

From Bharat to Belem: Delhi Declaration Sets the Stage for COP30, Amplifying Urban Voices from Global South

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Setting the stage for the upcoming UNFCCC Climate Conference, COP30, the ***Delhi Declaration on Local Action for Global Climate Goals*** emerged as the key outcome of the **first ARISE Cities Forum 2025**, held on October 8–9 in New Delhi. The Declaration unites voices from across the Global South in a shared call for stronger multilevel cooperation and accelerated urban climate action. The forum was co-hosted by ICLEI South Asia and the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA).

More than **200 delegates from 60 cities and 25 countries** representing local, subnational, and national governments, the private sector, and other key stakeholders pledged to amplify urban voices and strengthen collaboration across cities, sectors, and borders to ensure that priorities of resilience, equity, and sustainability are reflected in global climate outcomes.



The ARISE Cities Forum 2025 opened with an address by **Hon'ble Minister of State Shri Tokhan Sahu**, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India. Distinguished speakers included Mr. Gino van Begin, Secretary General, ICLEI; Dr. Debolina Kundu, Director, NIUA; Mr. Norio Saito, Director, Urban Development and Water Division, Asian Development Bank; Mr. Shombi Sharp, UN Resident Coordinator in India, and Mr. Emani Kumar, Deputy Secretary General, ICLEI South Asia.

Adopted at the close of the two-day Forum, the Delhi Declaration will be handed over to the COP30 Presidency in Belém as a collective statement of urban ambition, underscoring the leadership of cities in driving resilient, equitable, and sustainable climate action.

The Delhi Declaration was handed over by Shri Shankar Lalwani, Member of Parliament, Indore, and Mentor,



The Delhi Declaration represents a landmark affirmation of the role of cities and local governments as indispensable actors in global climate governance. It amplifies the collective voice of the Global South within the UNFCCC process, translating the Local Government and Municipal Administration (LGMA) constituencies vision for **multilevel collaboration and urbanisation in climate action** into a concrete, city-driven commitment. By aligning with COP30's Action Agenda and echoing the outcomes of the Global Stocktake, it signals that urban leadership is central to achieving the Paris Agreement's goals. The Declaration strengthens the LGMA's long-standing advocacy for recognising subnational contributions through enhanced **NDCs 3.0**, equitable access to climate finance, and systemic inclusion of local priorities in global policy. As this document travels *from Delhi to Belém*, it carries the unified call of cities — not just to be heard at COP, but to be recognised as partners shaping the decisions, resources, and resilience frameworks that define our shared climate future.

The Declaration outlines **shared commitments** to guide local and subnational governments across the Global South:

- Advance local climate action through enhanced, measurable, and resourced multilevel NDCs;
- Drive inclusive urban resilience integrating adaptation, circularity, and nature-based solutions;
- Promote just and participatory green transitions toward net-zero pathways;
- Empower citizens, women, youth, and communities in climate governance;
- Strengthen multilevel governance and transparent data systems;
- Mobilise climate finance and expand direct access for cities; and,
- Champion Global South urban leadership through South–South and triangular cooperation.

The Forum's sessions and plenaries spotlighted the gaps between national climate ambition and local delivery; waste and water circularity; inclusive and sustainable urban food systems; the role of nature-based solutions in climate-resilient development; and systemic responses to urban heat. Other themes included innovative climate action in cities, locally led governance, urban disaster management, climate finance instruments and policies, clean mobility transitions, digital solutions for sustainable energy planning, and transit-oriented development.

As South Asia's premier urban resilience platform, the ARISE Cities Forum is poised to catalyse a new wave of inclusive, multilevel, and locally driven climate action, reinforcing the message that sustainable urban development begins in cities.

Minister of State Shri Tokhan Sahu, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India addressed, “Cities are important as they are centres of economic development, but they are under pressure from rising population, and water and air pollution. But where there are challenges, there are also solutions. ARISE is important as here solutions can be sought, despite the challenges. I congratulate ICLEI South Asia for completing 20 years of work in sustainable urban development and for organising the ARISE Cities Forum.”

Emani Kumar, Deputy Secretary General, ICLEI- Local Governments for Sustainability and Executive Director, ICLEI South Asia informed “ARISE is about the collective ownership of a resilient future and the determination to act together. It is a collective effort to carry Bharat to Belem, ideas to innovation. This is the time to work together, so that it is not just for the NDCs but also locally determined contributions.”

Amit Prothi, Director General, Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, Delhi stated “We are witnessing a rapid scale and pace in urbanisation simultaneously, which has never been recorded in recent history. The key questions to address now are, how can we understand risk better? How do we understand and imagine infrastructure differently? How do we make sure that agents of change are not just the government entities?”

Dr. Debolina Kundu, Director, National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) quoted “The Delhi Declaration is a strong testament that while cities face climate challenges, strong collaboration can lead to transformative change. Let’s carry the spirit of ARISE into our cities, ensuring that climate solutions are practical, adaptive, and inclusive.”

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