



2026 BEIJING GREEN DEVELOPMENT FORUM

Advancing the Urban Green Economy

Shared Insights from Global Cities

FORUM PUBLICATION

Beijing · 17 September 2026

School of Environment, Tsinghua University



About the Authors

Ming Xu

Chair Professor of Carbon Neutrality and Associate Dean, School of Environment, Tsinghua University

Xiaohui Lu

Assistant Researcher, School of Environment, Tsinghua University

Jianchuan Qi

Assistant Researcher, School of Environment, Tsinghua University

Dong Li

Associate Research Professor, Institute for Urban Governance and Sustainable Development, Tsinghua University

Xin Zhou

Director of AI and New Frontier Group, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies

Roberto Cardinale

Associate Professor, The Bartlett School of Sustainable Construction, University College London

Ayyoob Sharifi

Professor, The IDEC Institute, Hiroshima University

Zhifu Mi

Professor, The Bartlett School of Sustainable Construction, University College London

Gang He

Associate Professor, Marx School of Public and International Affairs, Baruch College, City University of New York

Key Messages

UNEP's Definition of a Green Economy

A green economy is one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities ^[1].

- 01 The green economy is becoming an integral part of comprehensive urban development strategies.
 - 02 Stable policy frameworks and practical applications work together to create sustained demand for green solutions.
 - 03 Emerging green industries and the green transition of existing sectors need to advance together.
 - 04 Effective green finance connects technologies, businesses and projects.
 - 05 Equity and resilience should be central to urban green economy development.
-

Preface

The global green transition is entering a critical phase in which broad agreement on goals must be translated into systemic action. Climate change, resource and environmental constraints, industrial and technological transformation, and social equity considerations are increasingly intertwined. The need for cities to transform their development models is becoming more pressing, while the transition also creates opportunities to foster new drivers of growth, improve the urban environment and strengthen long-term resilience. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) defines a green economy as “one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities” ^[1]. In the urban context, the green economy connects technological innovation, industrial upgrading, urban regeneration, investment, employment and public well-being, making it an important pathway towards high-quality urban development ^[2-4].

The concentration of people, economic and cultural activities, buildings, transport, energy and public services in cities creates significant resource and environmental pressures, while also generating diverse opportunities for technology deployment and broad market demand. By combining planning, regulations, standards, public investment and procurement with public participation, cities can mobilise private investment and financial resources and translate long-term green objectives into implementable projects and viable market opportunities. Different cities can build on their industrial foundations, spatial structures and governance conditions to pursue distinctive pathways for urban green economy development.

This publication examines five global cities-Beijing, London, New York City, Paris and Tokyo-as case studies. All five have considerable international influence, while differing in their industrial foundations, spatial structures and governance approaches, enabling them to illustrate diverse practices in urban green economy development. The study draws primarily on strategies, plans, regulations and

policy documents publicly released by the five cities. It provides a qualitative analysis of their strategic positioning, policy instruments and representative practices. Based on cross-city synthesis and input from participating experts, it distils shared insights on urban green economy development. On this basis, it identifies priority issues and directions for future cooperation to support cross-city exchange, knowledge sharing and practical collaboration.

I

The Green Economy in Global Cities

Insights from policy and practice across five global cities.



Insights from Practice

Beijing, London, New York City, Paris and Tokyo differ in their development contexts, urban functions and governance systems. Each city is integrating green objectives into its development strategies and translating them into practice through institutional rules, real-world applications, public-sector action and market mechanisms. Figure 1 presents the resulting range of pathways for urban green economy development.

Comparison Dimension	Beijing Innovation-led development · Regional coordination	London Long-term planning · Climate finance	New York City Regulation-driven demand · Industry and employment	Paris Climate action · Spatial planning	Tokyo Differentiated regulation · Sustainable finance
01 Integrated strategy and cross-sector coordination	●	◐	●	◐	◐
02 Regulations, standards and demand creation	◐	●	●	◐	●
03 Technology deployment and industry development	●	◐	●	○	◐
04 Public investment and green finance	◐	●	○	●	●
05 Urban regeneration and infrastructure	◐	◐	○	●	●
06 Employment, livelihoods and public participation	○	○	●	●	○
07 Climate adaptation and urban resilience	◐	◐	◐	●	●

● Core emphasis ◐ Important supporting area ○ Supporting area

Note: Based on a qualitative review of publicly available policy materials as of August 2026.
The symbols indicate the relative emphasis placed on each policy area within each city's policy framework; they do not represent policy effectiveness or an absolute ranking.

