



FIRST AFRICAN MINISTERIAL FORUM ON HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Rabat – Morocco
11 and 12 May 2016

An International Urban Forum in Rabat ahead of Habitat III

As part of the preparatory process for the third UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development - Habitat III, to be held in Quito, Ecuador, (17-21 October 2016), the Kingdom of Morocco, represented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Policy, is organizing the first African Ministerial Forum on Housing and Urban Development (AMFHUD) on 11-12 May 2016, in Rabat under the theme: « *Urban Policies and Sustainable Development* ».

Jointly organized with UN-Habitat, this Forum is meant to contribute, on a global scale, to the preparatory process leading to Habitat III, and to actively participate, on a regional scale, in addressing the issue of cities and their development and sustainability in Africa. The Forum will also give Morocco an opportunity to showcase its approach in line with the New Urban Agenda, to be adopted by the international community at Habitat III, and to promote the post-2015 Agenda spelt out in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 11: « *Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable* ».

The event will also tackle the issue of city sustainability, while keeping an eye on climate change, as per the recommendations of COP21 (Paris, December 2015) and in preparation of COP22, which Morocco will be hosting in November 2016.

From Habitat II to Habitat III

The Rabat Forum is an opportunity to measure the progress achieved since the second UN Conference on Human Settlements – Habitat II (Istanbul, June 1996), one slogan of which was based on the right of access to housing, and aimed to « *ensuring adequate shelter for all and making human settlements safer, healthier and more liveable, equitable, sustainable and productive* »¹.

Twenty years after the adoption of the Istanbul Declaration, Habitat III presents the international community with a roadmap, whereby the city is at the heart of an agenda to be

¹ *The Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements, in the Istanbul Declaration and the Habitat Agenda, page 3, 1996, 179 pages.*

adopted by 2030. The latter is viewed as the New Urban Agenda, and is supported by the Sustainable Development Goals.

Major Objective

To contribute to the preparatory process for Habitat III with a thematic conference on city policies and their relation with sustainable development on global and regional scales, so as to address the challenges of accelerated urbanization in Africa based on the Post-2015 Agenda.

Specific Objectives

- To hold a thematic conference in light of the principles of the New Urban Agenda to be adopted at Habitat III, covering (i) urban legislation and governance systems; (ii) domestic urban policies;(iii) urban economy;
- To incorporate the dimension of sustainable development into city policies in the wake of Rio+20 (2012) and COP21, and in preparation of COP22 (2016);
- To enrich the process of Habitat III by involving Africa in the review of urban dynamics and city policies;
- To enhance the common position of the African Continent on the agenda for the sustainable development of Africa by 2030, as well as on the 2063 vision, as addressed during the Abuja Conference (February 2016).
- To align the forum, its objectives and recommendations on the Sustainable Development Objectives, especially Objective 11 relating to cities and human settlements.

A Global Context Dominated by Cities

There are 7.3 billion inhabitants in the world today, 4 billion of whom live in cities or a total of 55%. In 2050, this urban population will reach 6.3 billion inhabitants or 70%. The way ahead is fraught with challenges arising from accelerated urbanization, and which beg proportionate solutions if we are to have integrated, equitable and sustainable cities, in a global environment where cities prevail as the dominating form of human settlement.

The African continent has also engaged into a process of irreversible urbanization. In fact, Africa is now experiencing accelerated urban transformation, with over a billion inhabitants in 2009, 400 million of whom in cities. By 2030, 50% of Africans will be living in urban areas. With 12 additional cities of more than 3 million inhabitants, and 2 cities of over 10 million, Africa is now facing poverty urbanization. Indeed, 60% of urban population live in informal housing, which is the main component of major habitats in most cities and megacities like Cairo, Lagos, Kinshasa, Luanda and Abidjan.

According to the 2063 African Agenda adopted by the African Union², two thirds of the total population of Africa (2.5 billion) will be living in cities fifty years from now. In other words, the urban population will have increased four-fold by then.

² Agenda 2063, *The Africa We Want*, African Union, Addis Ababa, 2013.

This is a major challenge, which could also be a unique opportunity if governments, local governments and municipalities avail the means to tap this urban growth for the sake of sustainable development.

Today, public policies need to cater to crucial challenges that concern the future of our cities by: (i) ensuring urban equity through access to decent housing, basic services and development opportunities; (ii) promoting enhanced urban planning to create wealth and jobs, and involving all local players, including the private sector; (iii) incorporating the environmental dimension into urban management and planning, and securing mobilization for climate change mitigation; (iv) reducing the risks associated with scarcity of water resources, many a city being located on the coastline, and repeated natural disasters.

