

APRU Sustainable Cities and Landscapes Hub Declaration of Climate Emergency and Call to Action



Humanity has destabilized the global climate system upon which all societies depend. To limit impacts and guard against increasing risks requires solutions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, drawdown excess atmospheric carbon dioxide through landscape carbon sequestration, and enhance societal capacity to adapt to extreme conditions outside the bounds of past human experience. These solutions must be planned and implemented across entire landscapes, including cities, rural settlements, forests, grasslands, agricultural lands and wetlands. They must vary by nation and region to align with their biophysical, economic, social and political contexts, and to optimize cost-effectiveness and feasibility. Because cities are both the nexus of human activities and the source of greatest carbon emissions, managing the relationships between cities and the landscapes they rely on for essential resources and services is an essential component of any successful strategy.

To implement such solutions, we identify four key goals as essential to success.

Ecological foundations of life – Protect earth ecosystems, ecological processes, global biodiversity, and evolutionary potential as the foundation of life’s resilience and adaptive capacity;

Rights of future generations – Act to ensure that future generations have access to the conditions needed to flourish, including natural resources such as healthy air, clean water and fertile soils; and cultural support systems that provide security, education, healthcare, shelter and fulfilling livelihoods in supportive communities;

Climate justice – Because marginalized communities are disproportionately impacted by climate change, specifically address their vulnerabilities and needs, and actively engage them in resilience and adaptation planning and implementation;

Cities embedded in landscapes – Shift from a tendency to think of cities in isolation of their environments to a conception of continuous landscape mosaics comprised of all landscape types interacting with one another, the hydrosphere and, critically, the atmosphere.

We assert these four goals are necessary and mutually reinforcing. Without sustaining the ecological foundations of life, there is no capacity to sustain the rights of future generations. Without ensuring that future generations have the capacity to flourish, efforts to increase climate justice for marginalized communities will be ever more difficult. If we allow marginalized communities to be left behind, we will foster not only human suffering but conflict and war. Finally, without crafting and implementing strategies across entire landscapes, it will impossible to jointly satisfy the other three principles due to the pervasiveness of the problems and their interconnectedness. With this call to action, we invite collaborators from all sectors of society -- national to local governments, private organizations and public agencies, business and academia, and citizens from all walks of life -- to join us in transformative partnerships and united efforts.

Future generations will judge us by whether we act immediately, decisively and effectively.