

# Talanoa Dialogues in Africa

**Advancing coordinated action  
between national, subnational  
and international actors**

**Multi-level, multi-sectoral Talanoa Dialogues are key to  
raising ambition of Nationally Determined Contributions**



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Covenant of Mayors  
in Sub-Saharan Africa



**CITIES & REGIONS  
TALANOA DIALOGUES**



**FRACTAL**  
FUTURE RESILIENCE FOR AFRICAN CITIES AND LANDS



# Urban communities currently contribute up to 70 percent of greenhouse gas emissions globally.

Urban areas are also among the most vulnerable hotspots for climate change impacts. This reality means that urban communities are at the centre of the challenge to achieve global climate targets. Cities have been in the spotlight for their ambitious commitments to tackle climate change and have inspired a ground-up movement of action on climate around the world. As the trailblazers of climate action, subnational governments are key drivers for the implementation of more ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). National governments have a critical role to play in igniting the collective torches of subnational governments, together with civil society, the private sector and other non-state actors. Research by UN-Habitat found that two-thirds of all NDCs mention the urban dimension in the context of national priorities and ambitions for reducing emissions<sup>1</sup>. Given the scale of the challenge facing African nations in particular, national governments need to draw on the available knowledge and capabilities of all levels of government and beyond. The Cities and Regions Talanoa Dialogues, a series of in-country climate consultations starting in 2018, is an innovative approach to facilitating critical multi-level, multi-sectoral conversations and knowledge sharing.

## What are Talanoa Dialogues?

The concept of the Talanoa Dialogue was introduced into international negotiations during the 23rd United Nations Climate Change Conference or COP 23, held in 2017, and represented the first time in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process that national governments met with non-Party stakeholders in an official setting. The Cities and Regions Talanoa Dialogues were launched by ICLEI at the ninth World Urban Forum, with the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy (GCoM) and UN-Habitat as special partners. Since then, Talanoa Dialogues have been held around the world as a way to take stock of current action towards the implementation of NDCs. The informal and inclusive dialogues use story-telling as an accessible way to enable stakeholders to openly report on progress. The dialogues are designed to support actors to raise ambition and to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement on climate change. The word Talanoa itself refers to a style of dialogue practiced in Pacific Island countries, which fosters openness and inclusiveness. The ethos of the dialogue is to bring together stakeholders to discuss cross-cutting challenges in a space conducive to participatory and transparent communication.

**\*Parties to the UNFCCC are typically nation states, including all United Nations member states and one supranational union, the European Union. Non-state actors, such as sub-national governments or private actors, are not parties to the UNFCCC. Some states, NGOs and IGOs, such as ICLEI, have observer status to the Convention**

# The Cities and Regions Talanoa Dialogues are designed to initiate a collaborative process involving all levels of government to take stock of, shape and strengthen NDCs.

Each tier of government, and actor within the governance system, whether big corporations or local community organisations, have a unique and vital role to play in delivering a climate resilient future. The Cities and Regions Talanoa Dialogues present an opportunity to co-design an approach to multi-level NDC implementation with national and subnational governments and actors.

**As of 29 October 2018, ICLEI and other partners, have together convened 45 Cities and Regions Talanoa Dialogues in 31 countries, including eight held by ICLEI Africa in seven African countries.**

By the end of 2018, more than 60 dialogues in 40 countries will have been held, and submitted by ICLEI to the UNFCCC. These dialogues have brought multiple tiers of government, multiple sectors and non-state actors together to share what they are doing to strengthen NDC implementation, as well as raise ambition of future NDCs. The Cities and Regions Talanoa Dialogues are guided by three questions which aim to provide a safe and inclusive space for reflection and engagement:

## 1. Where are we?

Participants reviewed national and subnational commitments and actions. They also looked at whether sustainable urban development was adequately reflected in national climate policy, including the NDC.

