campaign, a platform that brings together a large array of global organisations to advocate for sustainable urbanisation, and the former Vice-President of the General Assembly of Partners, a platform established to bring stakeholder voices to Habitat III and in the drafting of the New Urban Agenda. She is also a former Vice-President of ISOCARP, the International Society of City and Regional Planners.

Shipra Narang Suri has worked with the United Nations, specifically, UN-HABITAT, UNDP, and UNESCO, as well as international NGOs and private sector organisations, for over two decades. She has worked across Asia, Africa, South-eastern Europe and the Middle-East. She has been involved in the development and execution of a variety of development, research and training projects and programmes, is a regular public speaker at national and international fora and has several publications to her credit.



**Commissioner Brigid Shea, Travis County, Texas; Chair of ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability USA (ICLEI USA)**

Brigid Shea came to Austin in 1988 to start the Texas chapter of [Clean Water Action](#). Prior to that she had been an award-winning journalist at NPR stations in Minnesota and Philadelphia. In Austin, she was a leader in the Save Our Springs movement of 1992 which resulted in Austin's historic SOS law to save Barton Springs.

Brigid Shea was elected to and served on the Austin city council from 1993 to 1996 where she championed consumer, electoral, and environmental reforms.

She has been an advisor to the LCRA, Seton Hospital, and the City of Austin.

Her carbon-reduction work won the TCEQ Environmental Excellence award in 2010. In 2014 she was elected to the Travis County Commissioners Court.

Currently, Brigid Shea is the USA Board Chair of ICLEI, Local Governments for Sustainability, the oldest UN recognised, non-governmental organisation representing local governments; Chair of Air Quality subcommittee of the NACo EELU Committee. She serves on the national board of Clean Water Action, is a member of the state board of Texas Campaign for the Environment and is a former member of the Austin Chamber of Commerce Clean Energy Council. She was selected for the 2019 Women in Government Leadership Program of [Governing](#) magazine.

Brigid Shea was recently given a [Lifetime Achievement award by the Texas Energy Summit](#). She is a native of North Dakota and married to John Umphress, a former Green Building specialist with Austin Energy and beekeeping entrepreneur, and together they have two sons.



**Marta Youth, Deputy Assistant Secretary Bureau of Population, Refugees, And Migration, State Department, United States**

Marta Youth joined the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) as Deputy Assistant Secretary in November 2020. She has responsibility for humanitarian assistance programs in Africa and also oversees the Office of International Migration and the Southwest Border Task Force.

Marta Youth was previously the Director of Central American Affairs in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs. Prior assignments include Director of the Office of Europe, Central Asia, and the Americas in PRM from 2017 to 2019; Deputy Chief of Mission at US Embassy Managua, Nicaragua from 2014 to 2017; and Economic Counsellor at the US Embassy in Ottawa, Canada from 2011 to

2014. She also worked at the US Embassy in Quito, Ecuador as Press Attaché from 2008 to 2011. She also served overseas at the US Embassy in Madrid, Spain as a Trade Officer from 2000 to 2004 and at the US Consulate in Chennai, India as a Consular Officer from 1992 to 1994.

During her State Department career additional Washington, DC assignments included Country Assistance Coordinator for Russia and Moldova, South Africa Desk Officer, and Portugal, Malta, and Vatican City Desk Officer. She has also been assigned twice to the State Department's Economic and Business Affairs Bureau.

Marta Youth has been a Foreign Service Officer for more than 25 years and is a member of the Senior Foreign Service. She has a BA in Political Science and Economics from St. Peter's University in New Jersey and pursued graduate studies at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Bologna, Italy and Washington, DC.

## II. The Organisers

### British Council

The [British Council](#) is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. "We build connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education and the English language. Founded in 1934 we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body."

The British Council is leading [The Climate Connection](#), a global programme that brings people around the world together to meet the challenges of climate change in the lead up to COP26. Through arts and culture, education and the English language, it is about ideas, innovation and real change.

The partnership with the Global Parliament of Mayors forms part of the policy engagement strand, connecting cities from around the world and sharing local solutions to climate-related challenges.