Figure 1 Comparative Matrix of Green Economy Pathways

Across the five cases, convergence is strongest in the integration of green objectives into long-term urban strategies and in the use of combined policy instruments. Differences are more apparent in implementation. Beijing places greater emphasis on green technology innovation, industrial development and regional coordination; London combines statutory planning with project development and climate finance; New York City links mandatory building-emissions rules with industrial and workforce policies; Paris aligns climate action with public investment and spatial regeneration; and Tokyo combines differentiated regulation with technology deployment and

sustainable finance. These approaches illustrate how regulation, public investment, private finance and technology policy can play different but complementary roles under different local conditions.

Beijing

Green innovation · Industrial development · Regional coordination

Beijing combines green innovation, industrial development and regional coordination. Its strategic focus is to align the goal of becoming an international benchmark city for the green economy with the capital's high-quality development priorities, its role as an International Centre for Science and Technological Innovation, and the coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region. The *2024 Opinions on Accelerating Beijing's Development into an International Benchmark City for the Green Economy* set out five benchmark initiatives covering technology innovation, industrial development, urban liveability, green culture and cooperation. Representative measures include demonstration projects, work towards a national green technology trading centre and the development of a local carbon footprint background database. The *Beijing Action Plan for Climate Change Adaptation* also integrates risk monitoring, infrastructure and public health into urban governance. Together, these measures link innovation, industrial development, urban transformation and regional coordination [5, 6].

Beijing: Building an International Benchmark City for the Green Economy

High-quality development of the capital · International centre for scientific and technological innovation · Coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region

Key Areas of Practice



Figure 2 Green Economy Practices in Beijing

London

Long-term planning · Climate finance · Project delivery

London links long-term planning and climate finance to project delivery. Its strategic focus is to use urban planning to support the transition of buildings, transport, land use and infrastructure towards net zero. The *London Plan 2021* integrates whole life-cycle carbon and circular economy requirements into the planning system, an approach carried forward in the *Draft London Plan 2026*. The London Climate Finance Facility combines project-development support with financial instruments: the Green Finance Fund offers eligible public-sector organisations long-term, low-cost loans, while the Zero Carbon Accelerator provides technical support to develop viable and investable decarbonisation projects. Together, these instruments address financing costs and project-readiness barriers, illustrating how London connects long-term planning, project pipelines and finance ^[7-10].

London: Linking Long-Term Planning, Climate Finance and Project Delivery

Long-term climate strategy · Statutory spatial planning · Climate finance and project delivery

Key Areas of Practice



Figure 3 Green Economy Practices in London

New York City

Mandatory rules · Industry development · Workforce policy

New York City uses regulation and action planning to connect emissions reduction, industry, and employment. Its strategic focus is to translate climate action into opportunities for business growth, technology deployment, workforce development, and a just transition. The *Green Economy Action Plan* sets out an integrated programme of action, while Local Law 97 sets greenhouse gas emissions limits for large buildings and provides a regulatory basis for energy-efficiency retrofits and related energy management, technical advisory and compliance services. The combination of strategic action and mandatory rules connects climate objectives with industry development, employment and community participation ^[11, 12].

New York City: Turning Climate Action into Green Economy Opportunities

PlaNYC climate and resilience strategy · Building emissions regulation · Green Economy Action Plan

