

Speech at the ICLEI World Congress Opening Plenary by ICLEI President Ashok Sridharan, Mayor of Bonn

delivered at the ICLEI World Congress, Montréal, Canada, 19 June 2018

Your Excellencies, Ministries of Quebec and Canada, Honorable Mayor Plante, Special Representative to the ICLEI Presidency David Cadman, Secretary General Gino General Van Begin, Honorable members of the ICLEI Council and the Global Executive Committee, honorable ICLEI members, Mayors, Governors, esteemed guests and participants,

Welcome to ICLEI World Congress 2018 in Montréal! Thank you, Mayor Park, for your kind words. Thank you, dear members of the global ICLEI-network, for entrusting and mandating me to represent ICLEI as your president for the term of 2018 to 2021! I humbly accept this responsibility and dedicate myself to the goals of our network!

We are gathered here in Montréal to drive sustainable urban development as set out in our new strategic vision – a vision inspired by the needs and experiences of our constituencies at the local level through which we will deliver on global goals. We now live in an urban world and are operating in the era of sustainable development in which our network of cities and regions plays a crucial role to help implement international sustainability frameworks such as the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals.

I am looking forward to leading ICLEI and this Global Executive Committee as the new President, and I am excited to work alongside the outstanding leaders united in this body.

The newly elected members of the ICLEI Global Executive Committee and presidium represent the diversity and strength of our network. First Vice President Councillor Oke, Vice Presidents Mayor Uy-Tan and Mayor Cownie, with you at my side we form a strong and dedicated presidium. Thank you for taking this challenging and promising road with me!

Apart from being highly qualified, we also have a gender balanced ICLEI presidium! As a Mayor whose board of directors is more than 50 percent female, I can attest to the importance of diverse and balanced leadership.

As a supporter of the #HeforShe campaign run by UN Women, I encourage everyone, in particular male leaders, to join in supporting gender equity at heforshe.org.

Before I come to the challenges and opportunities awaiting us in the near future, I would like to pay my highest respect to my predecessors, in particular to you, David, and to Mayor Park from Seoul, Korea. During the last two years I have worked closely with Mayor Park as his First Vice President. I am deeply honored to succeed him as ICLEI President. On behalf of the incoming Global Executive Committee, I would like to express our gratitude to Mayor Park for his unique leadership, for his dedication and for the milestones he achieved for our organization during his three years of service, in particular for his indispensable assistance to establish the ICLEI Beijing Office. I hope that I will be able to convey our heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to Mayor Park in person very soon.

Let me add that, in my time working with ICLEI, I have benefited greatly not only from the networking, synergies, support and cooperation provided by the network, but from the friendship I have enjoyed with fellow leaders.

Looking forward now, this is a time of great opportunity for local and regional governments around the world and there are several key working areas that I am eager to drive forward for the ICLEI network.

I am dedicated to scaling up our ongoing advocacy process. We live in an increasingly globalizing and interconnected world. This is the era of global sustainability agendas and ICLEI's holistic approach to sustainable development is more critical than ever.

In our urban era it's time to take multilevel, multistakeholder, multidisciplinary consultations, cooperations and coalitions to the next level. ICLEI has a unique lead role in these global discussions as the UN Climate Change focal point for the Local Governments and Municipal Authorities (LGMA) constituency. In this capacity ICLEI has taken on a leading role at the international level, resulting in the increasing presence of local and regional governments on the global stage. Through initiatives like the Cities and Regions Talanoa Dialogues which invites national governments to the table to raise climate ambition, and declarations like the Bonn-Fiji Commitment which I myself delivered to the UN Secretary General, cities and regions voices are getting heard at the highest levels.

I see the beauty and potential in our new vision for a sustainable urban world. As a compass to manage our rapidly changing urban and global environment we – the ICLEI Members - will drive sustainable action through five critical and strategic pathways which are closely interlinked. These pathways are set out in the Montréal Commitment and Strategic Vision 2018-2024, a living document we will take back home.

I am proud and honored to lead this network of 1,500 highly diverse local and regional governments. I am also optimistic that our network can grow further in the coming years.

During my presidency, I will foster intense exchange with the nine ICLEI regions in order to establish new platforms, to create new opportunities and to reach out to non-member-jurisdictions in order to further strengthen our network. I would also like to thank my fellow mayors in the regional executive committees for their great leadership without which we could not build such a robust and effective global network!

While working intensively across regions, I will continue my close cooperation with the World Secretariat. ICLEI opened its first climate unit in Bonn in 2009 and the ICLEI World Secretariat moved to the City of Bonn in 2010. Bonn and ICLEI have worked closely together ever since.

Our working relationship with Secretary General Gino Van Begin and his team is well established and based on trust and reliability. I would like to thank Gino and his staff for their tremendous work and the continual support they deliver to us ICLEI Members and in particular to me and the Global Executive Committee!

I have already extended an invitation to the members of our ICLEI governance bodies to join me in Bonn in June 2019 for a high level political exchange with the Parties to the UNFCCC on the CitiesIPCC process, meeting of the ICLEI leadership and the High Level Track of the ICLEI Resilient Cities Congress, which will celebrate its 10 year anniversary.

Today in Montréal we are celebrating another anniversary – our 10th ICLEI World Congress, graciously hosted by the City of Montréal and my dear colleague Valérie Plante. Madam Mayor, many thanks to you, your team and the people of your beautiful city for your hospitality!

And now, fellow Mayors, ladies and gentlemen, I wish us all an inspiring and productive time at the ICLEI World Congress 2018!

With new encounters, inspiring discussions and with concrete impulses for action and cooperation, with new ICLEI initiatives and programs, with a fascinating atmosphere in a charming city - and with all of YOU, the leadership of the local level, a tremendous movement which I am proud to be part of! Thank you!