



Urban Sustainability at the Core of Human Development

A Stocktaking Discussion about Ongoing Post-2015 Processes

20th January 2015, 13:15 - 14:30 | Conference Room 5, Conf. Building, UNHQ, New York

Organized by:



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Background

Sustainable cities and regions matter now more than ever. They hold the key to the equitable and sustainable future of our societies, our economy and planetary health. Through a series of bold and visionary actions, we can collectively grasp that future and make it real, for all people everywhere.

Today, more than half the world's 7.3 billion people and around three quarters of its economic output (over \$50 trillion) are in urban centres of all sizes. These concentrate most new investments and most new jobs and so also most opportunity. Between now and 2030, almost all the growth in the world's population (over one billion people) is expected to be in urban areas – mostly in Asia and Africa – and humanity expected to be nearly 70 per cent urban by 2050.¹ Yet, close to 70 percent of greenhouse gases emissions come from urban consumers. 1 billion people live in slums or informal settlements with high levels of overcrowding, mostly no piped water connection and poor access to sanitation, drainage, waste collection, clean energy, education and healthcare.

As indicated in the Issues Brief on the topic of Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements that the UN Technical Support Team produced for the 7th Session of the SDGs Open Working Group (held in January 2014), '60 per cent of the area expected to be urban by 2030 remains to be built, indicating that the shape of future cities must be guided proactively.² If current trends hold, cities in the developing world with at least 100,000 people will expand up to three times their present size. Policymakers need to adopt a wider view of cities' use of space and resource footprints and to connect local development with global impact to achieve long-term urban sustainability.³ (...) Rapidly growing cities will have to be even more innovative than those in the past in terms of how they take advantage of the efficiencies and innovation from agglomeration within an increasingly resource-confined environment. Slowly growing cities in the developed world also have their part to play in reducing per capita resource use and emissions, in many cases by retrofitting existing, obsolete infrastructure and promoting more sustainable patterns of consumption and production.'

¹ UN/POP/EGM-URB/2008/01 An overview of urbanization, internal migration, population distribution and development and More recently, 66% according to United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the "World Urbanization Prospects, 2014 Revision.

² Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2012): Cities and Biodiversity Outlook, SCBD, Montreal.

³ UNFPA (2007): State of the World's Population: Unleashing the Potential of Urban Growth. UNFPA, New York.

The Report of the Secretary-General's High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda stated that 'cities are where the battle for sustainable development will be won or lost.' It also highlighted that 'cities are the world's engines for business and innovation. With good management they can provide jobs, hope and growth, while building sustainability.' Urbanization is also linked to poverty reduction.⁴

The urban future, which will be so characteristic of the 21st Century, holds unprecedented transformative potential for humanity in terms of greater equality, social cohesion, economic growth and improved environmental outcomes. All these are central aspects to several ongoing post 2015 UN processes – from the sustainable human development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), that will be adopted in September and now includes proposed SDG11 for 'Making Cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable'; to the 'New Urban Agenda', which is the focus of the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development Habitat III in 2016. Equally important is the synergy and interrelation with the discussions on the Data Revolution; the refreshed Hyogo Framework for Action for Disaster Risk Reduction to be agreed in March; the new Financing for Development agreements expected in July, and the much-awaited new global climate action framework for adoption in December.

As the international community embarks in a new negotiation phase towards these policy-making milestones, this event will be organized by ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability in collaboration with UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments in Post 2015 Development Agenda Towards HABITATIII, The Group of Friends for Sustainable Cities, and the World Urban Campaign, facilitated by Communitas Coalition for Sustainable Cities and Regions in the New UN Development Agenda, with the generous support of the Ford Foundation.

Our panel of urbanisation practitioners, associations of local & regional governments and UN Member States will take stock on what are these ongoing post 2015 processes doing to empower sustainable urbanisation outline. This discussion session will also be the opportunity to outline key aspects that require further political discussions and technical support in the coming months if we are serious about reinvigorating the global commitment to sustainable urbanization and territorial development as a driver for sustainable human development.

⁴ World Bank/International Monetary Fund (2013): Global Monitoring Report, World Bank, Washington DC.

Programme

1:15pm **Welcome & Introduction**

Welcome: **Mr. Yunus Arikan**, *Head of Global Policy & Advocacy and Manager of Cities Climate Center, ICLEI- Local Governments for Sustainability; Organizing Partner of Local Authorities Major Group; Member of the Global Task Force of Local & Regional Governments and the Communitas Coalition*

Moderator: **Ms. Maruxa Cardama**, *Executive Coordinator & Co-Founder, Communitas Coalition for Sustainable Cities & Regions in the New UN Development Agenda*

1:25pm **Panel Discussion**

Dr. Eugenie L. Birch, *Chair of the World Urban Campaign & Chair of the Graduate Group in City & Regional Planning, University of Pennsylvania*

Mr. Andrew Rudd, *Urban Environment Officer, Urban Planning and Design Branch, UN-Habitat*

Mr. Yunus Arikan, *Head of Global Policy & Advocacy and Manager of Cities Climate Center, ICLEI- Local Governments for Sustainability; Organizing Partner of Local Authorities Major Group; Member of the Global Task Force of Local & Regional Governments and the Communitas Coalition*

Dr. Cynthia E. Rosenzweig, *Co-Chair, Cities Working Group, UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network; Senior Research Scientist, NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies*

Mr. Borg Tsien Tham, *Co-Chair, Group of Friends for Sustainable Cities and Counsellor, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Singapore to the United Nations (Response as Lead Discussant)*

2:15pm **Q&A Session**