## 2. Where do we want to go?

During the dialogues, participants identified possible links between climate action, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and national urban development policy. They considered how to strengthen NDCs by integrating commitments and actions by subnational governments, as well as how inter-sectoral collaboration and coordination could support the implementation of NDCs. The involvement of development banks, youth organisations, universities, private investors, development agencies and corporates, as well as international organisations and network associations was also encouraged.

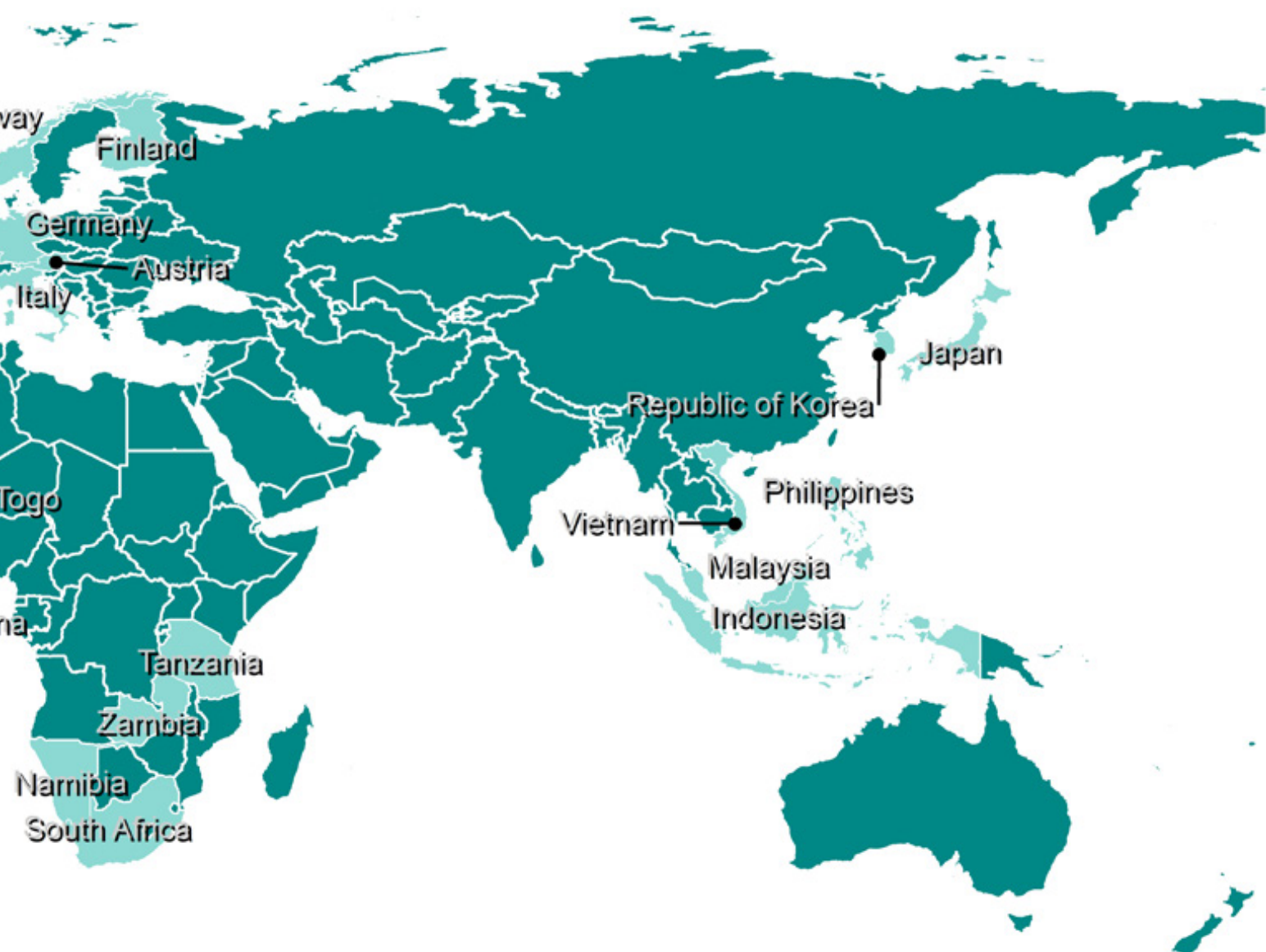
## 3. How do we get there?

