



ALLIANCES FOR  
CLIMATE ACTION

ACHIEVE

## Bridging Levels:

*Advancing Climate Action Through Multilevel  
Governance and Local Leadership.*



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During the COP30 Local Leaders Forum, held in Rio de Janeiro from November 3-5, 2025, WWF and the Alliances for Climate Action mobilized a cohort of 25 fellows from subnational governments in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and South Africa to take part in a series of learning sessions to foster peer exchanges and forward thinking.

Over the course of four thematic sessions, and broader participation in C40 programming, participants explored how cities and regions are driving high-integrity climate action, tackling plastic pollution through community engagement, placing nature at the heart of local climate agendas, and advancing multi-level climate governance through subnational leadership. These dialogues showcased innovative approaches, highlighted practical solutions, and reaffirmed the critical role of local governments in accelerating climate and nature action across Latin America and beyond.



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## Session 1: Strengthening multi-level governance: A priority for climate action

ACA convened activities at the COP30 Local Leaders Forum opened with the session “Strengthening National-Subnational Collaboration for the Implementation of NDCs,” held in Rio de Janeiro from November 3–5, 2025.

This dialogue echoed the spirit of the CHAMP Declaration launched at COP28, which positions multi-level governance as a cornerstone for accelerating climate action. In a global context where emissions continue to rise despite decades of negotiations and national pledges, the urgency to shift from commitments to concrete implementation has never been greater. The session underscored the vital role of subnational actors in bridging ambition and action, and in translating national climate goals into tangible local outcomes.

### *Feasible and ambitious national pathways to 2035 and net zero emissions.*

The session opened with a keynote presentation by Nate Hultman, Director of the Center for Global Sustainability (CGS) at the University of Maryland, who shared key findings on how to build plausible and highly ambitious national pathways toward 2035 and emissions neutrality. His approach is based on a bottom-up logic, recognizing that climate goals must be aligned with each country’s net-zero emissions targets, but also feasible given their political, economic, and social contexts.

The CGS analysis covers twelve key emitting countries, including Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, the United States, India, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, South Korea, South Africa, and the European Union, and highlights the importance of sectoral transitions, priority public policy actions, and, crucially, the contribution of subnational governments. The platform offers a comparative view of these pathways, showing how the sum of national and local efforts can keep alive the possibility of limiting global warming to 1.5°C.



### *Reflections from the subnational context.*

**Luli Pesqueira**, Global Climate Action Coordinator for WWF Mexico moderated a panel, with the participation of **Charlotte G. Brynielsson**, Sustainability Strategist at Viable Cities (Sweden); **Mario Silva**, Chief of Staff to the Mayor of Guadalajara (Mexico); **Daniela Vilar**, Minister of the Environment for the

Province of Buenos Aires (Argentina); and **Is'haaq Akoon**, Senior Climate Change Manager for the Municipality of Ekurhuleni (South Africa). The discussion revolved around three key reflections: the importance of focusing on implementation, recognizing subnational contributions, and the opportunities for multi-level and inter-level collaboration.

First, a call was made to shift the focus from goals to implementation. While national climate commitments — such as NDCs — are fundamental to guiding action, the experience gained from more than 30 COPs demonstrates that without effective implementation mechanisms, goals remain merely on paper. The UNFCCC *High-Level Champions* have promoted the action agenda as a response to this gap, seeking to mobilize non-state actors, accelerate solutions, and generate tangible impacts. In this regard, local and regional governments are strategic allies: they have the capacity to implement, are close to the communities, and have the flexibility to innovate. Implementation is not only technical; it is political, and it requires will, resources, and coordination across all levels of government.

Second, the importance of recognizing and effectively accounting for subnational contributions was highlighted. This not only allows for raising climate ambition—by showing that countries can achieve more when local efforts are taken into account—but also reflects an unavoidable reality: implementation happens at the local level. Tools like the One WWF's *Planet City Challenge*, the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate ( GCoM ), and the Cities Race to Zero have demonstrated that local governments are taking concrete action, often more ambitious than national policies. Incorporating these efforts into national inventories and reports to the UNFCCC is not only fair but also strategic: it allows for a stronger narrative, attracts funding, and builds trust among stakeholders.

Finally, the need to strengthen multi-level collaboration and governance was emphasized, not only among levels of government (national, provincial, and municipal), but also among municipalities and provinces that have made firm climate commitments, even in contexts where national governments do not prioritize climate action. Examples such as the Alliance for *Climate Action in Argentina or America Is All In* in the United States show that local leadership can move forward autonomously, generating collaborative networks, sharing best practices, and exerting political pressure to raise national ambition. This horizontal governance—among subnational peers—is as important as vertical governance and must be recognized, strengthened, and funded. Effective climate action requires an institutional architecture that allows for pooling efforts and scaling up solutions, ensuring that no one is left behind.

