

Keynote Address by the Executive Mayor of the City of Johannesburg

Town Hall Conference of Parties (CoP): Validation of the Revised Climate Action Plan and Launch of MetroView

Date: 15 September 2026 | Time: 10:00–13:00 | Venue: MS Teams

Programme Director, Megan Euston-Brown from Sustainable Energy Africa; MMC for Environment and Infrastructure Services, Cllr Jack Sekwaila; Representatives of UK PACT; Representatives of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA); Representatives of the C40 Cities Leadership Group; Representatives of ICLEI Africa; Representatives of Sustainable Energy Africa; Representatives of the CSIR; the City Manager and Executive Leadership of the City; Representatives of National and Provincial Government; Representatives of City Departments and Municipal Entities; Partners from Business, Academia, Civil Society and Development Finance Institutions; Distinguished Guests; Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good morning.

It is a privilege and an honour to welcome you all to this City of Johannesburg Townhall Conference of Parties, convened to engage you in co-creating the City's revised Climate Action Plan and to share a significant milestone as we launch the City of Johannesburg MetroView.

Today represents far more than an engagement session on a strategic document. It is an opportunity to reaffirm Johannesburg's commitment to building a city that is climate-resilient, water-secure, economically competitive, environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive. Most importantly, it is an opportunity to demonstrate that climate action is not separate from service delivery — climate action is service delivery. When we strengthen water security, protect roads from flooding, improve stormwater systems, reduce energy insecurity, manage waste more sustainably, improve air quality, and protect vulnerable communities, we deliver better services and build a more climate-responsive and resilient city. Climate action and service delivery are not competing priorities, but mutually reinforcing ones. As climate risks intensify, the City's ability to provide reliable services will increasingly depend on the resilience of our infrastructure, our institutions and our communities.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to SALGA, C40 Cities, UK PACT, Sustainable Energy Africa, the CSIR, ICLEI Africa, our development partners, academia, civil society organisations, business leaders and all City departments and entities that have contributed to this important process and made this virtual event possible. Your partnership demonstrates a fundamental truth: no city can build climate resilience alone.

Ladies and gentlemen, climate change is no longer a future challenge. It is a present-day reality affecting our economy, our infrastructure, our natural environment and our

communities. The evidence is clear. We have all experienced the recent cold, rainy spells, unusually cold and wet for this time of year — a reminder that the seasonal weather patterns we learned about in school have already begun to change.

The latest science tells us that Johannesburg is becoming hotter. By 2050, average annual temperatures are projected to rise significantly, and heavy rainfall events are expected to intensify, increasing the risk of flooding, infrastructure damage and service disruption. The City's updated Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment confirms that Johannesburg faces four major climate hazards: extreme heat, flooding, wildfires, and drought and water insecurity. The assessment further indicates that by 2050, more than 161 000 people, over 33 000 buildings and more than 800 kilometres of road infrastructure could be exposed to very high flood risk. Heat exposure is also expected to increase significantly, particularly in densely developed urban areas, where the urban heat-island effect is most severe.

As our city continues to grow, these risks will grow with it. Johannesburg's population is expected to increase substantially over the coming decades, meaning more residents, businesses and infrastructure will be exposed to climate hazards. Importantly, these risks are not experienced equally. Climate impacts hit our poorest and most vulnerable communities hardest, who have the fewest resources to prepare, adapt and recover.

Programme Director, ladies and gentlemen, you may ask why we revised the 2021 Climate Action Plan. The answer is that, since 2021, South Africa has adopted the Climate Change Act. In addition, City Council has adopted several important policy instruments, including the Water Security Strategy, the Human Settlements Strategy, the Biodiversity Strategy, the Net-Zero Buildings Policy and the Food Resilience Policy, to name a few. In addition, the City has significantly expanded its climate evidence base—reviewing existing greenhouse gas inventories, including new ones covering 2016 to 2021; undertaking climate-risk assessments using the latest available scientific knowledge; and conducting urban heat studies, particularly given the El Niño cycle expected to affect us. Through all of this, we have improved our data systems to better understand our risk exposure and how to reduce our contribution to climate change.

This review is not, however, a complete overhaul of the 2021 Climate Action Plan, but rather an opportunity to strengthen the vision and ensure it remains aligned with emerging science, national policy developments and implementation realities. Through a co-creation approach, the draft revised Climate Action Plan reflects extensive engagement with stakeholders across government, academia, business, civil society, and development institutions. Through workshops, technical engagements, consultations and collaborative planning processes, you have helped shape both the evidence base and the implementation pathways in the draft revised Plan. We also recognise, collectively,

that the solutions required to address climate change do not reside within a single institution but require an all-of-society approach—hence this engagement.

MMC Sekwaila, one of the most encouraging findings of the review process is that the climate actions implemented so far have delivered measurable results. The City's latest greenhouse gas emissions inventory shows a decline in emissions despite growth in both the economy and the City's population. This demonstrates that climate action and economic development can go hand in hand. The City's climate response is already contributing to energy security, resource efficiency, infrastructure resilience and improved environmental outcomes. These achievements confirm that climate action is not a constraint to development.

