

G-NETS Leaders Summit Communiqué

1. The world is currently facing the climate crisis, the threat of infectious diseases, and other serious risks. With the addition of issues such as intensifying conflict between states and energy prices soaring as a result, the world's problems are becoming increasingly complex.

In order to address these challenges and realize just and sustainable societies into the future, cities, which are closely concerned with the livelihood of their citizens and are at the front lines of response, must go beyond differences that exist between states and work together by rallying their knowledge and experience. Now is the time to take concrete actions.

Mindful of the importance of achieving economic growth that leaves no one behind and assisting those affected by disasters and conflicts surpassing national borders, through ongoing exchange through G-NETS, a network of cities, by cities, for cities, we will fulfill our important role of making societies sustainable. We will aspire for a world that is peaceful and stable, and share our knowledge on common challenges raised in this communiqué that must be addressed by cities, and build our relations. We will also utilize the knowledge of startups and other various players.

2. In February and March 2023, we gathered in Tokyo, Japan, for the G-NETS Leaders Summit, which was held on the theme of “realizing just and sustainable societies with an eye to a post-COVID world.” Here, leaders from 34 cities engaged in discussions over the course of three days.

Recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic is not a return to pre-COVID society, but presents the opportunity to aim for a society that is more just and sustainable. Societal changes brought on by global challenges, such as the climate crisis and COVID-19, will be considered from the three perspectives of (1) connections among people, (2) the environment surrounding cities, and (3) safety and security, and we will promote initiatives to “realize inclusive and just societies,” “build safe and secure cities,” and “respond to environmental issues.”

(Realizing Inclusive and Just Societies)

3. Diversity highlights individuality and is the driving force for innovations that create new values. Building inclusive societies that embrace diversity is extremely important for shaping a future where each individual can shine. To that end, we will focus on the socially disadvantaged, and while receiving citizen participation, work for a healthy, long-life society, gender equality, the promotion of barrier-free accessibility, as well as the promotion of sports and culture, youth

exchanges between cities, and the realization of intercultural cohesion.

4. Realizing healthy, long-life societies:

Individuals aged 65 and older are projected to rise from 8.3 percent of the global population in 2015 to 17.8 percent by 2060. This aging of the population is expected to progress rapidly and become a global issue. However, some regions have not yet adequately prepared for the aging of their societies. Therefore, we will aim for societies in which members of all generations can live healthy and long lives. In particular, we will work for the social participation of the elderly and to provide them with living, educational and medical support with the goal of realizing healthy and long-life societies.

5. Realizing gender equality:

The circumstances faced by women have improved over the past several decades, with a reduction in the gender gap in education and health. Nevertheless, many women in the world still face disadvantages in social participation and economic status. To realize human rights for all, irrespective of gender, we will work for greater engagement, social participation and the empowerment of women.

6. Promoting barrier-free accessibility:

Cities have a major role to play in removing physical and mental barriers and creating an environment that makes it easier for people to lead their lives, and need to promote barrier-free accessibility in public facilities and public transportation. However, when viewed globally, there are regional differences in the promotion of accessibility, and it can be said that a sufficient environment has not yet been prepared in some regions. Therefore, we will strengthen intercity cooperation for the promotion of accessibility.

7. Promoting sports, culture, youth exchange between cities, and intercultural cohesion:

Sports and culture, such as the arts, play a major role in mental and physical wellness. This makes it necessary to stimulate the promotion of culture and sports. Specifically, the COVID-19 pandemic has limited people's physical activity, with physical decline, obesity, and deteriorating mental health growing more serious over a broad range of generations. Therefore, we will strengthen cooperation among cities to promote sports and culture, youth exchange between cities, and intercultural cohesion,

(Response to Environmental Issues)

8. Climate change is developing into an issue that threatens the future of humanity. The achievement

of zero emissions has become one of our planet's most important goals to curb climate change. Environmental problems related to waste, the air, and water resources are growing more serious due to rapid urbanization and population growth in cities, and are having enormous impacts on people's lives and health and on biodiversity. To address these issues, we will work to achieve zero emissions through measures such as promoting energy conservation, expanding the use of renewable energy sources, and utilizing green hydrogen and will engage in efforts such as promoting a circular economy and other measures against waste, promoting air and river pollution measures, urban greenery, and securing water resources.

9. Achieving zero emissions:

Many cities are working for decarbonization to achieve zero emissions, but they are facing hurdles due to the substantial investments and expert knowledge needed to promote energy saving, the transition to renewable energy, and the utilization of green hydrogen.

Cities particularly need to reduce CO₂ emissions from buildings. At the same time, there are high expectations that decarbonization can be promoted by involving companies and other stakeholders. Therefore, we will promote measures while strengthening cooperation among cities in such areas as promoting energy saving in buildings, expanding the use of solar power, utilizing geothermal power generation and storage batteries, promoting green transportation by introducing public transportation systems and expanding the use of zero emission vehicles (ZEVs) and bicycles, and creating energy funds.

