



worldmetropolitanday.org

World Metropolitan Day

Look beyond city boundaries



metropolis ●



Montreal (Canada). © Zhanhong Cheng, Unsplash

About

World Metropolitan Day is held every year on 14 October, commemorating the adoption of the Montreal Declaration on Metropolitan Areas in 2015.

Since 2018, Metropolis and UN-Habitat have hosted World Metropolitan Day to promote a better urban future by bringing together mayors and metropolitan leaders all over the globe to share groundbreaking solutions to the biggest challenges facing metropolises. This campaign seeks to designate World Metropolitan Day as an International Day, adopted by the UN General Assembly.

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World Metropolitan Day

Forward

In the 21st century, the world is witnessing a remarkable transformation in the urban landscape. Mid-size cities are rapidly expanding, morphing into vibrant metropolises of over one million inhabitants, while megacities continue to emerge, defining the urban future. This urban growth is transforming regions and nations, not just metropolitan areas. Governments worldwide are grappling with the complexities of managing these sprawling metropolitan areas, which are now home to 2.6 billion people, seeking effective governance frameworks that can harness their potential.

Metropolitan governance is not merely about enhancing horizontal cooperation between municipalities. It's about forging a holistic approach that aligns local needs with the broader regional, national and even global context. This vertical integration and coordination are crucial to unlocking the resources, expertise and opportunities that lie dormant within and beyond metropolitan boundaries.

Breaking down outdated paradigms is essential for effective metropolitan governance. The distinction between rural and urban is increasingly blurred, as cities and their surrounding hinterlands become interconnected ecosystems. Similarly, the notion of a stark contrast between nature and urban living is no longer tenable. Instead, metropolitan areas have to embrace the integration of biodiversity and sustainability into our urban fabric. Similarly, the traditional dichotomy between city centre and periphery must also be challenged. When the city centre stands apart from its surroundings, urban disparities and territorial inequalities inevitably arise. By adopting an integrated model that boosts the vitality of each conurbation, we can ensure equitable distribution of infrastructure, services and opportunities throughout the metropolitan territory.

Over one-third of humanity lives in metropolitan areas and for many residents, straddling administrative boundaries and navigating the shifting limits between cities, peripheries, rural areas, and nature is a daily occurrence. Living in metropolitan areas offers unmatched opportunities for jobs and leisure, education and healthcare, culture, connectivity and diversity; however, it is plagued with its own problems, from mobility and pollution to security, access to housing and lack of quality green space. Piecemeal solutions, fragmented governance and diffused political responsibility often hinder people's ability to hold authorities accountable and participate fully in metropolitan governance. **To empower 2.6 billion women and men to demand and contribute to a more fulfilling metropolitan life, we must deepen our understanding of metropolitan realities and foster innovative approaches to governance.**



For nearly four decades, Metropolis has been at the forefront of these discussions, witnessing first-hand the evolving challenges and opportunities facing metropolitan areas. We have observed the need for governance structures that can adapt to the demands of global megatrends, such as climate change, biodiversity loss and social inequality. **World Metropolitan Day serves as a beacon for change, raising awareness and mobilising political will to address these critical issues at the appropriate scale.** By making the invisible challenges of metropolitan areas visible, we empower governments to take bold steps and become pioneers in shaping the future of urban development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

In recognition of the pivotal role metropolitan areas play in shaping our world, Metropolis proposes the official designation of World Metropolitan Day as an International Day. This recognition at the highest level, the United Nations General Assembly, would underscore the importance of the metropolitan vision and inspire global action.

National governments, we urge you to lead this initiative and help us make World Metropolitan Day an official International Day. By embracing this vision, we can transform metropolitan areas into beacons of sustainability, innovation and equitable prosperity. Let us work together to shape the future we want.



Jordi Vaquer
Metropolis Secretary-General

World Metropolitan Day

Why It Matters

Metropolises are the dominant form of urbanisation in the 21st century, home to more than 2.6 billion people or about 60% of the world's urban population (UN-Habitat, 2022). They are vital for economic development, offering significant benefits and spillovers to their national economies. In 2014, about 60% of metropolitan areas created more jobs than their national averages, a trend that has continued over time. Metropolitan areas are especially influential in driving national growth in Asia-Pacific, North America, and South America, but this is true for every region. When well-managed and planned, urbanisation has been key to the economic transformation of many countries in recent decades.