Key Areas of Practice

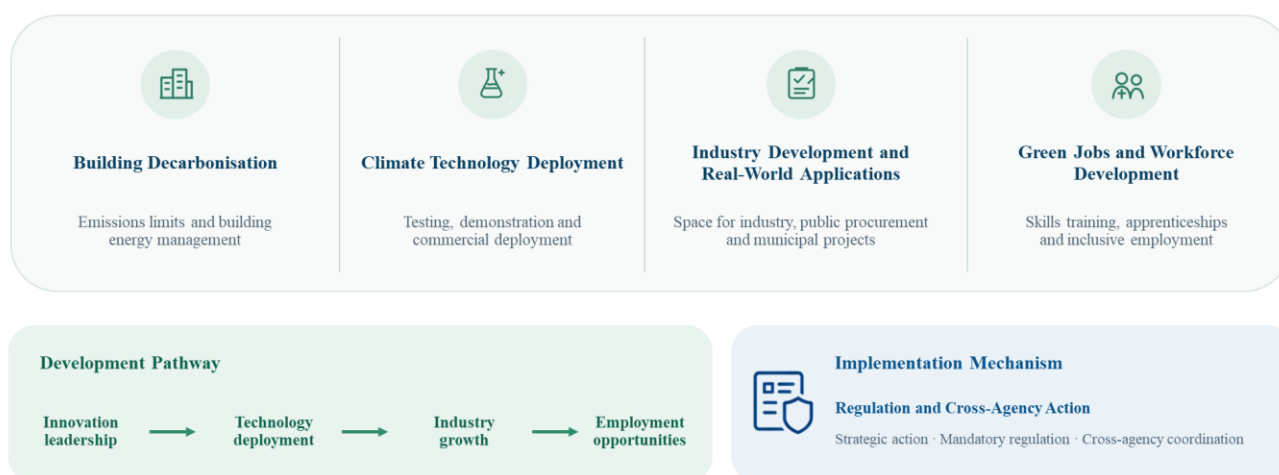


Figure 4 Green Economy Practices in New York City

Paris

Climate action · Public investment · Spatial regeneration

Paris uses climate action and spatial planning to advance citywide regeneration. Its strategic focus is to integrate emissions reduction, adaptation, and improvements in residents' daily lives into a broader urban transition. The *Paris Climate Action Plan 2024–2030* brings housing renovation, energy use and public space transformation into a single framework for action, while the *Bioclimatic Local Urban Plan* integrates ecological, climate, and social objectives into land use, construction, and the renewal of existing urban spaces. The alignment of climate policy and spatial planning is a defining feature of Paris's approach to environmental improvement and more sustainable urban lifestyles^[13, 14].

Paris: Advancing Citywide Regeneration through Climate Action and Spatial Planning

Climate action · Bioclimatic spatial planning · Urban regeneration and sustainable lifestyles

Key Areas of Practice



Figure 5 Green Economy Practices in Paris

Tokyo

Differentiated governance · Technology deployment · Sustainable finance

Tokyo coordinates differentiated governance, technology deployment, and sustainable finance.

Its strategic focus covers energy, buildings, transport, resource efficiency and circularity, and climate adaptation. Policy instruments are tailored to large facilities, buildings, small and medium-sized enterprises, and the public sector, while green and blue bonds support projects including energy-efficient public buildings, low-emission transport, the decarbonisation of water services, flood prevention, and ecosystem conservation. This combination of differentiated governance, technology deployment and sustainable finance shapes Tokyo's approach to the green economy ^[15, 16].

Tokyo: Advancing the Zero-Emission Transition and Urban Resilience

Zero-emission transition · Differentiated regulation · Climate adaptation and sustainable finance

Key Areas of Practice



Figure 6 Green Economy Practices in Tokyo

II

Shared Insights on the Urban Green Economy

Five insights distilled from diverse city pathways.



Shared Insights

The experiences of Beijing, London, New York City, Paris and Tokyo show that the green economy is becoming an integral part of broader urban development strategies, supported by mutually reinforcing mechanisms that combine stable policy frameworks, diverse real-world applications, industrial transformation and financial support. Drawing on their respective development conditions and governance approaches, the five cities have pursued distinct pathways while sharing a commitment to advancing economic development, environmental improvement, social inclusion and urban resilience in an integrated manner.