As a next generation energy source, green hydrogen is expected to become a cornerstone for decarbonization. However, while the use of hydrogen has been progressing in some regions, the expanded use of hydrogen in a diversity of fields and technology for the use of green hydrogen are still under development. Therefore, we will work with each other and with relevant stakeholders to promote initiatives to expand hydrogen utilization and for technological developments.

10. Promoting waste measures:

With the global population forecasted to rise, there are concerns that the increase in waste will also become a substantial challenge. Cities must promote measures to reduce waste by raising the awareness of not only businesses, but their citizens as well. For this purpose, while promoting cooperation among cities, we will promote initiatives for realizing a circular economy and more effective recycling utilizing advanced methods.

11. Promoting measures to prevent air and water pollution and advancing the greening of cities:

As the world's population continues to increase and economic and industrial growth progress, air and river pollution caused by human daily activities and economic activities is worsening. Cities take on the important role of working to prevent the release of harmful substances, such as exhaust gases and wastewater by companies and citizens, and promoting the proper treatment of such substances. Therefore, while promoting cooperation among cities, we will advance efforts to prevent air and water pollution.

In addition, the greening of cities is anticipated as one solution that will contribute to the absorption of carbon emissions and air quality improvement. Increasing greenery in cities can also help to mitigate the heat island effect through heat absorption and cooling, to preserve biodiversity, and to enhance flood disaster mitigation by improving groundwater retention and drainage. Recognizing that city-led initiatives to increase urban greenery are essential, we will leverage cooperation among cities to promote initiatives for that purpose.

12. Water resource protection and management:

As one of the earth's natural resources, water resources are essential to the lives of people. In some areas of the world, however, there is no access to safe water because adequate water supply and sewer technologies have yet to be adopted. From the standpoint of building a circular economy, there is also the need to properly manage our precious water resources through water reclamation. Therefore, while strengthening cooperation among cities, we will advance efforts for the development of water supply and sewer technologies and construction of infrastructure throughout the world.

(Building Safe and Secure Cities)

13. To make our cities safe and secure, in addition to preparing for climate disasters such as the frequently occurring torrential rains and droughts that threaten lives around the world and properly dealing with such events, there is also the need to appropriately implement infectious disease countermeasures and to secure the infrastructure and food supplies essential for stability in people's lives. Therefore, we will work to build more resilient cities, including integrating climate change adaptation to mitigate natural disasters, which are intensifying due to the climate crisis, to ensure energy and food security, and to realize enhanced measures to counter pandemics caused by the coronavirus or unknown viruses.

14. Building more resilient cities through climate adaptation and other measures to mitigate natural disasters intensifying due to the climate crisis:

Due to climate change, natural disasters have become increasingly severe in recent years, having a major impact on people's lives and the economy. Since cities have a major role to play when a natural disaster or other such emergency occurs, it is necessary to develop disaster-resilient cities. To that end, by leveraging cooperation among cities, strengthening measures for the development of disaster mitigation infrastructure and disaster response based on long-term plans and expert predictions, and utilizing digital technologies, we will work to build more resilient cities that implement both climate change mitigation and adaptation measures.

15. Ensuring energy and food security:

Against the backdrop of the situation in the Ukraine and other factors, the energy supply-demand balance continues to be tight worldwide. This situation, along with the resulting food supply shortage and soaring prices, is casting a great shadow over people's lives and social activities. Therefore, we will work to share knowledge related to the promotion of energy efficiency, diversification of methods of generating electricity, including the use of renewable energy sources, the use of storage batteries, and other means to achieve energy security, as well as matters related to food security, including measures to counter price hikes.

16. Strengthening measures for pandemic response:

The COVID-19 outbreak, which became a global pandemic in 2020, has continued to have a major impact on the lives of people and economies around the world. Amid concerns over new viruses spreading in the future, cities play an enormous role in preventing pandemics and taking action when a pandemic occurs, including organizing systems for the provision of vaccinations, placing restrictions on the movement of residents, and providing economic support. Through cooperation among cities, we will work to strengthen measures for pandemic response, including measures to prevent pandemics from developing in the first place.

17. Aid for the earthquake that directly struck southeast Turkey

We cities express our heartfelt condolences for the large-scale earthquake that directly struck southeast Turkey on February 6, 2023, and had devastating consequences with many people killed or injured. We will endeavor to quickly provide necessary aid to help the people in the disaster-stricken areas of the Republic of Turkey and the Syrian Arab Republic in overcoming this difficult situation.

18. In conclusion, to protect and improve the lives of citizens, we shall engage in efforts to expand cooperation among cities to realize more inclusive and just societies, build safe and secure cities, and create an environment that facilitates response to climate issues. It is with such aspirations

that we hereby adopt the Tokyo Declaration 2023. We hope that utilizing G-NETS to solve challenges shared by cities will contribute to resolving global challenges to realize sustainable societies.