

Yokohama Mayor Takeharu Yamanaka promotes decarbonization initiatives and international collaboration at Vatican Summit

The Mayor of Yokohama was invited to the Vatican Climate Summit to share Yokohama's decarbonization initiatives, and met with other mayors and top UN officials

YOKOHAMA, JAPAN, May 22, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Yokohama Mayor Takeharu Yamanaka visited Vatican City and Italy, where he participated in the Vatican climate summit hosted by Pope Francis and the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, speaking in front of an audience of governors, mayors, and other leaders, and shared Yokohama's

decarbonization initiatives and international collaboration towards a more sustainable world. During his time in Rome, Mayor Yamanaka also engaged in top-level meetings with three food-related United National agencies and organizations headquartered there, creating avenues to further advance Yokohama's decarbonization efforts and enhancing its international presence.

“

[Yokohama] will continue to lead Asia on the way to zero carbon society.”

Takeharu Yamanaka, Mayor of Yokohama

The summit hosted at the Vatican by Pope Francis, [“From Climate Crisis to Climate Resilience,”](#) was held from May 15-17, 2024, and invited mayors and governors representing local cities and regions from around the world to gather in the Vatican City and share and discuss

their respective climate action initiatives. Setting the stage for the summit, Pope Francis emphasized the importance of the role and collaboration that cities play in addressing climate change.

Mayor Yamanaka took to the stage during the second day of the conference, in a session titled



Yokohama Mayor Takeharu Yamanaka speaking at Vatican Climate Summit

“In the Front Lines: Climate Hotspots.” During his presentation, Mayor Yamanaka focused on three key ingredients for societal transformation toward sustainability and green solutions: citizen empowerment, the city government’s convening power, and international collaboration. The presentation was highly praised by the other participants. Notably, Mayor Yamanaka was the only top-ranking local government leader from Asia to speak at the conference.

During his presentation, the Mayor noted some of Yokohama’s achievements in recent years, such as a reduction of household waste by 43% from 2001 to 2010 despite population growth, which the Mayor contributed to a new waste separation system and over 2,800 local volunteer clubs whose actions, when combined with a total of 15,000 government-led workshops on waste separation, empowered Yokohama citizens to enact behavioral change, engage with the separation system, and reduce waste overall. In addition, Mayor Yamanaka noted that more recent changes to Yokohama’s waste management system focusing on guidelines for a more detailed separation of plastic are expected to contribute to a 15% decrease in CO2 from plastic incineration by next year.

Mayor Yamanaka also touched on the role that businesses play in carbon emissions and how government can galvanize change among corporations and SMEs. Yokohama’s Minato Mirai waterfront district is the city’s fastest-growing, an area of around 200 hectares with a working population of 130,000 and 80 million annual visitors, and a cluster of large companies that in total accounts for 10% of the business sector’s energy consumption in the city. Yet Minato Mirai is also the target of goals to reduce the carbon emissions in the area by 100% within the next 5 years, requiring massive efforts to collaborate with businesses. Mayor Yamanaka discussed Yokohama’s plans to completely decarbonize the area, and also increase the percentage of SMEs city-wide that participate in climate action.



Yokohama Mayor with Alvaro Lario, President of IFAD



Mayor Yamanaka of Yokohama presenting in front of other leaders at Vatican summit

As a conclusion to his presentation, Mayor Yamanaka called for international collaboration, noting Yokohama's history in supporting climate action throughout Asia. Yokohama has been engaged in partnerships with other Asian cities for over a decade, facilitated in part through the [Asia Smart City Conference](#) hosted in Yokohama every year. The Mayor noted an example in Yokohama's partnership with the Philippines, through which Yokohama's sharing of waste management expertise allowed Mandaue City in the Cebu Metro area to increase waste separation and plastic recycling, reducing annual waste by 4,500 tons in 2023, and enabling a 3,000 ton decrease in carbon emissions. Moreover, this initiative was only possible through a public-private collaboration with a local company in Yokohama, demonstrating the importance of including private companies in the equation. Mayor Yamanaka also cited Yokohama's recent collaboration with 44 cities and governmental organizations across Asia, which gathered in Yokohama and issued the Yokohama Declaration toward Carbon-Neutrality during the 2023 Asia Smart City Conference.

Yokohama's role in international collaboration and climate leadership extends beyond the Asian region as well. Inspired by a collaboration with New York City, Yokohama published a Voluntary Local Review in 2021 transparently detailing the city's actual progress toward standardized, UN-led climate and sustainability goals. Yokohama has also been the Japanese host city of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) ever since 2003, and will be hosting the 9th TICAD in 2025. Following this, in 2027 Yokohama will be hosting the [GREEN×EXPO 2027](#), a world expo certified by the Board of International Exposition, which will be a showcase of diverse solutions toward a decarbonized society. To further increase opportunities for international collaboration in climate action, Mayor Yamanaka also made sure to strengthen connections with other local leaders from around the world that were in attendance during the Vatican summit, including Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo, and Boston Mayor Michelle Wu, among others.

During his trip to Rome for the Vatican climate summit, Mayor Yamanaka also engaged in separate meetings at the headquarters of three UN food-related agencies: FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), an agency aiming for the transformation to more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable agriculture and food systems; IFAD (International Fund of Agricultural Development), a financial institution that provides loans for agricultural and rural development in the world's poorest countries; and WFP (World Food Programme), a food assistance agency providing food support during emergencies such as conflicts and natural disasters and supporting long-term peace and stability of local communities. These meetings focused on collaborative relationships leading up to TICAD 9 in 2025 and ensuring the success of GREEN×EXPO 2027, with Mayor Yamanaka discussing global food and agriculture issues with top-level UN officials, and afterwards confirming their collaboration towards Yokohama's upcoming initiatives.

Mayor Takeharu Yamanaka's invitation to and participation in the "From Climate Crisis to Climate Resilience" summit held at the Vatican marks another step in Yokohama's journey of becoming a more sustainable city, as the Mayor worked to share Yokohama's successes, learn from other cities' examples, and create and strengthen international bonds with other leaders to power

future collaboration in climate action and fighting climate change.

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