



## Media Release

**March 4, 2025**

**To:** All Members of the Media – National and International

### **Johannesburg and Tshwane Launch U20 Cycle, paving the way for Global Urban Agenda at Historic African G20**

GAUTENG, South Africa (4 March 2025) – In a landmark moment for global urban governance, the cities of Johannesburg and Tshwane officially launched the 8th cycle of Urban 20 (U20) with the theme of “Cities Leading the Way in Reimagining Global Change.”. The U20 is a global initiative uniting major cities to shape discussions at the G20 Summit for Heads of State and Government which is set to be held in Johannesburg in November.




The U20 Co-chairs, Executive Mayor Nasiphi Moya of Tshwane and Executive Mayor Dada Morero of Johannesburg, marked the start of this year-long process at the Government Communication and Information Systems (GCIS) Building in Pretoria, underscoring the historic significance of South Africa hosting and leading this pivotal global forum for the first time. This initiative aims to amplify the voices of major cities in shaping the agenda of the G20 Summit.

This milestone follows the handover of U20 leadership from the cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, which successfully steered the initiative during Brazil’s 2024 G20 Presidency. The new Co-chairs have pledged to focus on urgent issues such as equitable economic opportunities, sustainable financing, social inclusion, and enhanced public services. Their leadership comes at a pivotal time, as cities worldwide grapple with the dual crises of climate change and rapid urbanization.

As one of the thirteen G20 Engagement Groups, U20 has played a critical role in amplifying the voice of cities in global decision-making. The 2024 U20 cycle, led by Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, achieved significant progress by advocating for climate finance for cities, green jobs, social inclusion, poverty alleviation, and sustainable development—themes that strongly influenced the final G20 discussions.



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Building on this legacy, Johannesburg and Tshwane will now guide approximately 50 global cities in crafting a unified message to present to national leaders ahead of the G20 Summit. The impact of this year's U20 cycle is expected to extend far beyond the G20. The outcomes will feed into the UN World Social Summit in Doha, Qatar, and the global climate talks at COP30 in Belém, Brazil, reinforcing the critical role of cities in achieving sustainable development and climate resilience.

The U20 cycle will culminate in the U20 Mayors Summit, set to take place in Johannesburg from 12–14 September 2025. Ahead of the summit, cities will participate in a series of online and in-person Sherpa meetings to negotiate a joint political outcome document, the U20 Communiqué. This document will be presented to world leaders at the G20 Summit, ensuring that urban perspectives are central to the discussions.




Executive Mayor Dada Morero, City of Johannesburg, U20 2025 Co-Chair, said: “This important summit serves as a strategic moment to elevate the voices of cities, particularly those in Africa, as key drivers of global progress and economic resilience. This is also an important summit in the history of the multilateralism agenda for local government which will provide a powerful platform for us to showcase our leadership in urban governance, climate resilience, and sustainable development, while also fostering meaningful partnerships with cities and global institutions”, said Executive Mayor Dada Morero. “Our objective is to shape the urban agenda for the G20, ensuring that cities are recognized as critical players in solving global challenges.”

Executive Mayor Nasiphi Moya, City of Tshwane, U20 2025 Co-Chair, said: “This is a historic moment for South Africa and for cities across the Global South,” said Executive Mayor Nasiphi Moya. “Under the theme, ‘Cities Leading the Way in Reimagining Global Change,’ we are not just hosting the U20; we are leading a global conversation about the future of our cities and the role they must play in addressing the most pressing challenges of our time.” She emphasized the need for stronger collaboration between national and local governments. “Cities are on the frontlines of the climate crisis, economic inequality, and social exclusion. It’s time for our voices to be heard at the highest levels of global decision-making,” she added.

Mark Watts, Executive Director, C40 Cities, said: “The Urban 20 represents city-led climate collaboration at its best, with mayors coming together to champion ambitious climate action at the heart of the G20 process and put social justice front and centre. This is the first G20 hosted in Africa – a region with incredible innovation and city leadership, but also disproportionate vulnerability to the climate crisis despite contributing least to global emissions.



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“It is my hope that this year's G20, inspired by the world's mayors, can cement support for a people-centered urban just transition – building on the leadership, innovation and resilience of cities like our Co-Chairs, Johannesburg and Tshwane.

“We are at a critical moment for global climate cooperation, and U20 mayors’ spirit of collaboration and action-oriented leadership will be more essential than ever as we approach the pivotal COP30 in Brazil. As permanent conveners of the U20, C40 – together with UCLG – looks forward to supporting U20 cities to foster this cooperative spirit and strengthen the influence of the U20 within the G20 process.”

Emilia Saiz, Secretary-General, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), said: “Cities are where people feel the immediate impact of global challenges. Whether it is addressing conflict, the climate crisis, or growing inequalities, hunger, and poverty, local governments are on the front lines, working to protect and improve the lives of their communities. In the current challenging times for the national multilateral system, cities and the local multilateral system are central to bringing leading innovative action forward towards regaining trust, strengthening resilience, and building a shared vision for the future that is at the root of a new social contract.

“As we look towards the implementation of the Pact for the Future and the Second World Summit for Social Development, UCLG and C40 celebrate the convening of the first G20 in Africa, a historical opportunity for Urban 20 to present an agenda for global social transformation that starts in our cities and communities.”