Participants explored how national and subnational governments and non-state actors could work together to mobilise technical, financial and policy resources to deliver on and strengthen the NDCs. They explored potential models for collaboration across different levels and functions of government, through new or existing institutional mechanisms and structures.

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Map of the countries in which Cities and Regions Talanoa Dialogues have been held, as of 29 October 2018, with more dialogues planned for implementation







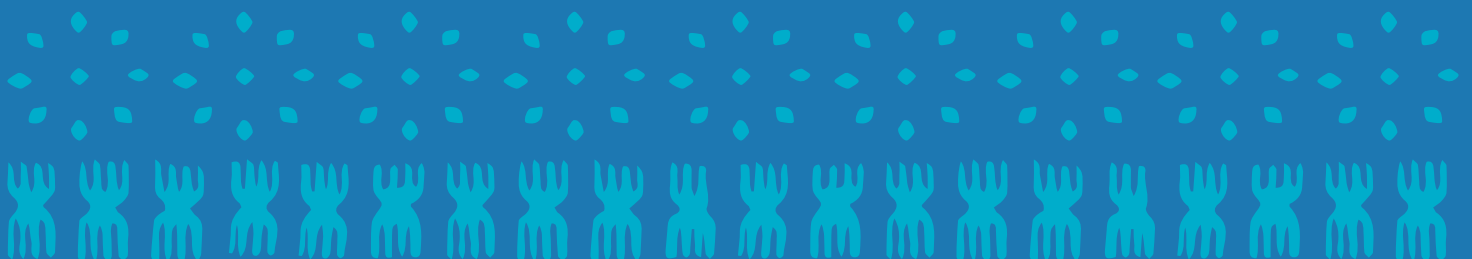
# TALANOA DIALOGUE

## FOR CLIMATE AMBITION



Picture and caption: Participants gathered in Windhoek (Namibia) to discuss how they could collectively raise climate ambitions. The Dialogue included representatives from the Namibian National Climate Change Committee (NCCC), national Ministries of Environment and Tourism, Fisheries and Marine Resources, the Development Bank of Namibia, the National Youth Council, the City of Windhoek and others.

Ensuring that international processes and terminology are tailored to local contexts is a crucial part of making global discussions on climate change inclusive of different regions and levels of governance. **The ethos of the Talanoa Dialogue resonated with many participants in the African context. Some participants highlighted that the same principle is known by different names in different places.** In Windhoek (Namibia), a representative from the National Youth Council said a local word that they use to describe such processes, is *oxungt*. Overall, the dialogues highlighted the value of multi-level engagement in NDC development, implementation and reporting. **There was broad consensus that to effectively implement NDCs, as well as raise ambition in future NDCs, regular engagement between national and subnational governments is essential.**



# Five lessons from the African Talanoa Dialogues

## Lesson 1: Coordinated reporting

**Subnational governments are already implementing ambitious climate actions and engaging directly with them can help ensure successful initiatives are reported on and up- and out-scaled.**

Participants from all sectors were keen to see their successes recorded as a contribution towards achieving their country's NDC. The discussions highlighted the importance of having an efficient and accessible monitoring and reporting mechanism for all actors to be able to share both their challenges and achievements with national government and the international climate fraternity.