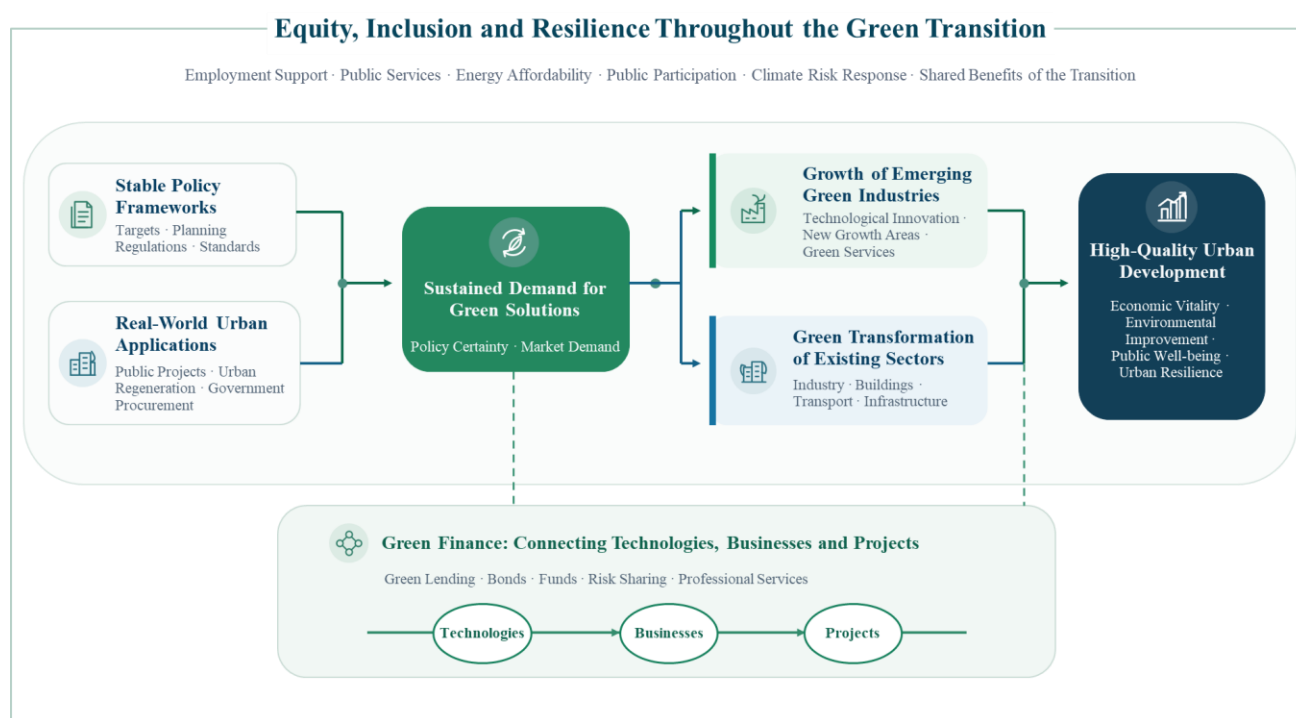


Figure 7 Shared Insights on the Urban Green Economy

01

The green economy is an integral part of comprehensive urban development strategies.

It encompasses not only green industries, but also the transformation of established industries, urban regeneration, improvements in public services, and changes in lifestyles. Green economy development needs to align economic vitality with public well-being, social equity, and urban resilience, so that environmental improvement and high-quality development reinforce one another.

02

Stable policy frameworks and practical applications can help create sustained demand for green solutions.

Medium- and long-term objectives, plans, regulations and standards can provide greater certainty, while public projects, urban regeneration and government procurement can create opportunities to deploy green technologies and services and generate market demand. When policy guidance is combined with real-world deployment, green technologies and solutions can move more effectively from research and validation to demonstration and market deployment.

03

The growth of emerging green industries and the transition of existing sectors need to advance together.

Clean energy, energy efficiency and environmental services, green transport, and circular economy activities can create new areas of growth. At the same time, the

transformation of established industries, buildings, transport systems, and infrastructure generates broader and more sustained demand. Progress on both fronts can broaden the urban green transition and build sustained momentum for change.

Green finance needs to be better connected to technologies, businesses and projects.

04

Capital supply alone is not sufficient; financing needs to be combined with project preparation, technical support, risk sharing and transparent reporting. London links project-development assistance with long-term, low-cost lending, while Tokyo uses green and blue bonds to connect public projects with capital-market funding ^[9, 10, 16]. These practices illustrate how public funding, commercial capital and professional services can improve project readiness and align financing with different project cycles.

Equity and resilience are essential dimensions of an urban green economy.

05

The green transition will reshape skills requirements, occupational structures and employment patterns in some sectors, with different implications for communities and social groups. As cities pursue industrial and spatial transformation, they need to consider employment support, essential public services, energy security and affordability, public participation, and the diverse risks posed by climate change, pandemics, and geopolitical instability, so that the benefits of the transition are shared more widely.

III

Priority Issues for Urban Green Economy Development

Five issues likely to shape the next phase of urban green transition.



