



72nd World Town Planning Day Statement

A PLURALITY OF VOICES FOR EFFECTIVELY PLANNING OUR WAY OUT OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS

The Global Planners Network, a free association of small and large national and international planning associations, calls for urgent action to timely turn the tide of a rapidly unfolding climate crisis compounded by biodiversity-loss and increasing social inequality. Spatial Planning can help societies seize the opportunity of the Covid-19 recovery to lead the world on a path of true sustainability before the window for action closes.

The gap between the emissions reductions announced globally and those needed to deliver the Paris Agreement tells us that we are not on track to meet the targets set out in this legally binding international treaty. If this is not addressed now, every community in the world will be increasingly at risk by a deepening climate and biodiversity crisis, with people facing untold suffering in many places across all cities, towns, and villages.

Covid-19 has impacted cities and regions around the world, exposing the vulnerability of our communities and of the global economy and offering us a chance to change course. Planning professionals around the world are uniquely well placed to help tackle these challenges.

This year, the 72nd World Town Planning Day falls during COP26. As planners, we call for nations and cities to deliver inclusive and ambitious climate measures and support a fair global transition to net zero with less use of cars, better air quality, more nature, less poverty and reduced consumption of resources and energy and non-organic goods and foods.

For this to happen, we advocate for better human and technical resources to planning institutions and functions and for stronger powers to subnational governments to control land development so that local plans can be swiftly aligned to national sustainability and climate action agendas and quickly deliver on the Paris Agreement.

This will mean re-imagining planning so that the lessons learned on the limits to growth on a planet with finite resources can be shared by society. Adopting a place-based systems-thinking approach to the climate emergency requires collaboration across planning and allied professions and a flexible approach to foster innovation, learning and adaptation.

Key to this will be creating capacity to allow effective strategic and participatory planning at regional and national levels, addressing inequalities and harnessing the power of data and knowledge for driving change and effectively including the voices of the most at-risk from the climate emergency into our plans.

Cities host the majority of the global population and are large contributors to greenhouse gas emissions while accounting for the bulk of the global energy consumption and production of waste and pollution. At the same time, hundreds of millions of urban dwellers – and particularly the urban poor and vulnerable - are at risk from more severe or frequent storms, floods and heatwaves, constraints on fresh water and food supplies, and heightened health risks.

City-regions sit at the forefront of current emergencies. Utilising effective planning across them can play a significant role in addressing the challenges of climate change. Local governments, by virtue of their close relationships with businesses, residents, and institutions, provide an opportunity for new policies to be implemented quickly in response to pressing social, environment and economic challenges. Working together in wider areas, they can bring powerful additional action to effectively tackle these challenges.

Local planning functions are key to mobilising resources, redistributing land value uplifts, and delivering truly inclusive place-based solutions to adaptation and mitigation which communities can influence, co-produce and own.

The role of planning in delivering climate action at the local level is not only key for directing where we build and how we move around, but also what we build and how we build it. Planning can also co-ordinate infrastructure investments to align efforts to deliver net-zero and sustainable development.

It is the firm belief of the Global Planners Network that planners throughout the world have the unique skills, the talent, the desire, and the commitment to tackle the global crisis we now face. Planners stand ready to play their part.

World Town Planning Day takes place every November 8th, bringing planners and communities together to celebrate how good planning improves the lives of people and benefits society at large, creating places to live, work and play. Argentinian professor Carlos María della Paolera started World Town Planning Day in Buenos Aires in 1949, and today, planners from over 30 countries celebrate the occasion with lectures, school competitions, fundraising, charity events, planning awards and street festivals.