Global Cities New Zealand Conference 2026

New Frontiers

3 - 5 September 2026 | Ōtautahi Christchurch

GLOBAL CITIES
NEW ZEALAND
Connecting people globally for peace and prosperity

Conference Programme

Thursday 3 September

12:00pm – 5:00pm	**Registration open**	**Christchurch Town Hall, Victoria Room**
1:00pm – 4:30pm	**Site Visit** All visits depart from Christchurch Town Hall after registering at Victoria Room	
1:00pm – 4:30pm	**International Antarctic Centre** An immersive introduction to Antarctica and Christchurch's role as a gateway to the continent, showcasing international collaboration in science, logistics, and environmental stewardship.	
1:00pm – 4:30pm	**Halswell Quarry Park & Christchurch Adventure Park** Home to Christchurch's Sister City Gardens, where landscaped spaces and heritage features symbolise the city's long-standing international relationships and people-to-people connections. Christchurch Adventure Park, a post-earthquake regeneration success story that showcases innovation, outdoor recreation, and how cities can reimagine landscapes to support economic recovery and community wellbeing.	
1:30pm – 4:30pm	**Central City Walking Tour** A guided walking tour through central Ōtautahi Christchurch, visiting iconic landmarks such as the Christchurch Cathedral and the innovative Tūranga central city library, while exploring the city's regeneration, contemporary urban design, and public spaces shaped by recovery, adaptation, and innovation.	
5:30pm – 7:30pm	**Welcome Function sponsored by The Chinese Embassy** 中华人民共和国驻新西兰（库克群岛、纽埃）大使馆 The Embassy of the People's Republic of China in New Zealand (Cook Islands, Niue)	**One New Zealand Stadium at Te Kaha**

Join us for the Welcome Reception held at One NZ Stadium at Te Kaha. Christchurch's exciting new addition, for an evening of networking, and connection

Please make your own way to the Stadium – Gate A. You can find directions here: Google Maps: One NZ Stadium

Friday 4 September

8:00am	**Registration | with arrival tea and coffee**	**Victoria Room**
9:00am	**Conference opening**	**Limes Room**
9:00am	**Mihi Whakatau** Cultural Welcome	
9:10am	**Kay Gregory | Conference MC** Introduction and housekeeping	
9:20am	**His Worship Phil Mauger | Mayor | Christchurch City Council** Welcome from Host City	
9:25am	**Mayor Grant Smith | President | Global Cities NZ** Sister Cities NZ welcome address	
9:30am	**Grahame Morton | Deputy Secretary - Americas and Asia Group | Ministry of Foreign Affairs** **International engagement under the Foreign Policy Reset and the value of city-to-city diplomacy**	
10:00am	**Mr Tangi Utikere | Member of Parliament for Palmerston North** Building Connections Beyond Borders – The Role of Communities in an Interconnected World	
10:20am	**Morning Break**	**Victoria Room**
10:40am	**Keynote Address**	**Limes Room**
	Shamubeel Eaqub | Chief Economist | Simplicity Cities in a changing world	
11:20am	**Panel Discussion | From Legacy to Leverage** This panel explores how long standing sister city relationships have evolved over time and adapted to changing global, economic, and community priorities. Drawing on real world examples, panellists will reflect on how partnerships that may have begun with a strong cultural or people to people focus have expanded to support outcomes such as trade, education, tourism, climate resilience, and broader civic collaboration.	**Limes Room**
	Moderator **John McKinnon | Chair | New Zealand China Council** **Panellists** **His Excellency Dr WANG Xiaolong | Ambassador | Embassy of the People's Republic of China in New Zealand** **Dr Graham Wise | Director of International Development | University of Canterbury** **Edwin Paul | Chair | India New Zealand Business Council**	

Friday 4 September

12:05pm	**Lunch sponsored by the Embassy of Japan in New Zealand** Embassy of Japan in New Zealand	**Victoria Room**
1:05pm	**Panel Discussion | New Geographic Frontiers** This panel explores regions of the world where New Zealand cities have, to date, had limited traditional or emerging sister city relationships. Focusing on India, Southeast Asia (including the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia), and the Pacific, the discussion will consider why engagement in these regions has been comparatively limited and what factors have shaped past patterns of city to city connection. Panellists will examine the potential benefits of deeper engagement with these regions, including economic opportunity, demographic growth, regional stability, cultural connection, and shared urban and governance challenges. The session will explore what meaningful relationships could look like, whether through bilateral partnerships, networked or trilateral models, or purpose driven collaborations aligned with local and national priorities. By looking beyond established pathways, New Geographic Frontiers invites delegates to consider how New Zealand cities can thoughtfully expand their international engagement, drawing on lessons from existing relationships while responding to emerging global and regional realities. **Moderator** **Dr James To | South Island Engagement Manager | Asia New Zealand Foundation Te Whītau Tūhono** **Panellists** **Her Excellency Ms Muanpuii Saiawi | High Commissioner | High Commission of India** **Her Excellency Ms Kira Christianne Azucena | Ambassador | Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines**	**Limes Room**
1:50pm	**Panel Discussion | Multi-City and Networked Partnerships** This session explores emerging models of tri-city and networked partnerships, demonstrating how cities can collaborate beyond traditional one-to-one sister city relationships to achieve shared outcomes. The discussion will consider the potential benefits of trilateral arrangements—such as Auckland–Los Angeles–Guangzhou—as well as innovative models like “sister city-in-law” relationships, for example Christchurch–Adelaide–Qingdao, and partnerships where New Zealand cities pair or coordinate to work collectively with international counterparts. The session will examine how these models can enhance scale, resilience, and impact, support economic and cultural objectives, and provide flexible pathways for cities to respond to increasingly complex global challenges. **Moderator** **Her Worship Tania Tapsell | Mayor | Rotorua Lakes Council** **Panellists** **Mark Rocket | CEO | Kea Aerospace** **Michelle MacWilliam | Chair | Christchurch China Sister Cities Committee** **Scott Callaway | General Manager Tourism and Trade | Christchurch International Airport**	**Limes Room**
2:35pm	**Afternoon Break**	**Victoria Room**