Five Priority Issues

Looking ahead, advances in digital technology, evolving climate risks, urban regeneration and industrial restructuring will continue to reshape urban economies and everyday life, placing new demands on the urban green economy. Greater priority should be given to human well-being, with due attention to urban-rural and city-region linkages in resource use, industrial cooperation, employment and public services. Drawing on the five city cases and broader emerging trends, this publication identifies five priority issues requiring shared attention: aligning digital and green transitions; strengthening climate adaptation and urban resilience; advancing urban regeneration and circular resource use; scaling green technologies and innovating business models; and promoting green employment and a just transition.

01 **Aligning digital and green transitions**

Artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things and big data provide new tools for optimising the management of energy, transport, buildings and resources. At the same time, they increase the importance of energy-efficient computing, clean energy supply, low-carbon digital infrastructure, and ethical and responsible governance. Advancing these objectives together, by using digital technologies to support the green transition while decarbonising digital infrastructure, will be an important priority for urban innovation. Beijing's emphasis on green technology innovation and Tokyo's deployment of technology across urban systems illustrate how this agenda is beginning to take shape at city level ^[5, 15].

02 Climate adaptation and urban resilience

Extreme heat, heavy rainfall, flooding, water stress, pandemics, and geopolitical instability pose persistent challenges to urban operations, public health, and economic activities. Cities need to incorporate climate risk and resilience thinking into urban planning, infrastructure, public services and industrial siting decisions, while advancing adaptation technologies, resilient infrastructure, and risk management services in a coordinated manner. The integrated adaptation approaches adopted in Beijing, Paris and Tokyo show how climate risk management can be integrated into infrastructure planning, public health and urban services ^[6, 13, 15].

03 Urban regeneration and circular resource use

The renovation of existing buildings and infrastructure and the upgrading of public spaces, community services and facilities will continue to generate demand for green investment and services. Urban regeneration needs to give greater attention to life-cycle management, circular resource use, and community participation, improving spatial quality and public services while reducing environmental impacts. London's planning requirements for whole life-cycle carbon and circular economy statements, together with Paris's bioclimatic planning approach, illustrate how these considerations can be embedded in urban development and regeneration ^[7, 14].

04 Scaling green technologies and innovating business models

Many green technologies and urban projects face lengthy validation processes, high early-stage risks, and fragmented revenue streams. Stronger mechanisms for pilot testing, demonstration, project development, risk sharing, and information disclosure can improve the links between technology supply, market demand, and long-term capital. Beijing's emphasis on green technology demonstration and New York City's climate innovation programmes illustrate the importance of linking policy support with real-world testing and deployment ^[5, 11].

05 Green employment and a just transition

The growth of green industries and the transformation of existing sectors will continue to reshape occupational structures and skills needs. Vocational education, skills training, employment services, and social protection need to respond more effectively to industrial change and create more inclusive opportunities for young people, workers, and small and medium-sized enterprises to participate in the green economy. New York City's integration of green industry and workforce development provides a particularly clear example of how employment and skills can be incorporated into a green economy strategy ^[11].

IV

Directions for Cooperation among Global Cities

Four practical directions for sustained and mutually beneficial cooperation.



Directions for Cooperation

01 Exchange on policy, knowledge and standards

Cities can share practical experience in strategic planning, rules and standards, public investment, urban regeneration, and community participation, while engaging in dialogue on green taxonomies, urban green economy assessment methods, carbon accounting, project assessment, climate risk and information disclosure. Exchange should address differences in policies and methodologies, as well as enabling conditions, stakeholders involved and delivery mechanisms, thereby making mutual learning more targeted, strengthening mutual understanding and transparency, and creating a stronger basis for cross-city cooperation.

02 Connecting green technologies with real-world urban applications

Cities, businesses, and research institutions can jointly identify practical needs and exchange information on potential applications and technology demand. This can support the testing and demonstration of green technologies in buildings, transport, energy, resource efficiency and circularity, and public services, and create opportunities for cross-city projects where conditions allow.

03 Joint research and talent development

Cities, universities, research institutions, enterprises, and international organisations have broad scope for cooperation on the alignment of digital and green transitions, climate adaptation, urban regeneration, a just transition, and green finance. Training programmes, research visits, youth exchanges, and professional networks can help develop professionals with interdisciplinary expertise in the green economy and an international outlook.

