



Christiana Figueres: Cities Can Change The Fate Of Climate Outlook

As the U.N. drives people into the cities, proposing to micro-manage them like herds of cattle, nobody challenges people like Figueres with the fact that cities are the very engines of pollution and not saviors from it. Technocrats will bend science to any degree to make their 'solutions' fit. □ TN Editor

The woman who led the world to its first deal on climate change now has a new mission: Stopping emissions from rising by 2020. Ahead of the upcoming MIECF 2018 event, she shares why cities hold the key to success for climate action.

One of the most iconic photographs from the signing of the Paris Agreement in the French capital in 2015 shows a row of United Nations officials and global leaders standing at a podium, joined hands raised in

triumph as they celebrated the world's first universal deal on climate change.

In the middle of this image, standing out from a sea of black in a light blue suit, is Christiana Figueres, the former executive secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). She is also the woman who led the complex and fraught negotiations among 195 global leaders to lock in a deal that will see the entire global community working to cap global warming at 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, in a bid to avoid dangerous climate change.

More than two years have passed since that milestone global event, but the 61-year-old Costa Rican diplomat who stepped down from her UN post in mid-2016, has not let up on her efforts to rally people across the world to take strong climate action.

These days, she spends much of her time working towards a goal that is just as ambitious as herding 195 nations towards a common agreement: Ending the upward trajectory of greenhouse gas emissions and making sure they start to decline by 2020.

She is the convenor of Mission 2020, an organisation that aims to bend the curve of global emissions in the next two years, and also the vice-chair of the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, and a World Bank climate leader, among other roles.

In a recent interview with Eco-Business, Figueres, who will be delivering the keynote address that the upcoming Macao International Environmental Co-operation Forum & Exhibition (MIECF) conference, says: "Cities are the key to the future of this planet, for two simple reasons".

"First, almost three quarters of the world's population will be living in cities within the next 20 years. Second, cities are from a regional perspective the highest emitters of greenhouse gases," she says.

"If we do not create better cities, 80 per cent of global emissions could come from cities," she adds.

Greenhouse gas emissions are not the only issue cities must contend with, Figueres adds. In addition to their growing populations and carbon footprints, urban areas struggle with challenges such as air pollution, inadequate transport and infrastructure, and food security.

But in the face of such an immense challenge lies a massive opportunity, says Figueres. “About 60 per cent of all the urban infrastructure we are going to need has not even been built yet,” she says. “There is an opportunity to make those cities much more sustainable, much more liveable, and certainly much more energy efficient.”

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