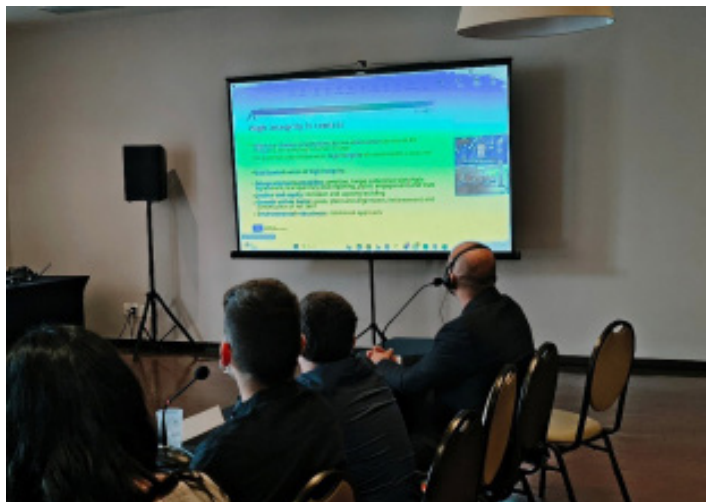


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## Session 2: High-Integrity Voluntary Climate Action in Cities

In a context where cities face urgent challenges in the face of climate change, the session “High Integrity Voluntary Climate Action in Cities” held in the context of the COP30 Local Leaders Forum explored how voluntary initiatives can strengthen local climate governance, promoting transparency, accountability and equity.

The session brought together a diverse group of leaders and specialists committed to strengthening climate governance at the local level. Participants included **Lauri Peterson**, a researcher at the University of Eastern Finland; **Lebogang Mashego**, China-Africa cooperation manager at C40; **Gabriel Vannelli**, sustainability director for the municipality of Vicente López, Argentina; **Claudio Radonich**, mayor of Punta Arenas, Chile; **Ruben Goldsztayn**, director of sustainable production and consumption in Colombia; and **Paula Domínguez**, councilwoman for Vitacura, Chile. The session was moderated by **Jonathan Sánchez** of WWF Colombia.



### What does it mean to act with climate integrity?

Integrity in climate action implies ethical consistency, honesty, and reliability. At the subnational level, this translates into clear commitments, reliable data, citizen participation, and alignment with global standards. Research presented by Lauri Peterson showed that cities participating in voluntary initiatives such as C40, GCoM, and One Planet City Challenges tend to adopt more ambitious and measurable goals.

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## Inspiring examples

- In Vitacura, Chile , a sustainability and innovation department was created to promote climate goals that can be replicated in other municipalities. Urban spaces have been transformed to reduce temperatures, and environmental education is being promoted through pollinator gardens and educational materials for schools and residents.
- In Nairobi , Kenya , an efficient refrigeration system was installed in local markets to reduce food waste, with plans to scale the initiative to 53 markets using clean energy.
- ZEBRA program , driven by C40, has catalyzed the transition to electric buses in cities across Latin America and Africa, with more than 7,000 units in operation thanks to partnerships between local governments, the private sector, and financiers.
- In Guadalajara, Mexico , gaps between municipalities were assessed before updating the climate action plan, prioritizing realistic goals based on reliable data.
- In Punta Arenas, Chile , the municipality has established a municipal tree nursery as part of its ecological restoration efforts. This space not only provides native species for reforestation degraded areas but also strengthens the community's connection with its natural environment. The initiative is part of a broader strategy to align local actions with national goals for emissions reduction and climate change adaptation.



## Keys to moving forward with integrity

The panelists agreed that participation in voluntary initiatives can be a powerful tool for cities, provided it is used strategically to:

- Strengthening institutional learning
- To generate legitimacy with key stakeholders
- Align efforts with global standards
- Promote regional collaboration
- Develop reliable emissions inventories and baselines
- Promote co-responsibility between the public and private sectors

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## From Ambition to Action:

High-integrity voluntary climate action is not just a statement of intent; it is an opportunity for cities to lead by example, build trust, and generate real impact. As highlighted in the session, the key lies in what we can achieve collectively that we could not achieve alone. Furthermore, the importance of engaging the private sector as a strategic partner was emphasized, recognizing that its participation—based on trust, shared responsibility, and clear standards—is fundamental to scaling solutions, mobilizing investment, and ensuring the sustainability of local climate action.

*#ClimateActionWithIntegrity #SustainableCities #COP30 #VoluntaryClimateAction*

# ACHIEVE



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## Session 3: Addressing plastic pollution in Latin America: Local action with global impacts

Within the framework of Local Leaders At the COP30 Forum in Rio de Janeiro, five Latin American cities shared their transformative experiences as part of WWF's **Plastic Smart Cities** initiative. From Mexico to Chile, these cities are demonstrating that local action is key to tackling the plastic pollution crisis.

