

## Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance Mayors Meet with Pope Francis

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Mayors from the Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance met with Pope Francis at the Vatican on July 21-22, 2015, and discussed one of the most pressing challenges of our day: ensuring equitable access to clean air, water, and a sustainable future as a fundamental human right.

This was the largest mayoral gathering ever at the Vatican. The Pope called for the meeting following his May 24 encyclical on ecology and climate change, in which he urged the protection of our “common home” and the need for a new “conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing...affect[s] us all.” The Pope was especially eloquent about “the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet.” The meeting focused on how cities and global and local faith-based and community leaders can cooperate to effectively tackle global climate pollution and avoid permanently impoverishing future generations.

Increasingly unpredictable and extreme weather like hurricanes, droughts, blizzards, floods, landslides, and fires are already threatening cities’ infrastructure, property, and the supply lines that are critical for business operations and trade, while coastal cities are becoming dangerously vulnerable to floods and storm surges. Poor communities in these cities are most at-risk of harmful effects of climate pollution and climate change impacts.

At the meeting, the Pope and Mayors signed a declaration of commitment to significantly reduce climate pollution and improve the health and resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations. The declaration signaled their awareness that cities are essential to combatting climate change as they are home to more than half of humanity and are responsible for nearly three-quarters of humanity’s greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions worldwide. Minimizing global temperature changes will require cities to reduce GHGs by at least 80% below 2000 levels by 2050 in order to avoid grave ecosystem disruptions and catastrophic human health impacts.

### Insights from Participants

“Pope Francis has been a global leader on climate change and income inequality— two of the most pressing challenges facing cities across the world,” said Bill de Blasio, Mayor of New York City and founding member of the Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance. “As the Pope has made clear, climate change disproportionately impacts our poorest communities. In New York City, we know that environment and economic sustainability must go hand-in-hand. As we take on climate change through sweeping goals like an 80 percent reduction in emissions by 2050, we are focused on lifting up all New Yorkers so that we can achieve a stronger, more equitable, more sustainable, and more resilient city.”

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“Climate change is the most urgent challenge facing humanity today, and it was a remarkable honor to meet Pope Francis and discuss how cities and the global community can and must act in concert to drastically reduce climate pollution,” said Gregor Robertson, Mayor of Vancouver and founding member of the Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance. “Pope Francis’ leadership will build on the resounding unity of big cities worldwide in calling for meaningful and binding emissions targets, and for a climate agreement signed in Paris that respects the needs of our cities, our planet, and the generations to come.”

“Intercity cooperation is vital to address many of the social, economic and ecological challenges facing the international community,” said Karin Wanngård, Mayor of Stockholm and founding member of the Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance. “This meeting is a crucial step on the path towards sustainable development.”

Mayors of Alliance Cities and other representatives that attended the Vatican meeting include:

- Mayor Matthew Appelbaum (Boulder, USA)
- Mayor Bill de Blasio (New York City, USA)
- State Secretary for Transport and Environment Christian Gaebler (Berlin, Germany)
- Deputy Mayor Stephen Greenhalg (London, UK)
- Mayor Charlie Hales (Portland, OR, USA)
- Mayor Betsy Hodges (Minneapolis, USA)
- Mayor Edwin Lee (San Francisco, USA)
- Mayor Ed Murray (Seattle, USA)
- Mayor Gregor Robertson (Vancouver, Canada)
- Governing Mayor Stian Berger Røsland (Oslo, Norway)
- Mayor Marty Walsh (Boston, USA)
- Mayor Karin Wanngård (Stockholm, Sweden)

### About the Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance

The Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance (“Alliance”) is a collaboration of global cities committed and actively working to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by at least 80 percent by 2050 or sooner—the most ambitious GHG emission reduction targets undertaken by any cities across the globe. Alliance cities are among the first local governments on the planet to develop and implement strategies to mitigate polluting GHG emissions to this degree and to take an international leadership role in encouraging coordinated global efforts to cut climate-changing GHG emissions, while improving their residents’ quality of life. Most have been able to do so while growing their local economies. A list of Alliance cities is available at [www.carbonneutralcities.org](http://www.carbonneutralcities.org).

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