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High Level Roundtable

As part of the Ministerial Meeting on Urbanization and Climate Change at COP29

Green Construction and Energy Efficiency in Buildings and Climate Resilience in Cities & Inaugural Ministerial Launch of the Intergovernmental Council for Buildings and Climate (ICBC)

Summary Report

20 November 2024 | 11:00-12:30 (UTC +4) - Hirkan Room, COP29 Blue Zone – Baku, Azerbaijan

Recording: [Click here](#)

UNEP Technical Highlight: [Click here](#) / **French government Press Release:** [Click here](#)

Objectives

- Highlight to policymakers UNEP support in implementing ambitious, investible NDCs for buildings and construction, through newly published guidelines.
- Highlight buildings as drivers for growth, jobs, resilience, and financing opportunities.
- Boost private sector engagement in how to support climate action in buildings and construction and how to catalyze funding through innovative finance instruments.
- Strengthen intergovernmental cooperation and high-level political commitments to decarbonization and climate resilience of buildings, through the ICBC for a shared building sector transition.

Expected Outcomes

- Policymakers gain insights into leveraging NDCs for policy and investment, with case studies.
- Enhanced public-private collaboration, with private sector commitment to climate action.
- Promotion of best practices for financing in the building sector, focusing on developing nations.
- Establishment of the ICBC as a platform for global cooperation on building sector transition.

Agenda

- Opening remarks
- Part 1: Role of the NDCs as a lever for building and construction decarbonization and strengthening climate resilience
- Part 2: Leveraging finance and engaging the private sector



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- Part 3: Strengthening intergovernmental cooperation for green and climate resilient buildings – Official Inauguration of ICBC - *Ministerial Interventions (page 6)*
- Closing remarks

Summary of Interventions

Opening remarks

Inger Andersen, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme

Inger Andersen emphasized the critical role of the building and construction sector in addressing climate change, as it contributes 21% of global greenhouse gas emissions. She stressed the urgency of reducing emissions by 41% by 2030 to meet the 1.5°C target, calling for the integration of energy efficiency, passive cooling, and climate resilience into new constructions and retrofitting of existing buildings. Highlighting the rapid pace of urbanization, equivalent to adding one Paris-sized footprint weekly, Inger Andersen underscored the importance of aligning this growth with stringent, climate-smart building standards and regulations.

Inger Andersen welcomed the inaugural ministerial meeting of the [Intergovernmental Council for Buildings and Climate \(ICBC\)](#), describing it as an important step toward fostering international collaboration and setting shared goals for decarbonizing the sector. She emphasized the ICBC's role in supporting governments to strengthen their climate commitments and integrate them into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Additionally, Inger Andersen explained the role of the [Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction \(GlobalABC\)](#), which will act as the ICBC's secretariat, providing technical support, fostering partnerships, and promoting knowledge-sharing to advance climate action in the building sector. These efforts aim to ensure the sector contributes to emissions reductions and resilient urban development globally.

Anar Guliyev, Chairman of the State Committee on Urban Planning and Architecture (SCUPA), Azerbaijan

Anar Guliyev emphasized the critical role of the construction sector in addressing climate change while acknowledging its impact on carbon emissions and environmental challenges. He stressed the need to adopt greener practices, improve energy efficiency, and use environmentally friendly materials. Anar Guliyev announced Azerbaijan's partnership with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) to create a Green Building Roadmap, offering practical steps to promote sustainable construction and urban development.

Anar Guliyev highlighted Azerbaijan's efforts to modernize its construction sector, including simplifying permit processes and using new technologies like Building Information Modeling (BIM) to improve efficiency. He also pointed to initiatives such as installing solar panels and adopting green technologies to



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reduce energy use in buildings. Anar Guliyev underlined the importance of public-private partnerships to advance urban renewal, particularly in post-conflict areas. He expressed confidence in the “Pathways for Resilient and Healthy Cities” declaration and the newly formed [Baku Continuity Coalition](#) as tools to drive collaboration and sustainable urban progress.