04 Cooperation on green projects, investment and finance

Stronger connections among project owners, technology companies, financial institutions, and professional service providers can facilitate financing arrangements suited to different stages of technology development and project cycles. Such partnerships can also strengthen project development capacity and help mobilise public finance, commercial capital, and long-term investment for the green transition.

Mechanisms for implementation

To translate these directions into practice, cities and partner organisations could explore four mechanisms: a shared repository of policy cases, methods and relevant non-confidential data; joint pilot projects with common approaches to documenting and evaluating results; a city-to-city platform for project development and investment matching; and recurring joint research, training and professional-exchange programmes. Platforms such as the Beijing Green Development Forum could convene participating organisations, identify shared priorities, support project and technology matching, and periodically review progress. These mechanisms could help turn event-based exchanges into sustained and practical cooperation.

Looking Ahead

Towards an urban future in which economic prosperity, environmental improvement, social inclusion, and resilience reinforce one another.

Looking ahead, the green economy will become more deeply integrated into urban development strategies and serve as an important driver of technological innovation and industrial transformation, while contributing to a better urban environment and improved public well-being. Urban green transitions should improve resource efficiency and environmental performance while also giving due consideration to development opportunities, public services and risk-management capacity, thereby advancing economic development, environmental improvement, social inclusion and urban resilience in a coordinated manner.

Cities differ in their stages of development, resource endowments, industrial foundations and governance arrangements, and there is therefore no single model for green economy development. Each city should build on its own strengths and circumstances, translate long-term objectives into sustained and concrete action, and develop a distinctive pathway through an appropriate mix of policies and implementation approaches. Cross-city exchange should be grounded in a clear understanding of the objectives, enabling conditions and operating mechanisms of different practices, while cities should adapt relevant experience to local needs.

Cross-city exchange and multi-stakeholder cooperation can facilitate the exchange of knowledge, technology and expertise, as well as the mobilisation of resources, enabling green innovation to better support industrial development and urban governance. Open, stable and enduring partnerships can help global cities strengthen their capacity for green economy development and provide a lasting foundation for more dynamic, liveable and resilient cities.

References

- [1] United Nations Environment Programme. *Towards a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication: A Synthesis for Policy Makers*. Nairobi: UNEP, 2011.
- [2] World Commission on Environment and Development. *Our Common Future*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- [3] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *Paris Agreement*. 2015.
- [4] International Labour Organization. *Guidelines for a Just Transition towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All*. Geneva: ILO, 2015.
- [5] General Office of the CPC Beijing Municipal Committee and General Office of the People's Government of Beijing Municipality. *Opinions on Accelerating Beijing's Development into an International Benchmark City for the Green Economy* (Jing Ban Fa [2024] No. 7). 26 October 2024.
- [6] Beijing Municipal Ecology and Environment Bureau and 16 other municipal departments. *Beijing Action Plan for Climate Change Adaptation* (Jing Huan Fa [2024] No. 1). 7 February 2024.
- [7] Greater London Authority. *The London Plan 2021*. London: Greater London Authority, March 2021.
- [8] Greater London Authority. *Draft London Plan 2026*. London: Greater London Authority, 16 July 2026.
- [9] Greater London Authority. *London Climate Finance Facility*. Accessed 14 August 2026.
- [10] Greater London Authority. *MD3497 Zero Carbon Accelerator Extension: Delivering Decarbonisation at Scale*. London: Greater London Authority, 22 May 2026.
- [11] New York City Economic Development Corporation and the Mayor's Office of Talent and Workforce Development. *Green Economy Action Plan*. 2024.
- [12] New York City Department of Buildings. *LL97 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction*. Accessed 14 August 2026.
- [13] City of Paris. *Paris Climate Action Plan 2024–2030*. 2024.
- [14] City of Paris. *Plan local d'urbanisme bioclimatique: vers un Paris plus vert et plus solidaire [Bioclimatic Local Urban Plan: Towards a Greener and More Inclusive Paris]*. Approved 20 November 2024. Accessed 14 August 2026.
- [15] Tokyo Metropolitan Government. *Zero Emission Tokyo Strategy Beyond Carbon Half*. 2025.
- [16] Tokyo Metropolitan Government, Bureau of Finance. *Tokyo Green and Blue Bonds Impact Report*. October 2025.