Ladies and gentlemen, the revised Climate Action Plan confirms that Johannesburg's greatest emissions-reduction opportunities remain within the energy, buildings, transport and waste sectors. We are already taking action collectively. Through City Power and various partners, Johannesburg has established a significant Municipal Independent Power Producer procurement pipeline and continues to expand opportunities for renewable energy, embedded generation and energy security. The City continues to implement energy-efficiency programmes, municipal retrofits and green-building initiatives that reduce emissions while lowering operating costs. We have also installed micro-grids in five informal settlements, bringing clean energy closer to our most vulnerable communities.

We are also investing in sustainable and integrated transport solutions, including public transport improvements and cleaner mobility options. In this regard, the City of Johannesburg, in partnership with C40 Cities, the International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT) and leading South African Original Equipment Manufacturers, has launched an electric bus technology trial programme. The trial will take place on selected Metrobus and Rea Vaya BRT Phase 1C(a) routes over 30 to 60 days, testing battery-electric buses under real Johannesburg operating conditions.

The City is transforming waste — from a disposal and landfill-airspace challenge — into an economic opportunity. I implore you all to see waste as a resource. Organic waste, when diverted from landfill sites, can generate renewable energy and contribute to a growing circular economy. Just last week, on 8 September, I had the privilege of leading the sod-turning ceremony for the Robinson Deep Biogas Pilot Plant. This facility will process approximately 50 tonnes of source-separated biodegradable waste per day, using anaerobic digestion technology. The project will convert waste into renewable biogas and nutrient-rich digestate, while helping the City reduce landfill dependency and greenhouse gas emissions. These interventions are helping us build a city that is both more competitive and more resilient.

Air pollution is also a challenge for our city. The actions we are taking to reduce greenhouse gas emissions also contribute to cleaner air, directly benefiting the health and wellbeing of our residents. Water security is another concern for our city, especially given the looming El Niño. Our City is experiencing increasing pressure on water resources due to population growth, urbanisation, climate variability, pollution, infrastructure constraints, and rising demand. Our response cannot be limited to finding additional water. This is why the City is implementing a range of initiatives under its Water Security Strategy, including water conservation, leak reduction, groundwater investigations, water reuse, rainwater harvesting and alternative water-source development.

Ladies and gentlemen, the progress we celebrate today would not have been possible without strong partnerships. Through the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, the City is guided by the national legal framework for climate change, including South Africa's leadership in the global climate change negotiations under the UNFCCC. Through SALGA, the City continues to strengthen local government climate governance and intergovernmental collaboration. Through C40 Cities, Johannesburg has benefited from global best practice, climate planning support, technical expertise and implementation assistance. Through UK PACT and Sustainable Energy Africa, the City has strengthened its climate planning processes and institutional capacity. Through the CSIR and our academic partners, Johannesburg continues to benefit from scientific research, climate-risk assessments and innovative decision-support tools. Through our partnerships with development finance institutions and cities around the world, we continue to explore opportunities for climate finance, infrastructure resilience, and sustainable urban development. These partnerships demonstrate that climate action succeeds when knowledge, resources and expertise are shared.

Today we launch one of the most important outcomes of the Climate Action Plan review process. I would like to acknowledge the valuable contribution of the British High Commission, which provided funding under UK PACT, and the CSIR, for its role in developing MetroView. MetroView transforms climate science into practical decision-making. It is an integrated climate-risk, vulnerability and decision-support platform designed to help users understand where climate hazards, vulnerable communities, critical infrastructure and service-delivery pressures intersect. Importantly, MetroView is not intended for government use only — it is a tool for all stakeholders. It will support municipal departments, municipal entities, planners, researchers, investors, civil society organisations, community organisations and development partners alike. By providing a common evidence base, MetroView will improve coordination, strengthen planning and support more informed decision-making across the City. It will help us identify where investments are needed most, where vulnerabilities are greatest, and where resilience interventions can achieve the greatest impact. In short, MetroView will help Johannesburg become smarter, more responsive and more resilient.

As I conclude, I call on all of you to partner with the City in developing the revised Climate Action Plan — knowing that the Plan will provide the roadmap for climate action in the City, MetroView will provide the intelligence, and our partnerships will provide the foundation. But implementation requires collective action. Across Johannesburg, many organisations, businesses, communities, researchers and institutions are already implementing climate-related initiatives. The challenge before us is to strengthen collaboration, improve coordination and scale what is already working. The City therefore remains committed to strengthening ongoing stakeholder engagementTown Hall. Today's Townhall Conference of Parties is therefore not the end of a process — it is the beginning of the next phase of action. Let us use this opportunity to strengthen partnerships, accelerate implementation and mainstream climate considerations into everything we do. Together, let us build a Johannesburg that is climate-resilient, low-carbon, water-secure and inclusive.