Part 1: Role of the NDCs as a lever for building and construction decarbonization and strengthening climate resilience

Moderated by: *[Gulnara Roll, Head of Cities Unit, Officer-in-Charge for Mitigation Branch, and Head of the GlobalABC Secretariat, UN Environment Programme](#)*

Gulnara Roll emphasized the significant role of the building and construction sector in addressing climate change, noting its status as the third-largest contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions. She highlighted the need to embed the sector into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans to align ambition with practical implementation, financing, and resilience measures. Gulnara Roll stressed that the NDC 3.0 submissions provide an important opportunity to prioritize the sector within national climate plans.

Gulnara Roll referred to activities at the [Buildings and Cooling Pavilion](#) during the same week, where the Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction (GlobalABC) and the Partnership for Energy Efficiency in Buildings (PEEB) launched a report. [This report](#) outlines strategies to make NDCs for buildings more ambitious, actionable, investable, and inclusive. She underscored the importance of multi-level governance and collaborative action to decarbonize the building sector, ensuring it plays a leading role in advancing climate resilience and sustainability.

[H.E. Stefan Wenzel, Parliamentary State Secretary, Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action, Germany](#)

H.E. Stefan Wenzel highlighted the significant role of the building and construction sector in achieving climate goals, emphasizing the need to adopt resilient and net-zero practices within the framework of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). He underscored the importance of constructing new buildings using climate-neutral materials such as wood, clay, and low-carbon cement, while also prioritizing circularity and recycling of materials. Transitioning from fossil fuel-powered heating and cooling systems to renewable energy technologies, such as heat pumps and district heating, was identified as a key priority.

H.E. Stefan Wenzel shared the European Union's plans to present a new NDC ahead of COP30, with enhanced commitments for the building sector. He outlined key policy initiatives, including the Energy Efficiency Directive and the revised Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, complemented by national policies like [Germany's Building Energy Act](#) and public funding schemes to prioritize retrofitting over new construction. He acknowledged the economic and social challenges of energy-efficient retrofits but emphasized their long-term cost savings, job creation potential, and importance in preventing stranded assets. H.E. Stefan Wenzel also stressed the value of international collaboration through partnerships such as the Partnership for Energy Efficiency in Buildings (PEEB) to accelerate the sector's transition.



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H.E. Ahmed Mohammed bin Thani, Director General of Dubai Environment and Climate Change Authority, UAE

H.E. Ahmed Mohammed bin Thani highlighted the UAE's collaborative approach to developing and updating Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which integrates actions from all emirates. He detailed Dubai's efforts, including the [Dubai Clean Energy Strategy 2050](#), which aims for 75% clean energy by 2050, and a demand-side management program targeting a 30% reduction in energy and water demand by 2030.

He emphasized the city's commitment to retrofitting 30,000 buildings by 2030, with 10,000 already completed, and the regular updates to Dubai's Green Building Code to enhance efficiency and reduce the carbon footprint of the building sector. H.E. Ahmed Mohammed bin Thani concluded by reaffirming the UAE's dedication to increasing ambition and action at every stage of its sustainability journey.

Kennedy Matheka- Deputy Director, Buildings Safety, Ministry of Lands, Public Works, Housing & Urban Development, Kenya

Kennedy Matheka emphasized the importance of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in guiding Kenya's building and construction policies toward resilience and sustainability. He highlighted the updated [National Building Code, launched in July 2024](#) and set for implementation in March 2025, as a pivotal tool for achieving NDC commitments. Kennedy Matheka also discussed the recently approved Green Incentive Policy, which encourages the use of sustainable building materials, including a target of 40% recyclable content in construction projects.

Kennedy Matheka stressed the need for local and international financing to support urban development and affordable housing initiatives, leveraging Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to engage the private sector. He underscored Kenya's efforts to build capacity among professionals, contractors, and stakeholders to align with climate-focused goals. Collaboration and synergy, Kennedy Matheka noted, are essential to instilling confidence and achieving sustainable construction in line with NDC commitments.