**Examples of sub-national climate actions** that were profiled during the Cities and Regions Talanoa Dialogues run by ICLEI Africa:

- The **City of Tsévié in Togo** is developing a **Sustainable Energy Access and Climate Action Plan (SEACAP)** as part of its role as a pilot city in the **Covenant of Mayors in Sub-Saharan Africa (CoM SSA)**, one of the regional arms of the **Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy**. National government were pleased to hear about Tsévié's efforts. After the dialogue, the Togolese agency for rural electrification and renewable energy (AT2ER) made a commitment to work with Tsévié and others cities on their action planning as a joint initiation with the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Finance. Togo is in the process of developing its **Monitoring, Reporting and Verification system** and ICLEI is seeking opportunities to support all levels of the Togolese government to coordinate climate change work.
- In **Ghana**, the Ga Mashie Development Agency in partnership with the Accra Metropolitan Assembly, Franchise Waste Company and residents, is addressing both pollution and unemployment through **sustainable solid waste management initiatives**. The initiatives have trained 92 youth in a range of roles, including using tricycles to collect waste, establishing a plastic buy-back centre and a new e-waste venture focused on cell phones. The initiative includes a waste recycling plant which is being managed in conjunction with a private waste management company, Jekora Ventures Ltd.



Participants gathered in Lomé in Togo for the Cities and Regions Talanoa Dialogue to take stock on NDC implementation and raise ambition





## Lesson 2: Accessing finance

**With additional resources and targeted capacity building, successful projects could be scaled-up and transformed into bankable projects that can attract international finance.**

In order to **maximise access to finance**, all tiers of government, the private sector and civil society need to pool their knowledge of available financing strategies, networks and technical expertise and experience. National governments and international organisations can help enhance this capacity, particularly when it comes to re-packaging and consolidating multiple investment opportunities at the subnational level and matching them with appropriate financiers. In some cases, national governments can help subnational governments or utilities to collectively issue bonds to pay for new infrastructure. This pooled approach means that a prospective lender faces much less financial risk if any one project fails, therefore lowering the cost of capital<sup>2</sup>.

National governments can play a catalytic role in raising finance for subnational governments by establishing enabling legislation and building the capacity of municipal authorities to use a suite of available financing options. National governments are best placed to outline the mandates and responsibilities of different tiers of government. In this context, National Urban Policies can provide clarity on which subnational agencies can use a particular financing mechanism, which can increase investor confidence.

Some examples of how national and sub-national governments can work together to leverage additional finance that arose from **the Cities and Regions Talanoa Dialogues**:

- During the dialogue, participants from Ghana learnt about the possibilities of accessing the **Green Climate Fund (GCF)** through a designated unit in charge of natural resources and climate change under the Ministry of Finance, aimed specifically at projects at the sub-national level.
- Improved mechanisms for financial reform could help sub-national governments increase revenue for NDC implementation, and was a key suggestion made by participants from Lusaka and Windhoek.
- In Monrovia, Liberia, participants highlighted demand from sub-national governments to co-develop funding proposals with the national Environmental Protection Agency, consolidating initiatives and producing a joint initiative across a number of cities.

## An ICLEI initiative on finance:

The **Transformative Actions Program (TAP)** is an innovative initiative that aims to catalyse and improve capital flows to cities, towns and regions and strengthen the capacity of sub-national governments to access climate finance and attract investment. Find out more at <http://tap-potential.org>





22 Participants gathered in Lusaka to discuss how they could collectively raise climate ambitions. Participants represented the Lusaka City Council, the National Water Supply and Sanitation Council, Lusaka Water and Sewerage Company, Ministry of National Development Planning, Devolution Trust Fund and the University of Zambia.

## Lesson 3: Building local ownership

**With the creation of more spaces for subnational and national government actors to interact, subnational governments can better align their projects to accelerate action and meet national targets, building momentum from the ground up.**

Including subnational governments in the development and implementation of NDCs can build buy-in and local ownership. Having local ownership of projects ensures that when national governments initiate climate action at the local level, subnational governments can support these efforts fully while contributing to their success through local skills and knowledge.

