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Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance Mayors to Meet with Pope Francis About Ending Climate Change

July 20, 2015 – Mayors from the Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance will meet with Pope Francis at the Vatican on July 21-22 to discuss one of the most pressing challenges in our day: ensuring equitable access to clean air, water and a sustainable future as a fundamental human right. This will be 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 called for the imperative to protect our “common home” and the need for a new “conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing...affect[s] us all,” especially about “the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet.”

The meeting will focus on how cities and global and local faith-based and other community leaders can cooperate to most effectively tackle global climate pollution and avoid permanently impoverishing future generations. The Pope and Mayors will sign a declaration committing to significantly reducing climate pollution and improving the health and resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations.

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 to avoid grave ecosystem disruptions and human health impacts.

"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. I am humbled by the Pope's invitation to join the Vatican's discussion on this critical issue.”

At the same time, increasingly unpredictable and extreme weather like hurricanes, droughts, blizzards, floods, landslides and fires threaten cities’ infrastructure, property and supply lines that are critical for business operations and trade and makes cities particularly vulnerable to floods and storm surges. Poor communities are most vulnerable to the harmful effects of climate pollution and climate change impacts.

“Climate change is the most urgent challenge facing humanity today, and it is a remarkable honor to be invited by Pope Francis to 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.”

The timing of this meeting is important, as it will influence two key international negotiations:

- The 21st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 21) to be held in Paris in December 2015, in which nations will attempt to achieve a legally binding and universal agreement on climate from all the nations of the world.
- The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development to be held in New York in September 2015, in which the United Nations General Assembly will adopt the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a proposed set of targets relating to future international development that will influence the post-2015 international development agenda.

The [Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance](#) (“Alliance”) is a collaboration of global cities committed and actively working to reducing 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 a leadership role internationally in encouraging coordinated global efforts to cut climate-changing GHG emissions while simultaneously improving the quality of life of their residents. Most have been

able to do so while growing their local economies. A list of Alliance cities is available at www.carbonneutralcities.org.

The Alliance is a project of the [Urban Sustainability Directors Network](#) (USDN), in partnership with the [C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group](#) and the [Innovation Network for Communities](#), and is supported by the [Kresge Foundation](#), [Barr Foundation](#), [V. Kann Rasmussen Foundation](#), [Rockefeller Brothers Fund](#) and [Summit Foundation](#).

Alliance cities attending 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 Edwin Lee (San Francisco, USA)
- Mayor Charlie Hales (Portland, OR, USA)
- Mayor Betsy Hodges (Minneapolis, 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)