Part 2: Leveraging finance and engaging the private sector

Moderated by: *Roland Hunziker, GlobalABC Steering Committee Co-Chair; and Director, Built Environment, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development*

Roland Hunziker emphasized the need for systematic approaches to accelerate decarbonization in the building sector. Referencing the [Buildings Global Status Report](#), he noted that while progress has been made in stabilizing emissions, the sector is not yet on track to meet climate goals. He introduced the concept of "Market Transformation," a strategy focusing on whole-life carbon assessment in building projects, integrating carbon data alongside cost considerations to improve decision-making, incentivize sustainable practices, and reshape market dynamics.

Roland Hunziker welcomed the establishment of ICBC as an essential platform for fostering collaboration between governments and stakeholders across the building value chain. He highlighted the importance of the GlobalABC in mobilizing partnerships among businesses, finance, and policymakers to drive the



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adoption of decarbonization solutions and align efforts toward a shared vision for sustainability in the built environment.

H.E. Nigar Arpadarai, UN Climate Change High-Level Champion for COP29

H.E. Nigar Arpadarai emphasized the pivotal role of the building and construction sector in addressing climate change, highlighting its potential to provide solutions such as improved energy efficiency, job creation, and better public health. She noted that while developed countries must accelerate retrofitting efforts, developing countries have the opportunity to ensure new buildings are efficient and affordable by design.

H.E. Nigar Arpadarai introduced the [Azerbaijan Sustainable Built Environment Blueprint](#), launched at the event, as a guide for transitioning from commitments to action. She highlighted a landmark declaration signed by leaders in Azerbaijan's construction industry, symbolizing the sector's collective responsibility to reduce emissions. She called for "radical collaboration" across all sectors to address challenges such as limited technical capacity and regulatory needs, while unlocking opportunities for sustainable growth. Looking ahead to COP30, she urged stakeholders to act decisively and leverage the momentum created by non-state actors already demonstrating climate leadership.

Rama Dunayevich, Global Impact Partnership Lead, Autodesk

Rama Dunayevich highlighted Autodesk's role in decarbonizing the built environment through its technology, which connects every stage of a project from design to operation. She emphasized addressing embodied carbon early in the design phase and enabling energy-efficient, low-carbon buildings. Autodesk's tools provide real-time insights to ensure sustainable designs are implemented effectively. Rama Dunayevich stressed the importance of digital solutions in achieving transparency and collaboration to create a low-carbon future.

Diep Nguyen-van Houtte, Senior Manager, IFC

Diep Nguyen-van Houtte emphasized the urgency of transitioning to net-zero carbon buildings by 2050 and highlighted the \$1.5 trillion investment opportunity in green construction. She showcased [IFC's EDGE Green Building Certification System](#), which has driven \$94 billion in investments across 110 countries since 2015. She noted IFC's support for the [Buildings Breakthrough](#) launched at COP28 and its collaboration with Azerbaijan's State Committee on Urban Planning and Architecture to develop the [Green Building Roadmap](#), set to be further presented at COP30. Diep Nguyen-van Houtte encouraged governments to partner with IFC to advance net-zero and resilient building standards.

Thomas Eriksson, Director, Department of the Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and the Middle East Region, GCF

Thomas Eriksson outlined the GCF's work in financing green buildings, energy efficiency, and climate-resilient infrastructure, with \$2 billion invested in 49 projects across countries since 2010. He emphasized the use of innovative financial tools, such as grants, equity, and guarantees, to de-risk investments and attract private capital. Thomas Eriksson highlighted GCF's efforts to design materials and infrastructure



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that withstand extreme weather events and to build capacity for climate-aligned building codes, integrating the sector into NDCs and National Adaptation Plans. He reaffirmed GCF's commitment to advancing transformative projects for a resilient future.