U20 is an initiative led by cities to shape G20 discussions and integrate urban priorities into global governance. Convened by C40 Cities and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), U20 unites 38 permanent member cities from G20 countries along with a rotating group of additional cities each year. Through this initiative, cities work together to develop policy recommendations and advocate for action on climate resilience, economic recovery, and social equity in urban areas.

As the world watches, Johannesburg and Tshwane are poised to make history, not only as the first African cities to lead the U20 but as champions of a more inclusive, sustainable, and equitable future for urban centers worldwide.

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## C40 Cities

C40 is a network of nearly 100 mayors of the world's leading cities working to deliver the urgent action needed right now to confront the climate crisis and create a future where everyone, everywhere, can thrive. Mayors of C40 cities are committed to using a science-based and people-focused approach to help the world limit global heating to 1.5°C and build healthy, equitable and resilient communities. We work alongside a broad coalition of representatives from labour, business, the youth climate movement and civil society to support mayors to halve emissions by 2030 and help phase out fossil use while increasing urban climate resilience and equity.

The current co-chairs of C40 are Mayor Sadiq Khan of London, United Kingdom, and Mayor Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr of Freetown, Sierra Leone; three-term Mayor of New York City Michael R. Bloomberg serves as President of the Board. C40's work is made possible by our three strategic funders: Bloomberg Philanthropies, Children's Investment Fund Foundation and Realdania.

## United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

UCLG is the largest world organisation of local and regional governments and their associations, representing and defending their interests on the world stage. UCLG's origins date back to the first ever International Congress of Cities held in Ghent in 1913. Today, with more than 250,000 members, it serves 70% of the world's population and is present in all world regions. UCLG leads on the localisation of the global agendas through its Pact for the Future of Humanity and the achievement of the common agenda through the facilitation of the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, the official consultation mechanism through which the constituency deliberates and unites its voice before the United Nations and other international processes.

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Editors Notes : Johannesburg and Tshwane Launch U20 Cycle, paving the way for Global Urban Agenda at Historic African G20

The launch of the 8th cycle of Urban 20 (U20) in Johannesburg and Tshwane marks a historic moment for South Africa and the global urban governance landscape. For the first time, African cities are at the helm of this critical initiative, which aims to amplify the voices of cities in shaping the agenda of the G20 Summit. Under the theme “Cities Leading the Way in Reimagining Global Change,” Johannesburg and Tshwane are set to guide approximately 50 global cities in addressing pressing urban challenges, including equitable economic opportunities, sustainable financing, social inclusion, and climate resilience.

This leadership comes at a pivotal time as cities worldwide face the dual crises of climate change and rapid urbanisation. The U20 initiative, one of the thirteen G20 Engagement Groups, has consistently played a vital role in ensuring that urban perspectives are integrated into global decision-making. The 2024 U20 cycle, led by Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, achieved significant milestones, particularly in advocating for climate finance, green jobs, and poverty alleviation. Johannesburg and Tshwane now build on this legacy, with their outcomes expected to influence not only the G20 Summit but also the UN World Social Summit in Doha and COP30 in Belém.



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The U20 Mayors Summit, scheduled for 12–14 September 2025 in Johannesburg, will be a key moment for cities to finalise their unified message to world leaders. The resulting U20 Communiqué will be presented at the G20 Summit in November 2025, ensuring that urban priorities remain central to global discussions. This year’s U20 cycle is particularly significant as it underscores the growing influence of cities from the Global South in shaping global policy.

Executive Mayor Dada Morero of Johannesburg: The Urban 20 (U20) launch in Johannesburg and Tshwane marks a historic moment for Africa, as two African cities will co-chair the influential forum, bringing the priorities of African cities and the Global South to the forefront of the global agenda. The U20 provides mayors from influential cities an opportunity to shape discussions on sustainable development, economic equity, and climate resilience. As Johannesburg and Tshwane take the baton from Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, they will focus on four key priorities: economic opportunities and financing, climate action and urban resilience, social inclusion and equity, and digital transformation and innovation. The theme for 2025 is "Cities Leading the Way in Reimagining Global Change," and the co-chairs aim to make the 2025 U20 more interactive, inclusive, and impactful than ever before, ultimately leading to a declaration of collective action at the U20 Mayors Summit.




Executive Mayor Nasiphi Moya of Tshwane aptly captured the importance of this moment, stating, “Cities are on the frontlines of the climate crisis, economic inequality, and social exclusion. It’s time for our voices to be heard at the highest levels of global decision-making.” Her call for stronger collaboration between national and local governments highlights the critical role cities play in addressing global challenges.

Executive Director Mark Watts of C40 Cities highlighted the value of U20, sharing that “the overriding purpose of the U20 is to raise the profile of urban priorities in the G20 agenda, proposing solutions and partnerships to the G20 that mayors know can make a real difference to people’s lives.” He reiterated the role of C40 and UCLG is to support Johannesburg and Tshwane in leading mayors and cities in this process.

Secretary-General Emilia Saiz of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) underscored the significance of the first G20 in Africa as a historic opportunity for Urban 20 to bring “leading innovative action forward towards regaining trust, strengthening resilience, and building a shared vision for the future that is at the root of a new social contract.”



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As Johannesburg and Tshwane lead this initiative, they are not only making history as the first African cities to chair the U20 but also championing a more inclusive, sustainable, and equitable future for urban centers worldwide. Their leadership underscores the transformative power of cities in driving global change and sets a precedent for greater representation of the Global South in international governance.

The world will be watching as these two South African cities steer the U20 process, demonstrating the potential of cities to lead the way in reimagining a better future for all.

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