However, metropolitan areas also tend to have a higher concentration of advanced economic and productive functions, which can create a gap between winners and losers. For instance, central city cores often remain attractive for certain activities, but many other parts of the wider metropolitan area lack public or private investment and connectivity with the main job locations. Income inequality is higher within big urban areas than elsewhere. This polarisation is one of the main negative spillovers that result from increasing urbanisation and agglomeration processes.

Metropolisation in numbers



Metropolises are home to +2.6 billion people

The number of metropolitan areas with more than one million inhabitants has been increasing steadily over the years. In 2015, there were 503 such areas, up from 305 in 1996 and 162 in 1976. This trend will continue and by 2035, there will be 3.47 billion people living in metropolises. This means that **almost 1 billion people will join the metropolitan population in the next decade.**



Metropolitan growth will be strongest in the Global South

The growth of metropolises will be especially rapid in the Global South. Asia-Pacific and Africa will have the largest increase in numbers, while Eastern Europe will remain stable. Latin America and the Caribbean, Western Europe, North America and Oceania will also see more metropolises, but at a slower pace (UN-Habitat, 2022).



At least 10 cities will have +50 million inhabitants by 2100

Another phenomenon is the emergence of megacities, which are metropolitan areas with more than 10 million inhabitants. Currently, there are 43 megacities in the world, some of which have more than 25 million people. **Some projections for 2100 suggest that there will be at least 10 cities with more than 50 million inhabitants by then.** Megacities are a reality and they are here to stay.

Municipal boundaries in many places no longer have any significance for people's everyday lives. People's lives are mobile, changing and not subject to these arbitrary boundaries. Life is built on a metropolitan scale. Consequently, it should be managed on the same scale on which it is experienced. To govern on a metropolitan scale is an exercise in overcoming administrative, political and mental barriers to facilitate people's lives. The metropolitan vision is an exercise of co-responsibility that will move our territories beyond the narrative of winners and losers.

Despite the fact that cities are inextricably linked to their surroundings, they have frequently been conceived of and planned in isolation. Too many cities continue to employ outdated methods and fail to look beyond their own borders. The challenges facing future metropolises cannot be solved with a narrow, urban-focused perspective. **Governments must find more innovative ways to manage metropolises that reflect the complex realities on the ground.** Especially as cities continue to grow and become more interconnected, governments must begin to consider governance at the metropolitan level and beyond.



Barcelona (Spain). © Pavlo Luchkovski, Pexels



A metropolitan vision can address these issues by connecting people, places and the planet



People

Cities have a significant impact on the well-being of local communities and inequalities. Metropolitan governance can promote equity and social justice by ensuring that all residents have access to high-quality public services and economic opportunities.



Places

Cities can reduce the polarisation of economic development, innovation and talent. Metropolitan governance can promote balanced and sustainable development by investing in all parts of the metropolitan area, including rural, peri-urban and underserved communities.



Planet

Cities are part of an ecosystem. Metropolitan governance can promote environmental sustainability by reducing pollution, conserving resources and adapting to climate change.

Governing the metropolis

Most metropolitan areas are the result of many cycles of urban development. As cities have grown beyond their original boundaries, their governance has become more complex and fragmented. To govern the metropolis effectively, governments need to understand the metropolitan area on three levels:

Defining the metropolis

Metropolises are characterised by their strong economic, social and environmental interdependencies. While there is no single definition of a metropolis, international instances such as the UN Statistical Commission recognise that the full extent of a city includes its functional urban area, which is a commuting zone of suburban, peri-urban and rural areas closely connected to the city (UN STATS, 2020). In other words, a metropolis is more than just its central core. It is a complex and interconnected system that requires integrated management.



As a system

A metropolis is more than just a city. It encompasses a city's surrounding areas and communities. It is a complex and interdependent system, with strong economic, social, cultural and environmental linkages.



As a part of an ecosystem

Cities are part of an ecosystem, meaning that they impact and rely on their surroundings. The metropolitan perspective recognises that cities are not fundamentally distinct from their surroundings.



As a global player

Metropolises are key stakeholders in global affairs because of their scope, size, economic and cultural significance. They have an important role to play in tackling global challenges such as climate change or public health.

Metropolitan governance is the process of governing cities in the 21st century. It is essential because it allows us to address the current challenges facing cities in the 21st century on a scale that is large enough to be effective.

For instance, climate change, economic inequality and pollution are all challenges that cannot be effectively addressed by individual cities alone. Despite being engines of economic growth and innovation, metropolitan areas face a number of challenges that are harming progress:



Political fragmentation and inadequate funding

Metropolitan areas are often divided into a patchwork of local authorities, each with its own government and agenda. This can make it difficult to coordinate policies and services and to address challenges that cross city boundaries. Local governments face many challenges, but they often do not have the power, the funds or the cooperation mechanisms to address them effectively.