Lasitha Peirera, CEO, Green Guarantee Company

Lasitha Peirera emphasized the Green Guarantee Company's role in unlocking climate finance by addressing the perception of high risk through investment-grade guarantees for green projects. He highlighted that risks in developing markets are often overestimated, despite data showing otherwise. Lasitha Peirera stressed the importance of global standards, like IFC EDGE, and collaboration within the construction sector to ensure quality projects. He pointed out systemic challenges, such as Nigeria's financial market, where only 50,000 mortgages exist for 200 million people, underscoring the need for financial reforms.

Adam Matthews OBE, Head of Strategy and Engagement, Catapult UK

Adam Matthews emphasized building investor confidence by de-risking sustainable infrastructure projects through digitalization. He highlighted the importance of transparency and better quality of information enabled by tools like Building Information Modeling (BIM), which improved procurement efficiency, reducing timelines from 12 months to three. Adam Matthews stressed that transparency builds trust, reduces costs and carbon emissions by up to 15%, and modernizes the construction sector to achieve climate goals.

Part 3: Strengthening intergovernmental cooperation for green and climate resilient buildings (Ministerial Inauguration of ICBC)

Moderated by: *Gulnara Roll, Head of Cities Unit, Officer-in-Charge for Mitigation Branch, and Head of the GlobalABC Secretariat, UN Environment Programme*

Gulnara Roll introduced the session on strengthening intergovernmental cooperation for green and climate-resilient buildings, featuring the inauguration of the Intergovernmental Council for Buildings and Climate, established under the [Chaillot Declaration](#) and signed by over 60 countries.

Yves-Laurent Sapoval, Ministerial delegate for sustainable cities-Urban Envoy, Ministries of Territories, Ecology and Housing, France - Chair of ICBC

Yves-Laurent Sapoval emphasized the importance of launching the Intergovernmental Council for Buildings and Climate (ICBC) to provide a political framework for collaboration and implementation in the building sector. Yves-Laurent Sapoval highlighted the sector's significance, representing 11-13% of global GDP and 60% of global wealth, while addressing its mitigation potential and exposure to climate change. Yves-Laurent Sapoval noted France's role in supporting the creation of the GlobalABC at COP21, which now includes over 290 stakeholders united under a common commitment.

Yves-Laurent Sapoval praised milestones such as the Buildings Breakthrough, launched with Morocco, and the Chaillot Declaration, supported by over 60 governments. As ICBC Chair, Yves-Laurent Sapoval outlined



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priorities including expanding membership, establishing governance, and focusing on finance. He expressed gratitude to countries like Brazil, Kenya, Germany, and the UAE, as well as private and NGO partners, whose contributions remain key to progress in this journey.

H.E. Rachel Kyte, UK Special Representative on Climate

H.E. Rachel Kyte emphasized the importance of the Intergovernmental Council for Buildings and Climate (ICBC) in fostering government-to-government collaboration to address the global challenge of decarbonizing the building sector. She highlighted the UK's unique context, with one of Europe's oldest housing stocks, where buildings account for a third of national emissions, making retrofitting essential to achieving net-zero goals.

H.E. Rachel Kyte announced the UK's funding of a Global Whole Life Carbon Tracker, which will provide a clearer picture of emissions from the building sector by country and inform the updated Global Status Report from the GlobalABC. She reaffirmed the UK's commitment to international initiatives like the Buildings Breakthrough and called on the ICBC to generate political momentum for achieving net-zero and resilient buildings globally by 2030.

H.E. Toesulusulu Cedric Schuster, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Samoa

H.E. Toesulusulu Cedric Schuster emphasized Samoa's vulnerability to climate risks as a small island developing state and its strong commitment to decarbonizing the building sector. Samoa's NDC, submitted in 2021, targets a 26% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 2007 levels, 100% renewable energy for electricity generation by 2025, and 70% renewable energy use by 2031. Key measures include mandatory building codes, energy efficiency standards, and low-carbon construction materials.

H.E. Toesulusulu Cedric Schuster stressed the importance of climate finance, capacity building, and technology transfer to achieve these ambitious goals. He welcomed the Intergovernmental Council for Buildings and Climate as a vital platform to foster collaboration and advance sustainable development.