Draft Agenda

The first day will be dedicated to three thematic sessions in the form of expert panels comprising of ministers, mayors and other elected officials, academicians, and representatives of the civil society, who will deal respectively with:

- Urban legislation and governance systems in relation with city policies – *Institutional framework, modus operandi and accompanying instruments*;
- Domestic urban policies for urban planning and land use – *Domestic strategies, territorial policies and metropolisation*;
- Urban economy – *Funding of urban operations and role of municipal finance, access to housing and basic services*;
- Sustainable development in city policies – *Environmental policies and resilience to climate change*.

This item can be dealt with across the board given its impact on each of the previous themes.

The official opening of the forum will be followed by four multi-partner panels, distributed in two half-days. The first day will end with the adoption of a common declaration.

The second day will be dedicated to the future of cities in the African region. Participants will engage into two dialogues for an exchange of experiences and best practices:

- A first dialogue will cover the three pillars of the New Urban Agenda and their incorporation into city policies in Africa, in light of the stakes, challenges and constraints faced by the continent;
- A second dialogue will touch upon sustainable development as a fully-fledged component of the urban agenda for Africa, in particular the modalities for formulation and incorporation into public policies.

These two dialogues are scheduled during the first half-day. The second half-day will be dedicated to discussing the future format of the African Ministerial Forum on Habitat and Urban Development. The proceedings will revolve around the four following themes:

- Partnership for Africa;
- « The Africa of cities » in the 21st century;
- South-South Cooperation;
- The Forum's sustainability mechanisms.

Forum Participants

The Forum is open to all stakeholders engaged in developing and managing cities, particularly as part of the preparatory framework of Habitat III. It will gather State representatives at ministerial level, representatives of regions and metropolitan centers, municipalities and the civil society. International bodies, and bilateral and multilateral cooperation will also be represented.

Around 300 international participants are expected in Rabat, including African Ministers of Housing and Urban Development. National delegations are encouraged to seek a balanced representation of central and local governments and the civil society. The aim is give the event a global dimension, by sharing the challenges of the New Urban Agenda and the solutions thereto – including through good practices -, but also a regional dimension, geared towards empowering African cities and stakeholders, local and national, who are striving for a better urban environment at continental level.

Urban Growth and Sustainable Development Challenges in Africa

In the face of accelerated urban growth (the majority of Africans will be living in cities by 2030), four major stakes involving urbanization and urban development policies need to be highlighted:

- Infrastructures, including in terms of transportation and communication, as is the case in emerging countries in other regions;
- Housing, or how to help populations access appropriate funding facilities to secure a decent housing for all;
- Access to basic services for all (water, sanitation, basic healthcare, primary education, public transportation, safety) as a « Right to the City » ;
- Long term urban strategies combining land use and socioeconomic integration.

The African Continent has major challenges to meet for its cities to be:

- Inclusive, with a reduced urban divide³;
- Competitive, harnessing their potential and creating wealth;
- At the service of citizens, through enhanced local governance.

The Stake of Sustainable Development

A sustainable city is economically productive, socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable. These three conditions must be part of the agenda for Africa in the 21st century, as cities will host 300 million additional residents by 2050.

To face up with the multiple challenges of sustainable development, as provided for in the Rio+20 Declaration⁴, Africa needs to tackle the issue of urban environment quality and the impact of cities on the natural environment, a crucial component of its development,

³ UN-Habitat, State of the World's Cities 2010/2011 – *Cities for All: Bridging the Urban Divide*, 220 pages.

⁴ UN Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, *The Future We Want*, Rio de Janeiro, June 2012, 60 pages.

especially when it comes to climate change and urban resilience. A number of cities seem to have braced themselves for climate change, and are sufficiently equipped.

Coastal cities like Abidjan, Accra, Alexandria, Algiers, Casablanca, Darussalam, Lagos, Luanda, Maputo and Tunis are potentially exposed to climate change related risks. This should urge them to identify protection mechanisms for their coastal areas, while integrating adaptation and prevention mechanisms into their management methods. They should also pay close attention to floods resulting from recurrent cycles of torrential rain, as well as to the alarming issue of advancing desertification.

African cities must integrate the following elements in their future strategies: (i) Adaptation and resilience methods; (ii) Energy efficiency; (iii) Combined land use with basic services; (iv) Reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

Morocco, a country with few conventional energy resources, which imports up to 95% of its energy supply, is committed to achieving primary energy savings of 12% to 15% by 2020, through energy efficiency plans applied to every economic sector. The construction sector appears to be one of the largest users of energy, with 36% of total domestic energy consumption, 29% of which goes to the housing sector.

Challenges Involving Urban Legislation and Governance Systems

Urban legislation involves laws and governance instruments with relation to State commitments, whose implementation straddles the institutional framework and the urbanization process. This is a major effort Africa needs to deploy to face up with the multiples stakes generated by cities (land ownership, finance, politics, democratic participation, etc.)

The role of the State appears to be crucial in this regard, in terms of regulation, control and arbitration, as per the rule of law, but also in terms of managing the pressing issue of the urban policy in its multiple forms (texts, instruments, intervention and management, etc.). To this effect, the State needs to act as a regulator and actor at the same time in facilitating inclusive urban policies.