### C40 Cities-Mayors Migration Council Global Mayors Task Force on Climate and Migration (C40-MMC Task Force)

The [British Council](#) (C40) and the [Mayors Migration Council](#) (MMC) [Global Mayors Task Force on Climate and Migration](#) is a mayor-led initiative to address the impact of the climate crisis on migration in cities, inspired by C40's Global Mayors COVID-19 Recovery Task Force.

Mayors deal with the realities of climate change and migration on a daily basis. This includes protecting residents from extreme heat, wildfires, flooding, or landslides, and welcoming people displaced by climate impacts domestically or internationally. Mayors are also setting the global agenda in promoting climate justice and leaving no one behind in the green transition. To date, their

efforts have been delivered with limited resources and fragmented policy and financing regimes.

The C40-MMC Task Force will drive forward an Action Agenda in partnership with migrant and refugee community leaders, business leaders, and experts to be presented at the United Nations Climate Conference (COP26) in November 2021 in dialogue with national and regional counterparts. The C40-MMC Task Force is co-led by the Mayor of Dhaka North, Bangladesh and the Mayor of Freetown, Sierra Leone and includes as members the Mayors of Barcelona, Spain; Bristol, United Kingdom; Dakar, Senegal; Houston, United States; Lima, Peru; Los Angeles, United States; and Milan, Italy. The C40-MMC Task Force is funded by the MMC, which operates with the financial support of Open Society Foundations, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and the Robert Bosch Stiftung.

### **Global Parliament of Mayors**

The [Global Parliament of Mayors](#) (GPM) is a governance body of, by and for mayors from all continents with a vision of the world in which Mayors, their cities and networks are equal partners in building global governance for an inclusive and sustainable world. The mission of the GPM is to facilitate the debate between mayors, national governments and international organisations, drive systematic action to take on global and national challenges and opportunities to achieve political change on a global scale. Mayors take leadership and ownership of the global challenges that they face on a local level.

In partnership with the British Council the GPM has developed the project [“Uniting Mayors: Local Solutions to Global Climate Challenges”](#). The project brings together mayors and communities worldwide to explore the impact of climate change - particularly on communities in low lying areas in the Global South - and to share ideas and collaborate on city solutions and response strategies. City leaders have a vital role to play in responding to this challenge - both in terms of helping their cities to become carbon neutral and deal with the effects of climate change, and in terms of dealing with climate displacement and migration. The main output of the project is a mayoral ‘Call to Action’ that will be published prior to COP26.

### **International Organization for Migration (IOM)**

Established in 1951, [IOM](#) is the leading inter-governmental organisation in the field of migration and works closely with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners. It works to help ensure the orderly and humane management of migration, to promote international cooperation on migration issues, to assist in the search for practical solutions to migration challenges and to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, including refugees and

internally displaced people. In the environment and climate change field, IOM has been at the forefront of operational, research, policy and advocacy efforts, seeking to bring environmental migration to the heart of international, regional and national concerns in collaboration with Member States and partners.

### **The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)**

[UNHCR](#), the UN Refugee Agency, works in 135 countries to safeguard the rights and well-being of people who have been forced to flee. Together with partners and communities, they work to ensure that everybody has the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another country. UNHCR is providing protection and assistance to many refugees and other people displaced by the effects of climate change, as well as helping them increase their resilience to future disasters and secure lasting solutions.

## **III. Press Release**

### **Global Coalition of City Leaders Push for Climate Action Mayors Debate Climate Migration with National and UN Officials**

7 July 2021 - On Tuesday, July 6, mayors from around the world came together with representatives of national governments and UN officials at an official side event of the United Nations High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (UN HLPF 2021) to discuss the pressing development challenges related to climate change and related migration in cities, as well as the interrelated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and 13 (Climate Action).

The 2019 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) special report reveals that land degradation is already negatively impacting the livelihoods and well-being of at least 3.2 billion people, while rising sea levels could submerge the homeland of 280 million people by the end of this century. These climate change challenges will reflect on internal and international population movements. While it is today widely recognized that environmental migration is complex and multifaceted, we also know that most people's journeys will lead them to and through cities. Mayors deal with these realities on a daily basis and are leading the charge to take action now. They convened at the HLPF to meet with national and UN leaders to identify how different levels of government can better work together and accelerate the implementation of the SDGs at a global scale.