There is a global gap in metropolitan management

Most metropolitan areas do not have a specific plan or institution, meaning their local governments cannot benefit from the opportunities and synergies of agglomeration. Also, existing metropolitan management systems are not well-balanced as many still lack the financial mechanisms to carry out projects that have a metropolitan impact and to keep their metropolitan institutions running smoothly (UN-Habitat, 2022).



Obstacles to participation and engagement

Metropolitan residents often have difficulty participating in the decision-making process.



Local impact of global crises

Metropolitan areas are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of global crises, such as climate change or epidemics. This is because they are often densely populated and have high levels of economic activity.

City governments need to work together to address the complex challenges facing metropolitan areas. This means breaking out of traditional urban planning frameworks and thinking on a larger scale. By working together, city governments can improve the quality of life for everyone in the metropolitan area.

Milestones in building a metropolitan vision

The Montreal Declaration on Metropolitan Areas

2015

In October 2015, the Thematic Meeting on Metropolitan Areas was held in Montreal, as part of preparations for Habitat III. The Declaration that came out of that meeting defined the main challenges and transformations necessary for building more inclusive and interdependent metropolitan areas, as well as mechanisms for their implementation. Specifically, the Declaration called for:

- A clear legal and institutional framework for metropolitan governance based on the principles of democracy, local autonomy and subsidiarity.
- A new partnership with other levels of government to strengthen metropolitan governance mechanisms and implement financing mechanisms adapted to metropolitan challenges.
- Integrated participatory planning to promote compact and mixed-use development, ensure sustainable mobility and environmental sustainability to fight climate change and ensure resilience.
- Inclusive policies for housing, social services, gender equality and cultural heritage to create a healthy environment for all.

Participants at the thematic meeting also reaffirmed the need to place the “Right to the City” at the heart of metropolitan policies and ensure cohesion and solidarity between the territories that make up metropolitan areas. This is to promote equalisation mechanisms and civil society participation in the decision-making process.

“We need cities designed for and by citizens, cities that leave no one behind and Montreal is fully committed to taking action in this direction.”

Valérie Plante, Mayor of Montreal

The New Urban Agenda

2016/
2017

The New Urban Agenda (A/RES/71/256) adopted in 2017 emphasised the need for effective and inclusive metropolitan governance that transcends administrative boundaries and respects functional territories. It urged supporting subnational and local governments to enhance their capacities, participation and authority in addressing key urban, metropolitan and territorial issues. It also stressed the importance of reliable legal and financial frameworks, including sustainable debt management, for metropolitan governance. Moreover, it promoted sustainable urban and territorial planning that fosters synergies and interactions between urban areas of different sizes and their surrounding rural areas, including cross-border ones. It also encouraged urban-rural partnerships and inter-municipal cooperation mechanisms based on functional territories and urban areas as useful tools for carrying out municipal and metropolitan administrative tasks, providing public services and advancing local and regional development (NUA, paragraphs 87-88, 90-92, 95-96, 115-117, 136).

2018/
present

Since 2018, Metropolis and UN-Habitat have celebrated World Metropolitan Day, commemorating the adoption of the Montreal Declaration on Metropolitan Areas. However, it is time to take this campaign to the next level and bring much-needed attention to the realities faced by metropolitan areas worldwide.

The World Metropolitan Day campaign has garnered significant support from mayors of major global cities such as Bogota, Montreal, Barcelona, Johannesburg, Rabat and Seoul. Metropolis, along with 48 mayors and metropolitan leaders from all global regions, have signed a request for World Metropolitan Day to be recognised as an international day.

The 2022 was a significant milestone in the history of the World Metropolitan Day campaign, as for the first time, a city hosted World Metropolitan Day in partnership with Metropolis and UN-Habitat. The theme for this year was 'Crossing Boundaries'. Claudia López, Mayor of Bogota and president of Metropolis, led a global conversation around the role of care in strengthening metropolitan governance and collaboration, inviting local and international leaders to discuss experiences on how to use care as a guiding principle to develop urban policies that leave no one behind. The celebrations in Bogota were accompanied by events in cities worldwide and even the illumination of emblematic buildings in Guangzhou, Yiwu and Zhengzhou.

“Urban resilience implies transforming the challenges of our cities into opportunities that guarantee inhabitants’ rights, based on tolerance, solidarity and respect for diversity.”