The session featured local leaders who are transforming plastic waste management in their municipalities. **Daniel Cabral**, Director of Sustainability and Waste Management for La Paz, Mexico, shared his city's progress in implementing the "Desplastificate" (Go Plastic-Free) law and promoting community programs. **Carolina Cáceres**, Environmental Management Manager for Cayma, Peru, presented the district's efforts to integrate environmental education and source separation, highlighting the role of students as environmental advocates. From Guatemala, **Bryan Ramos**, Director of Environmental Management for Puerto Barrios, explained how his municipality has leveraged its autonomy to develop a comprehensive waste management plan and coordinate binational actions with Honduras.

For his part, **Mayor José Heriberto García** of Ixtlahuacán de los Membrillos, Mexico, shared the municipality's achievements in waste valorization through Metropolitan Green Points. Finally, **Nicolás Azócar**, international affairs advisor for Renca, Chile, presented the work being done to monitor plastic waste in the Mapocho River and the collaborative governance efforts in the watershed. The discussion was moderated by **Julia Murrano** of WWF Peru and **Clemente Silva** of WWF Chile, who facilitated the exchange of experiences and lessons learned among the participants.



### Community participation that transforms

- In **La Paz, Mexico**, the community and the municipal government work side by side: from massive beach cleanups to programs like Ambassadors for the Earth, where girls and boys lead actions to turn their schools into zero waste spaces, and the installation of collection points for recyclable waste.
- In Cayma, Peru, more than 470 students have become environmental promoters, promoting eco-bartering, eco-fairs and environmental education campaigns.

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- In **Puerto Barrios, Guatemala** , citizens actively participate in Recíclalos , a digital platform that connects citizens with points and alternatives for the disposal and recycling of different types of waste.

### **Municipalities as Engines of Change:**

Solid waste management is a municipal responsibility. This has allowed local governments like that of Puerto Barrios to develop their own Municipal Integrated Waste Management Plan, independent of national policies. Meanwhile, in the Guadalajara Metropolitan Area , nine municipalities have coordinated to install Metropolitan Green Points , collecting more than 290 tons of waste in less than a year , with the municipality of Ixtlahuacán de los Membrillos leading the efforts to mobilize the community. In the municipality of Renca, Chile , a public-private innovation center called La Fábrica leads the way, coordinating efforts with the community to monitor and reduce plastic waste in the Mapocho River.

### **Strategic Planning for Local Climate Action:**

The Plastic Smart Cities initiative not only drives immediate action but also strengthens municipalities' technical capacities for long-term planning. Through the development of baseline data on waste generation and characterization, participating cities have been able to design specific action plans to reduce plastic pollution. Furthermore, collection infrastructure has been created or strengthened, and behavioral change efforts have been implemented, such as educational campaigns, incentives, and partnerships with local businesses, which motivate more people to reduce, separate, and recycle their waste.

### **From awareness to action:**

These cities are demonstrating that, with local leadership, citizen participation and appropriate tools, it is possible to move towards a circular economy and a future free of plastic pollution.

*#PlasticSmartCities #LocalClimateAction #COP30 #SustainableCities*



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## Session 4: Nature at the Heart of Local Climate Action

The fourth session of Local Leaders The Forum placed a powerful idea at the heart of the debate: **nature must occupy a central place in local climate agendas**. In a context of ecological and climate crisis, subnational governments are demonstrating that protecting ecosystems is also protecting people.

**María Inés Rivadeneira**, WWF's Policy Leader for Latin America and the Caribbean, participated and presented five priority ecosystems for the region: the *Pacific Blue Corridor*, the *Jaguar Corridor*, the *Restoration Landscapes*, the *Amazon Push*, and the *Pantanal*. Her call was heeded by three representatives of local governments who are taking innovative actions for conservation.

First, **Carlos Gatica**, mayor of Coyhaique, Chile, shared how nature-based solutions have strengthened local climate resilience. Next, **Bryan Ramos**, director of environmental management for Puerto Barrios, Guatemala, explained how his municipality integrates conservation into land-use planning, especially within the framework of the Jaguar Corridor. Finally, **Federico Cacace**, secretary of the environment for San Luis, Argentina, and president of the Federal Council for the Environment, presented experiences in ecological restoration and their alignment with the national climate agenda.



### Nature as a climate strategy

From restoring urban rivers to protecting transboundary biological corridors, local governments are using tools such as:

- **Nature-based solutions** to reduce climate risks.
- **Territorial planning** that prioritizes conservation.

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- **Inclusive governance models** that involve communities, the private sector, and academia.
  - **Climate finance** to scale up restoration and protection projects.

For WWF, uniting climate action and nature conservation agendas is a strategic priority, and this session reaffirmed the organization's commitment to supporting subnational governments in designing public policies that recognize the value of ecosystems as key allies in the fight against climate change. The session concluded with a reaffirmation of the leadership of cities and regions in building a more resilient, fair and biodiverse future.

*#NatureAtTheCenter #SubnationalAction #COP30 #NatureBasedSolutions #WWF*