The event was a joint initiative of several organizations working together to address climate-related migration, including the British Council under the Climate Connection programme, the C40 Cities-Mayors Migration Council Global Mayors Task Force on Climate and Migration (C40-MMC Task Force), the Global

Parliament of Mayors (GPM), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR).

“The relationship between diverse forms of contemporary migration patterns and trends in urbanization are complex and challenging,” said **Michele Klein Solomon**, Regional Director for Central and North America and the Caribbean, International Organization for Migration (IOM). “It is therefore crucial that the international community takes urgent action to empower and enable cities to engage in migration diplomacy and policymaking and to connect this with inclusive climate action strategies and policies.”

**Fiona Clouder**, COP26 Regional Ambassador for Latin America and the Caribbean, Government of the United Kingdom, said that the climate challenges are no longer something theoretical. She noted, “We need to move from thinking to actually doing and it is through partnerships like the COP26 campaign [Race to Resilience](#), where we can put people and nature first, that will actually make the difference.”

**Mayor Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr**, Freetown, Sierra Leone; Co-Chair of the C40-Mayors Migration Council Global Mayors Task Force on Climate and Migration and member of the Global Parliament of Mayors spoke about the importance of appropriate financing. She said: “We need new ways for cities to access finance for adaptation where it is most needed. As the C40-MMC Global Mayors Task Force on Climate and Migration, we are holding ourselves accountable by defining concrete recommendations for national governments, multilateral banks, and the private sector to expand both our mandates and financial capacity.”

**Mayor Peter Kurz**, Mannheim, Germany; Chair of the Global Parliament of Mayors (GPM), spoke about the work of the GPM ahead of COP26, highlighting an upcoming Call to Action on climate-related migration, which he invited mayors and city networks to join in the months ahead. Kurz noted, “We need a coalition of city leaders committed to action. And we need national governments and multilateral institutions to acknowledge the effective contributions made by the cities. We need them to open their systems for equal participation and stand together with us.”

“Huge portions of the United States, much of the South and West of this country will become uninhabitable because of climate change,” said **Brigid Shea**, Commissioner of Travis County, Texas; Chair, ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability USA (ICLEI USA). She described the impact of Winter Storm Uri in Texas, arguing: “A whole-of-government approach is only a starting point of the answer. We need to ensure that the impacts of this breakdown are addressed in an equitable fashion.”

“We are committed to working globally locally and collaboratively to confront the crisis,” noted **Marta Youth**, Deputy Assistant Secretary Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, State Department, United States. Youth spoke about U.S. President Biden’s priorities ahead of COP26 and said: “We are committed to working across all levels and with all stakeholders to address the climate crisis. Groups such as the C40-MMC Global Mayors Task Force on Climate and Migration can often bridge the divide between governments, private sector, and civil society.”

**Anare Leweniqila**, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Fiji to the United Nations in Geneva and Chair of the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD), described the urgency of the situation in Fiji: “One thing is to have a good strategy, but a good strategy needs a funding mechanism.” Leweniqila concluded, “We will work at all levels of governments, including with the Mayors Migration Council, to ensure disaster displacement is part of the COP26 agenda”.

In his closing remarks, **Andrew Harper**, Special Advisor on Climate Action, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), highlighted the importance of hearing from mayors at the event. He noted, “We should listen more to the communities on the ground. It is only when you speak to the people on the front line of the emergency that you get a feeling of the urgency. I hope at COP26, and at other discussions, that we do understand that it is real. What we are talking about is the human face of climate emergency.” He continued, “It is not only climate change, but how climate change is exaggerating other mega trends, including urbanisation and changes in livelihoods.”

The mayors’ leadership on climate and forced migration will continue after the event. Members of the Global Parliament of Mayors are currently drafting a Call to Action, which they will invite other city leaders around the world and global city networks to sign ahead of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) to be held in Glasgow in November 2021. Building on this momentum, the C40-MMC Task Force is developing a mayor-led Action Agenda with ambitious city actions to actualise the GPM’s Call to Action, and concrete policy recommendations for national and regional governments, central banks and international financial institutions to support cities in this effort.

#UnitedMayors demand - and deserve - a seat at the table where policy and investment decisions around climate migration are made. Only through a real multi-level governance and specific financing mechanisms will the international community be able to address these pressing development challenges.