Carolina Cosse, Mayor of Montevideo

In 2023, Istanbul hosted the World Metropolitan Day 2023, organised by the Marmara Municipalities Union, Metropolis and UN-Habitat. The main theme of the event was “Beyond Urban: How Nature Can Transform Metropolises”. It brought together mayors and metropolitan leaders from different regions to exchange their experiences and visions on how to enhance the resilience of their metropolitan areas through nature-based solutions. The event in Istanbul was part of a global celebration that included events in cities such as Kinshasha, Buenos Aires, Barcelona, Washington and Mexico City. It also featured a discussion on the prospects of developing a legal framework for metropolitan governance in Ukraine, with inputs from the relevant parliamentary committee and the Association of Ukrainian Cities.

WM 2023: [How nature can transform Metropolises](#)

WM 2022: [Crossing boundaries](#)

WM 2021: [Resilience for all](#)

WM [2019](#)

WM [2018](#)

2023

Another important milestone for metropolitan governance was achieved at the second session of the UN-Habitat Assembly, held in Nairobi on 5-9 June. For the first time, a normative resolution on “Localization of the Sustainable Development Goals” was adopted by the UN-Habitat Assembly, with the endorsement of nine countries (Brazil, Botswana, Egypt, Israel, Italy, Malaysia, Mexico, Portugal and Spain). The resolution recognises the key role of local and metropolitan multi-level governance in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals through better policy coherence, cross-sectoral alignment and multi-stakeholder participation.

How can national governments engage in this campaign?

Metropolitan areas are of utmost importance when it comes to shaping countries' urban and territorial environments. They serve as hubs for economic activities, cultural interchange, and social engagement, making a substantial impact on a nation's socioeconomic progress and global competitiveness. At the same time, national and sub-national governments are essential partners in the development of metropolitan areas and the promotion of quality of life. National governments can engage in this campaign by improving metropolitan governance, fiscal arrangements and regulatory frameworks.

Recognising the prominence of metropolisation

Recognise the prominence of metropolisation in current national urbanisation trends and their significance towards localising the Sustainable Development Goals to achieve the targets of the 2030 Agenda (A/RES/70/1) as well as The New Urban Agenda (A/RES/71/256).

Integrating the metropolitan scale

Integrate the metropolitan scale in national urban and regional policies, as well as their national sustainable development strategies. Only by emphasising the need for metropolitan governance, territories will be able to connect diverse and interdependent territories, reduce social and spatial inequalities and protect natural ecosystems.

Supporting adequate levels of investment and partnership for services and infrastructure delivery

Subnational authorities should have access to the resources needed to deliver essential public services and infrastructure. This could help ensure affordable universal access to public services and the protection of public goods. Metropolitan areas need political and institutional recognition, clear competencies and sufficient resources to bridge the infrastructure gaps across the urban-rural continuum thus balancing national development.

Highlighting the potential of metropolitan solutions

Highlight the potential of metropolitan solutions to foster a sustainable urban future and enhance multilateral cooperation in addressing global challenges, especially in promoting effective urban climate action to achieve the global commitment to stay within the 1.5°C limit on rising temperatures by 2030 and accelerate the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals.

Declaring 14 October World Metropolitan Day

Declare 14 October World Metropolitan Day as an International Observance to be celebrated annually to promote knowledge exchange, collaboration, awareness and innovation amongst diverse metropolises worldwide.

More than 2.6 billion people stand to benefit from this shift in the way we plan, design and manage our metropolises.



Toronto (Canada). © Mwangi Gatheca, Unsplash

International Day Sustainability

Metropolis has been promoting effective and inclusive metropolitan governance since its creation in 1985. It is a global network of more than 150 cities and metropolitan areas with more than one million inhabitants, advocating and fostering cooperation and knowledge-sharing amongst its members to improve quality of life.

For the past five years, Metropolis has promoted, in partnership with UN-Habitat, World Metropolitan Day, encouraging cities to think beyond their administrative boundaries. Moreover, Metropolis continues to build knowledge and resources for its members and metropolitan areas around the world through research and projects such as the Metropolis Observatory, the USE Platform, and the development of a toolkit for metropolitan governance to be published in 2024.

To support the sustainability of World Metropolitan Day as an International Day, Metropolis offers itself as an external focal point for the commemoration of World Metropolitan Day. Metropolis commits to support the internal focal point in the United Nations, including the support that would be provided annually for the logistical organisation of the commemoration. This support could include the communication campaign, a call to select the annual venue for the Global Observance, the definition of the annual theme, a definition of the agenda of the commemoration and post-commemoration reporting and follow-up.

For more information, please contact our team:

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