**“This dialogue gave us a platform to directly interact with the ministries. This is the first step before establishing a regular and efficient communications mechanism.”**

*- Mayor of Tsévié, Bruno Loglo*

## Lesson 4: Identifying capacity gaps

**Coordination and communication, both horizontally and vertically, can help multi-scale and multi-sectoral actors to identify and communicate technical capacity gaps, barriers and opportunities in NDC implementation.**

- Participants in Johannesburg and Windhoek suggested that cities could each have a cross-cutting climate change team, which engages with national governments as well as international organisations. This team could communicate with relevant municipal staff and also ensure that each city has **at least one nominated focal point who liaises on behalf of the city with national government and international organisations.**
- In Lomé, Togo, stakeholders discussed the possibility of having **regional training centres for catalytic sectors and technologies** such as solar products and standards.
- Participants in Johannesburg, South Africa suggested that the **National Treasury's Cities Support Programme in South Africa**, which assists large South African cities primarily, could be adapted to also target the climate change challenges facing fast growing secondary cities.

**“We need more dialogues like this so that, as cities, we can learn from each other and interact with national government directly on how we can implement its policies.”**

*- Arusha City Council Director*

## **Lesson 5: Fostering city-to-city learning**

**By involving subnational governments in NDC development, they have an opportunity to engage with one another and for cities that have experience with successful climate actions to support other cities in following suit.**

Local government associations and city networks, in particular, are crucial platforms for engagement between subnational governments. Ensuring these associations and networks are sufficiently resourced is key to their ability to perform this important function.

Africa's 1.1 billion citizens (as of 2016) will likely double in number by 2050, and more than 80% of that increase will occur in cities<sup>3</sup>. Secondary cities often receive less attention and resources than bigger cities, but they will see unprecedented growth in size and could play a critical role in connecting rural and urban economies while driving inclusive growth<sup>4</sup>.

- In **Monrovia**, participants expressed demand for more **city-to-city exchanges** to support them in developing innovative projects.
- After the Talanoa Dialogues in Lomé, the **Mayor of Tsévié** agreed to share his city's expertise in developing their **Sustainable Energy Access and Climate Action Plan (SEACAP)** with the other cities.



Participants at the Cities and Regions Talanoa Dialogue held in Johannesburg, South Africa





