

SEA'TIES DECLARATION

The Mayors and Governors' Forum

Cities and their Territories Tackling Sea Level Rise

One Ocean Summit, Brest, France

We, Mayors and Governors of coastal cities, from small towns to megalopolises, have come together at the One Ocean Summit to tackle sea level rise, one of the major threats to our territories and citizens.

Sea level rise, coupled with rapid urbanization, entails significant environmental, economic, social and cultural impacts to which coastal cities are particularly exposed. Coastal flooding, erosion, inland salinization and other sea level rise impacts have been increasingly affecting our cities and territories. These phenomena are predicted to increase dramatically, amplifying the vulnerability of expanding coastal populations. By 2050, up to a billion people could be living in coastal cities and thus be at risk from rising sea levels.

Recalling the main conclusions of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC):

- Greenhouse gas emissions that warm the planet cause sea level to rise through expansion of ocean water and melting of ice;
- Global mean sea level continues to rise at an increasing rate and will further accelerate, reaching up to 1.10 meter in 2100, if greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are not sharply reduced;
- Extreme sea level events, while historically rare (once per century in the recent past), are projected to occur more frequently (up to once per year) in many locations over the 21st century, especially in tropical regions;
- Many low-lying coastal cities and small islands will be exposed to risks of flooding and land loss annually by 2050;
- Delays in mitigation and adaptation will substantially lower their cost-effectiveness.

While cities are at the forefront of increasing climate disasters, they are also the first responders to climate-induced changes. As hubs of innovation and creativity, many cities around the globe have started to implement diverse mitigation and adaptation measures at local levels.

We strive to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – in particular SDG 11 “to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”. While urbanization threatens wealth and resources in coastal areas, cities need to strengthen the resilience of coastal ecosystems, including by implementing ecosystem-based adaptation.

Yet, our commitment is not enough. We need the international community to rally behind cities threatened by sea level rise to collectively scale-up action to strengthen coastal resilience. At the local level, we need improved coordination with national coastal policies.

Therefore, we – Mayors and Governors of the world’s coastal cities – call all relevant stakeholders, building on the Cities Race to Resilience campaign, to scale-up mitigation and adaptation action to limit the impacts of sea level rise on cities, communities and their territories.

Following UNFCCC COP 26 in Glasgow, current global policies set us on an alarming path towards a warming of about 2.7°C. Therefore, We urge all States to:

- *Drastically reduce* GHG emissions to deliver on the 1.5°C target of the Paris Agreement, thus limiting sea level rise-induced risks;
- *Recognize* sea level rise as a significant threat to be urgently addressed in the international agenda, especially within the processes of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change;
- *Support and commit resources* to risk assessments and the implementation of scientifically-informed, equitable and just adaptation plans to sea level rise impacts.

Sea level rise cannot be tackled through a one-size-fits-all response, and requires considering a variety of factors, specific to each city. Four priority areas need to be leveraged to successfully adapt coastal cities to sea level rise. Accordingly, we call for:

1. *Mobilizing science and observation systems to guide adaptation to sea level rise.* In a context of great uncertainty, it is paramount to improve and expand data collection, observation and climate projections at local levels, while drawing on multiple knowledge systems, including local and indigenous, to feed systemic models and inform decisions.
2. *Integrating societal issues within adaptation plans to sea level rise.* Locally, social vulnerability, justice and equity need to be addressed within all adaptation plans to sea level rise to break down local priorities as well as the numerous risks and barriers faced by marginalized communities. Nationally, governments have a shared responsibility to ensure solidarity between coastal and land-locked areas. At the multilateral level, the many disparities (e.g., finance, technology, capacity) between developed and developing countries must be reduced, thus ensuring climate justice.
3. *Fostering adaptive and hybrid solutions in the face of sea level rise.* Facing the complexity of implementing tailored responses, it is crucial to combine different types of responses (e.g. protection, accommodation, Nature-based Solutions and managed retreat) and to coordinate responses at all levels of governance and across all sectors. Experience-sharing on adaptation plans among coastal cities is crucial to accelerate progress, increase response efficiency and avoid maladaptation.
4. *Boosting public funding and private investments for adaptation to sea level rise.* A broader set of financial actors, tools and incentives need to be engaged to increase and align resources for climate-smart investments. Risk vulnerability assessments should be supported to leverage the capacity of innovation and investment by the private and public sector, and mainstream climate adaptation insurance and solidarity mechanisms.

We invite Mayors and Governors of the world’s coastal cities aiming to tackle sea level rise to sign this declaration and thus commit, in collaboration with their governments, to monitoring progress towards the development and implementation of effective, sustainable and equitable mitigation and adaptation strategies.