Friday 4 September

3:05pm	**Panel Discussion | Partnering for Good | City Rebuilding** **Limes Room** The discussion will consider how New Zealand cities, where there is local interest and capacity, could partner with appropriate European cities to support Ukraine through knowledge sharing, capability exchange, and locally led rebuilding efforts once the current conflict concludes. The session will examine how sister city and multi-city relationships can be applied in humanitarian and recovery contexts, highlighting the principles of reciprocity, coordination, and long-term commitment that underpin effective international partnerships. It will invite delegates to consider how cities can contribute constructively and responsibly to global recovery efforts, while aligning with national and international frameworks.
	Moderator **Rosemary Banks | Former Ambassador of the United States of America** **Panellists** **His Excellency Patryk Blaszczak | Ambassador | Embassy of the Republic of Poland** **Her Excellency Isaura Duarte Rodríguez | Ambassador | Embassy of Colombia in New Zealand** **Olena Grubb | Honorary Consul of Ukraine for the South Island of New Zealand | Embassy of Ukraine** **Dr Paul Dalziel | European Union's International Urban and Regional Cooperation Programme | IURC, European Union**
3:50pm	**Panel Discussion | Partnering for Good | Our Backyard** **Limes Room** The discussion will focus on opportunities for city-to-city collaboration in areas such as climate action, resilience building, and sustainable agriculture and food security. Through a development and partnership lens, the session will consider how local government expertise, practical innovation, and long-term relationships can support locally led solutions that respond to climate impacts and economic vulnerability. Delegates will be invited to reflect on how cities can engage in ethical, respectful, and effective partnerships that contribute to regional resilience while complementing national development and international cooperation objectives.
	Moderator **Councillor Yani Johanson | Councillor for Linwood Ward | Christchurch City Council** **Panellists** **Ceciel DelaRue | Team Leader Urban Design | Christchurch City Council** **Riki Welsh | Pacific Community Leader** **Allison Rosanowski | Chairperson | Selwyn Sister City**
4:35pm - 5:00pm	**Mayor Grant Smith | President | Global Cities NZ** Day's wrap
6:30pm – 10:30pm	**Conference and Awards dinner** **Air Force Museum of New Zealand**
	This event will be held at the Royal New Zealand Air Force Museum, providing a distinctive and memorable setting for the conference gala. Hosted by Mayor Phil Mauger, the evening will celebrate the achievements of the Global Cities New Zealand community in 2026 and offer delegates the opportunity to connect and socialise in an informal setting. Located at Wigram, the birthplace of military aviation in New Zealand, the RNZAF Museum offers a unique backdrop that reflects innovation, history, and international connection.
6:00pm	Transport will collect delegates from the Town Hall.

Saturday 5 September

8:30am	**Registration | with arrival tea and coffee**	**Victoria Room**
9:00am	**Keynote Address**	**Limes Room**
	Stephen Yarwood | Urban Futurist @ city^{2050} | Former Lord Mayor of Adelaide, South Australia Sister Cities: looking to the future	
9:45am	**Panel Discussion | Measuring Value – Outcomes Councils Care About** The discussion will focus on opportunities for city-to-city collaboration in areas such as climate action, resilience building, and sustainable agriculture and food security. Through a development and partnership lens, the session will consider how local government expertise, practical innovation, and long-term relationships can support locally led solutions that respond to climate impacts and economic vulnerability. Delegates will be invited to reflect on how cities can engage in ethical, respectful, and effective partnerships that contribute to regional resilience while complementing national development and international cooperation objectives.	**Limes Room**
	Moderator **Mayor Grant Smith | President | Global Cities NZ** **Panellists** **Mayor Wayne Brown | Mayor | Auckland Council** **Mayor Rehette Stoltz | Mayor | Gisborne District Council** **Mayor Tania Tapsell | Mayor | Rotorua Lakes Council**	
10:30am	**Morning Break**	**Victoria Room**
10:55am	**GCNZ Town Hall | What Comes Next** GCNZ Board will share information to the delegates on their activities.	**Limes Room**
	Moderator **Mayor Grant Smith | President | Global Cities NZ** **Panellists** **Emeritus Professor Peter Cottrell | Board member | Global Cities NZ** **Danielle Caudwell | Director | Global Cities NZ**	
11:40am	**Conference Close**	**Limes Room**
11:40am	**His Worship Phil Mauger | Mayor | Christchurch City Council** Closing remarks	
11:45pm	**Mayor Grant Smith | President | Global Cities NZ** Closing remarks	

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Christchurch City Council

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