

**Zero Carbon City International Forum**  
**Opening Remarks (Video Message)**  
**H.E.Mr. John Kerry, U.S Special Presidential Envoy for Climate**  
17 March 2021

Hello everybody. Let me start by thanking the Government of Japan and Minister Koizumi, the UNFCCC Secretariat, the ICLEI and IGES and everyone else involved in organizing this conference on such a critical issue.

Over the past year alone, cities around the world have felt the effects of a changing climate in unprecedented ways. We saw this here in the United States for the raging fires that threatened Seattle, Portland and San Francisco last summer, to the devastating hurricane season that ravaged towns up and down on Atlantic and Gulf coasts, to the subfreezing temperatures and blackouts that fell over Austin and Houston, Texas, just last month. These are the shared experiences of cities around the globe. Drought and food insecurity in the urban centers of Africa and Middle East. Heat waves in Paris and Berlin even in the Siberian towns of the Arctic. Deadly record setting rainfalls and flooding in places like Jakarta, Indonesia, and Omuta Japan.

Cities are also a key part of the climate crisis for another reason. They're actually contributing to the problem. Cities today consume over two thirds of the world's energy, and they account for more than 70% of global co2 emissions. The good news is, cities are also a big part of the climate solution. They can help accelerate our collective path to net zero emissions by undertaking the kind of thoughtful, long term planning and bold action exemplified by many of the people tuning in for this conference.

US Supreme Court Justice, Louis Brandeis said local governments were laboratories of democracy. And climate change, cities have proven that their laboratories of leadership. Tokyo, for example, has laid out a vision for a city 30 years from now, with zero emission cars, buses, boats, planes and power plants, tapping biomass, geothermal, hydrogen, hydroelectric, solar and wind energy. Los Angeles and New York, the two largest cities in the United States have recently launched their own green New Deal initiatives.

A few years ago, when the US federal government decided to walk away from the Paris Agreement, hundreds of cities, counties and states declared that they were still in, and pledged their support. And they have committed to lean in, even further, now that we are back at the table. All over the globe, cities are stepping up in remarkable ways, including in Japan. We're close to 300 local governments representing over 100 million people have committed to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. Japan, recently announced the same target nationwide. Thanks in part to cities' advocacy and the example that they set. I think those here who have already joined the cities race to zero, and commend your work and furthering this momentum on the important road towards COP 26 in Glasgow.

We need you. So in that vein, I urge cities everywhere, act locally, but help us galvanize global action. Your counterparts in other countries need to see the transformative projects you are embracing to share best practices and lessons learned, and to partner together on research and innovation. The fact is the global sub national effort is critical to getting the world on the path toward net zero emissions by 2050.

Thank you again for inviting me to share a few thoughts, and please enjoy the rest of the conference, and I look forward to hearing what comes out of your conversations.