Participants at the Cities and Regions Talanoa Dialogue in Monrovia, Liberia

## The role of ICLEI in promoting and facilitating Cities and Regions Talanoa Dialogues

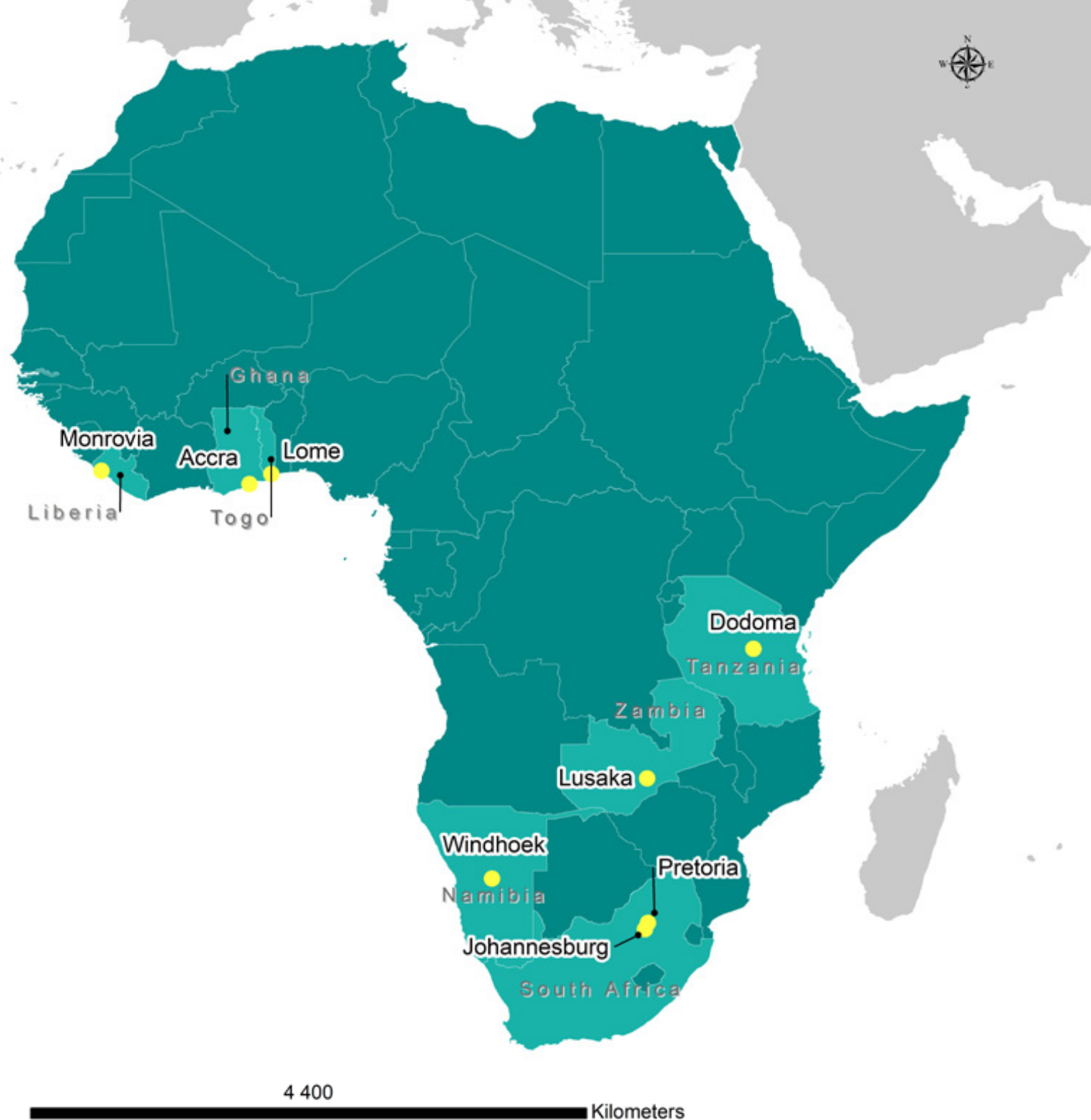
ICLEI, as a network-based organisation, is uniquely placed to facilitate dialogue and coordination between subnational and national governments, and between government and other sectors and stakeholders. Since 1990, we have been acting as knowledge brokers, enabling important conversations about sustainability and cities to occur.

During 2018, with the support of organisations such as **START International, Inc. (START)**, projects such as **Future Resilience for African Cities And Lands (FRACTAL)**, and initiatives such as the **Covenant of Mayors in Sub-Saharan Africa (CoM SSA)**, ICLEI Africa has held numerous Cities and Regions Talanoa Dialogues, including in Tshwane and Johannesburg, South Africa; Monrovia, Liberia; Lusaka, Zambia; Windhoek, Namibia; Lomé, Togo; Accra, Ghana; and Dodoma, Tanzania, as outlined in the map below. The dialogues have **generated new understandings, built momentum and facilitated information sharing between participants, resulting in commitments from cities and national institutions to communicate and coordinate on their current activities and into the future.**

**There was unanimous demand for further dialogues, and participants indicated that the ethos that the Talanoa Dialogues embodied was particularly beneficial.**

Participants expressed demand for ICLEI to assist them in holding further dialogues and in increasing the scope of participants engaged with in the future. Beyond the Talanoa Dialogues, experience confirms the need for further engagement with cities, particularly secondary cities, across different platforms for NDC development and implementation.