Strengthening urban legislation and governance systems calls for a combination of spatial planning and investment, based on effective decentralization in terms of: (i) decentralization of powers; (ii) fiscal decentralization; and (iii) increased decision-making powers at local level.

In this respect, one of the major breakthroughs made in Morocco, governance wise, is the incorporation in the new Constitution (2011) of the right to housing, in conjunction with the right to water, sound environment, healthcare and social protection. These new achievements, which stem from the political will to promote a human rights-based approach, are geared towards urban inclusion and poverty reduction, and should help meet to the conditions for a « Right to the City».

At territorial level, these achievements are to be considered within the context of Advanced Regionalization, as a result of the ongoing decentralization process, in an effort to endow Morocco with enhanced spatial architecture in response to the challenges of development, city competitiveness and territorial complementarity.

Adoption of National Urban Policies

Adopting national urban policies requires the development of integrated urban strategies, combining land ownership, finance and land use, and based on urban planning, underpinned by implementation plans. A strategic vision also implies the adoption, after due consultation at national and local levels, of long term policies supported by appropriate assistance mechanisms: (i) fiscal; (ii) financial; (iii) assistance by guarantee funds (solutions adapted to disadvantaged groups); (iv) partnership-based (Public-Private).

National urban policies call for the adoption of long term national strategies and their integration into economic, social and spatial plans. Such policies, which should be adopted at national level and contain guidelines for the development of local policies, require enhanced decentralization and a strengthened mandate for local authorities, if we are to reduce the disparities and inequalities that are the daily lot of our cities and territories in Africa.

In this perspective, in 2012, Morocco strengthened the Habitat portion using that of the *City Policy*, in a context marked by urban growth and strong local demand. The City Policy, a new form of advocacy for urban space, was amply debated at regional level and in national conferences in 2012, with the contribution of UN-Habitat. The process can be summed up in five objectives:

- Structuring the urban framework and strengthening inter-functional links between cities;
- Enhancing city attractiveness and competitiveness;
- Ensuring equity, integration and social solidarity;
- Improving the quality of living spaces;
- Guiding players in their respective roles and institutionalizing good governance.

This convergence of territorial policies through the involvement of stakeholders is illustrated by the launching of four new cities for an expected population of 1.000.000 inhabitants. These new emerging centers, which are part of larger regional metropolitan centers, aspire to be future beacons of attractiveness and competitiveness, as part of the overall enhancement of urban structure, and based on a metropolitan vision of territory.

Addressing Urban Economy

The task will require mobilizing human and financial resources on a continental scale, so as to generate the wealth required to fuel economic growth and development. In a fast-paced urbanization context⁵, cities will have to meet a strong social demand in terms of housing, infrastructures and basic services.

Faced with urban growth and no industrial development, many African cities are dogged by underemployment and lack of resources. This leads to the urbanization of poverty, whose enabling factors are: (i) fast-paced and unchecked urbanization; (i) lack of decent urban jobs; (iii) insufficient housing and basic services; (iv) deficiencies in terms of city planning and management.

⁵ 400 million Africans live in urban areas. In 2050, they are expected to reach 1.2 billion.

If they are to address the phenomenon of poverty and slums⁶, public authorities should formulate and implement urban planning and development plans that are conducive to investment and job creation. Housing and infrastructures are among the main challenges to be met, as part of urban strategies specifically designed to cater to the needs of populations.

One the major undertakings in terms of urban economy in Morocco is the « *Cities without Slums* » program launched in 2004, involving 390.000 households in 85 cities, the majority of which are located along the coastline between Casablanca and Kénitra.

The overall estimated cost of this program is USD 3.5 billion, 1 billion of which through subsidies from the State (30%), the remaining 70% being distributed among equalization operations (54%) and contributions by households (16%).

In December 2015, 55 cities and urban centers were declared void of slums out of the 85 cities involved. More than 1.300.000 inhabitants benefited from improved housing conditions, which represents an achievement rate of 80% of households, for completed or ongoing operations⁷.

The City: an opportunity for Africa

The city, a theme at the heart of the international urban agenda, boasts several assets for the 21st century space:

- The city is the place where citizens exercise rights and fulfill obligations;
- The city is conducive to income growth through access to different forms of employment, and better living conditions;
- The city, when planned and compact, enables access to basic services for all and favors the conservation of farming and natural spaces, which in turn leads to balanced regional development.
- The city is a factor of emancipation, especially for women and youth.
- The city is the space for citizenship.

⁶ 60% of Sub Saharan city dwellers live in slums, 90% of them in RCA, the Sudan and Chad.

⁷ For data on Morocco, refer to *National Report, Kingdom of Morocco – Third UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development – Habitat III, Rabat, 2015, 55 pages.*