



**Welcome Remarks by Dr. José M. Zuniga,
President/CEO, IAPAC and Fast-Track Cities Institute
14 October 2024 • Paris, France**

Bonjour et bienvenue à Paris, une ville qui brille encore de l'esprit des jeux olympiques et paralympique.
Good morning and welcome to Paris, a city still shining with the spirit of the Olympics and Paralympics.

On behalf of IAPAC, the Fast-Track Cities Institute, Stop TB Partnership, and the Coalition for Global Hepatitis Elimination, welcome esteemed Mayors, Councilors, UN representatives, delegates, community and health leaders, and distinguished guests to the Fast-Track Cities 2024 conference. It is my great honor to celebrate with you the 10th anniversary of the Fast-Track Cities network, which began with just 26 cities and has grown to include 550 cities worldwide. I would like to take a moment to reflect on the journey we have traveled together over the past decade and the enormous progress we have made.

The Fast-Track Cities network has proven to be a global force for change, accelerating the responses to HIV, tuberculosis (TB), viral hepatitis, and other health challenges. Cities around the world have worked collaboratively to reach ambitious goals, such as the 95-95-95 HIV treatment targets, reducing new infections, and improving the quality of life for people living with HIV. Beyond a purely biomedical response, the Fast-Track Cities network has prioritized efforts to reduce HIV-related stigma and discrimination, recognizing that these social barriers hinder access to prevention, treatment, and care. In that regard, the *Paris Declaration on Fast-Track Cities Ending the HIV Epidemic* commits cities to embrace and implement the Undetectable equals Untransmittable, or U=U, message. The network has also expanded its focus to address the social determinants of health that drive inequalities, such as poverty, housing insecurity, and access to healthcare services. The response to HIV, TB, and viral hepatitis must go beyond focusing solely on the virus and address the social determinants of health that shape individuals' vulnerability and their ability to achieve equitable health outcomes.

The value of the Fast-Track Cities network is demonstrated not just by the numbers, but by the lives saved, the communities strengthened, and the progress made toward the health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We have leveraged the power of urban leadership, collaboration, and shared resources to build resilient health systems, reduce inequities, and foster innovation. Indeed, leveraging the Fast-Track Cities infrastructure proved valuable in many cities around the world during the COVID-19

pandemic. As we look forward to 2030, the value of this network will be even more critical as we continue to address emerging global health challenges, from other communicable and non-communicable diseases and the growing health impacts of climate change. By extending our focus we can embrace a holistic approach to health.

I am honored that Mayor Anne Hidalgo is joining us this morning because it was here in the City of Paris on World AIDS Day 2014, when IAPAC, UNAIDS, UN-Habitat, and the City of Paris launched what is today the world's largest global urban health network. I would argue that we have also been one of the most impactful, and that is thanks to all of you, including our Paris hosts. Paris has been at the forefront of this movement, and I am proud of the work of Paris sans Sida and its successes. I also applaud the Fast-Track Cities across France and Francophonie countries for their endeavors. In many ways you are Fast-Track France in your ability to impact your national HIV epidemic through local action that prioritizes equity.

We at IAPAC and the Fast-Track Cities Institute are also grateful to have had the opportunity to shape and expand this global network over the past decade and we are now visioning the way forward through 2030 – the deadline to achieve the health-related SDGs, as we realign and rebrand ourselves as Fast-Track Health. Fast-Track Health will provide technical support and strategic guidance to Fast-Track Cities and Fast-Track Countries into the next decade as we strive towards achieving key goals and targets related to HIV, tuberculosis, and viral hepatitis, but also other communicable and non-communicable diseases, as well as environmental health.

As we reflect on the past decade of progress, we must also look forward with renewed determination. Our commitment is to continue striving for health equity, ensuring that no one is left behind as we tackle the pressing health challenges of our time. Together, we will harness the power of cities to achieve the health-related SDGs, protect our communities, and ensure a healthier, more sustainable future for all.

Thank you to the Mayors and city and public health leaders, community partners, health professionals, and donors who have contributed to the successes of the Fast-Track Cities network. And thank you to our institutional and corporate sponsors who are making this 10-year anniversary conference possible: Merck Sharp & Dohme, ViiV Healthcare, the French ANRS, Health Care Advocates International, and Housing Works.

Friends and colleagues in the struggle, let us continue this vital work as we look forward to another decade of progress and impact. Together, and based on this past decade of success, I believe we can fast-track our way to a healthier and more equitable world by delivering on the Fast-Track Cities 2024 conference theme of “Equity in Action.”