**ICLEI is committed to engage with cities and towns of all types and sizes and to continue partnering with local government associations and national governments, to enable these engagements.**



The ethos of the Talanoa Dialogues is instrumental in providing a space for national and subnational governments and multi-sectoral actors to actively engage and define their unique roles. Feedback from the Talanoa Dialogues held so far has emphasised their ability to provide an alternative space for actors to foster ground-up action and showcase to national governments the value different actors bring to NDC monitoring and implementation.

Continuing to hold dialogue in different spaces and forms around the world, will bring us one step closer to achieving the Paris Agreement.



# The Covenant of Mayors in Sub-Saharan Africa (CoM SSA)

aims to assist cities in planning for access to affordable, reliable and sustainable energy, while adapting to the effects of climate change. The aim of this project is to increase the capacities of cities to provide access to secure, sustainable, affordable and clean energy services to urban and peri-urban populations in Sub-Saharan Africa, and adapt to and mitigate climate change.

**“A steering committee on the climate change activities in Liberia should be created after this workshop. We need a stable institution which could deal with climate change.”**

*- Managing Director of the Financial Development Authority in Liberia during the dialogue in Monrovia*

## START

**provides opportunities for training, research, education and networking that strengthens scientific skills and inspires leadership for advancing solutions to critical sustainability challenges.**

# The Future Resilience for African CiTies And Lands (FRACTAL)

project aims to advance scientific knowledge about regional climate responses to human activities, and deepen understanding of the decision context and climate knowledge required to contribute to climate resilient development in nine southern African cities. Together with a broad range of stakeholders, researchers are working to co-produce relevant knowledge that will support resilient development pathways and enable decision-makers to better integrate pertinent climate knowledge into their resource management decisions and urban development planning.



## References:

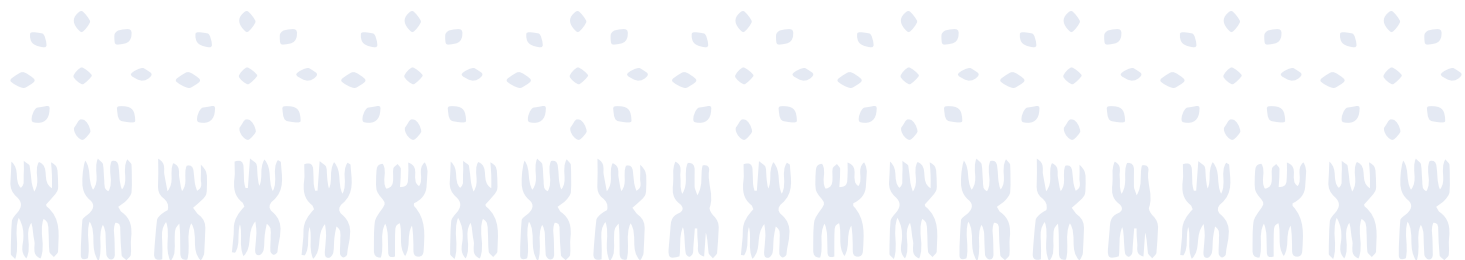
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## Useful Resources:

- Cities & Regions Talanoa Dialogues: <http://www.cities-and-regions.org/talanoa> for more information, including a full list of participating partners and events.
- Transformative Actions Program: <http://tap-potential.org>
- Urban Low Emission Development Strategies (Urban-LEDS): <http://urbanleds.iclei.org>
- Covenant of Mayors in Sub-Saharan Africa (CoM SSA): [www.comssa.org](http://www.comssa.org)
- START: <https://start.org>
- FRACTAL: <http://www.fractal.org.za>
- ICLEI: <https://www.iclei.org>
- ICLEI Africa: <http://africa.iclei.org>

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## CITIES & REGIONS TALANOA DIALOGUES

**#Cities4Talanoa**  
**#Regions4Talanoa**

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## Get involved

Contact ICLEI at [talanoa@iclei.org](mailto:talanoa@iclei.org) and visit <http://www.cities-and-regions.org/talanoa/> for more information, including a full list of participating partners and events.