H.E. Shaikh Nasser Majid Al Qasimi, Assistant Undersecretary of Infrastructure Development and Transport, United Arab Emirates

H.E. Shaikh Nasser Majid Al Qasimi emphasized the UAE's commitment to decarbonizing the building sector and enhancing climate resilience through initiatives like the [UAE Energy Strategy 2050](#) and [Water Security Strategy 2036](#). He emphasized the role of the ICBC in fostering intergovernmental cooperation and exchanging best practices to advance shared decarbonization goals.

H.E. Shaikh Nasser Majid Al Qasimi discussed key measures, including the Green Loans Program to promote environmentally friendly homes, solar energy expansion in government buildings, and the National Demand Side Management Program, targeting a 51% reduction in energy consumption by 2050. He also highlighted research on rising sea levels and the adoption of technologies like smart construction and 3D digital twins to improve urban planning. He reaffirmed the UAE's commitment to global collaboration, including the Arab Roadmap for Zero Emission Buildings.



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H.E. Dr. Eang Sophalleth, Minister of Environment, Cambodia

H.E. Dr. Eang Sophalleth emphasized Cambodia's vulnerability to climate change despite its historically low greenhouse gas emissions. He highlighted Cambodia's updated NDC, targeting a 42% reduction in emissions by 2030, and the submission of a long-term strategy for carbon neutrality by 2050 to the UNFCCC in 2021. He also noted the adoption of an operational manual for implementing Article 6 of the Paris Agreement.

H.E. Dr. Eang Sophalleth outlined key initiatives, including the [Green City Strategy Plan Methodology 2016](#), the [Phnom Penh Sustainable City Strategic Plan 2018-2030](#), and the [Sustainable City Strategic Plan for Seven Secondary Cities 2020-2030](#), aimed at accelerating low-emission and climate-resilient development. He reaffirmed Cambodia's strong support for the ICBC's inauguration, highlighting its potential to foster global collaboration and advance climate action.

H.E. Simonas Gentvilas, Minister of Environment, Lithuania

H.E. Simonas Gentvilas emphasized Lithuania's focus on achieving carbon neutrality by ensuring that buildings constructed today are climate-neutral ready. He highlighted Lithuania's transition from 10% to 80% renewable energy use in district heating over 15 years and subsidies covering half the cost of heat pumps for private residences. Lithuania has retrofitted one in seven multi-block housing units through a 20-year government program, fully subsidizing retrofitting for socially vulnerable groups.

H.E. Simonas Gentvilas outlined Lithuania's new building code, which mandates passive house standards and prioritizes CO₂-negative construction materials. He noted that public procurement now requires 50% CO₂-negative materials for government buildings, setting an example for the private sector. He called for global collaboration to prioritize green and resilient city development.

H.E. Namuganza Persis Princess, State Minister for Lands, Housing and Urban Development, Uganda

H.E. Namuganza Persis Princess highlighted Uganda's commitment to achieving net-zero carbon emissions and keeping global temperatures below 1.5°C by 2030. She emphasized the significant environmental impact of the construction sector, which accounts for 21% of global greenhouse gas emissions, 37% of energy-related carbon emissions, and half of the world's raw material use. She called for urgent action to ensure a sustainable built environment, particularly in developing countries like Uganda, which face heightened climate-related risks.

H.E. Namuganza Persis Princess noted Uganda's rich natural resources and its role in absorbing global emissions, emphasizing the importance of preserving these assets. She reaffirmed Uganda's support for the Declaration de Chaillot and called for adequate funding to advance green housing technologies. Uganda remains committed to advancing Nationally Determined Contributions, implementing international covenants, and fostering global collaboration to promote resilient and sustainable urban development.



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H.E. Yoko Alender, Minister of Climate, Estonia

H.E. Yoko Alender emphasized the building sector's significant impact on biodiversity, noting that 90% of biodiversity loss is due to material extraction, with 50% attributed to the building industry. She stressed the need to shift from new construction to renovation and reuse, highlighting Estonia's renovation wave and innovative factory reconstruction methods using sustainable materials to reduce demolition waste and improve energy efficiency.

H.E. Yoko Alender highlighted Estonia's collaboration with Nordic countries on sustainable construction practices and announced new regulations requiring carbon footprint calculations for buildings over 1,000 square meters starting July 2025. She praised the Chaillot Declaration and the Intergovernmental Council for Buildings and Climate (ICBC) for fostering intergovernmental collaboration to advance sustainable building solutions.

Maurice Akech, Executive Director, National Construction Authority (NCA), Kenya - Vice-Chair of ICBC

Maurice Akech highlighted Kenya's active role in the Intergovernmental Council for Buildings and Climate (ICBC) as a vice chair under France's leadership. He emphasized the importance of clear, measurable objectives, knowledge-sharing platforms, harmonized building codes, and engaging diverse stakeholders, including NGOs, community groups, and private sectors, to advance ICBC's goals.

Maurice Akech outlined Kenya's progress in decarbonizing the building sector, including the implementation of a [new building code](#), gazetted in March 2024 on the same day as the Declaration de Chaillot signing in France, launched in July, and set to become effective in March 2025. He also noted Kenya's development of long-term strategies for 2050, aligned with UNFCCC requirements, and a decarbonization roadmap to guide investments and foster economic growth in the construction sector.

Alessio Cipullo, Expert Advisor, Ministry for Environment and Energy Security, Italy

Alessio Cipullo reiterated Italy's active participation in the Intergovernmental Council for Buildings and Climate (ICBC), established through the Declaration de Chaillot. He highlighted key priorities, including innovative tax mechanisms and financing solutions for energy renovations, and landmark legislation on energy communities passed recently in Italy.

Alessio Cipullo emphasized the role of public administrations in green public procurement and the importance of circular economy principles in urban areas, construction, and technical planning to reduce building energy consumption. He also underlined Italy's commitment to developing nature-based solutions alongside energy efficiency, positioning green public procurement as a model for residential buildings.



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Closing remarks

Ambassador Antônio da Costa e Silva, Chief International Adviser, Ministry of Cities, Brazil - Vice-Chair of ICBC

Ambassador Antônio da Costa e Silva emphasized Brazil's commitment to shaping the ICBC agenda to address challenges relevant to both Brazil and other developing countries. He highlighted the issues of informal, self-built construction in peripheral areas and the critical role of local governments, as most building regulations in Brazil are set at the municipal level. Brazil plans to integrate decarbonization standards into its social housing program, which aims to build 2 million homes under President Lula's mandate to address a 6-million-unit housing deficit. He also identified waste management in the construction sector as a key area for improvement.

Ambassador da Costa e Silva stressed the global importance of addressing housing deficits, noting that this challenge is not limited to the Global South but also affects developed nations. He highlighted the need to balance housing needs with the evolving demands of the building sector while ensuring sustainability. He called for building synergies between ICBC and other global alliances to address shared challenges and advance a common climate agenda. Brazil, in collaboration with ICBC co-chairs France and Kenya, aims to present a more comprehensive program of work at the next ministerial meeting in Belém.

Anar Guliyev, Chairman of the State Committee on Urban Planning and Architecture (SCUPA), Azerbaijan

Anar Guliyev emphasized the success of the high-level ministerial meeting, noting the valuable contributions from delegates in advancing sustainable urbanization and low-carbon construction practices. Anar Guliyev stressed the importance of integrating carbon emission accounting alongside construction costs to accelerate progress toward zero-carbon buildings. He highlighted the launch of the [MAP initiative](#) and the Baku Continuity Coalition, designed to ensure that discussions lead to actionable plans at both national and local levels.

Looking ahead, Anar Guliyev reaffirmed Azerbaijan's commitment to supporting these initiatives, leveraging its role as host of the 13th World Urban Forum in 2026 to further global efforts in sustainable urban development. He emphasized the need for continued collaboration to address shared challenges, particularly in achieving decarbonization and resilience in the construction sector.



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