



From MDG to SDG: Towards a New Paradigm at Habitat III *Sustainable Cities & Human Settlements in the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda*

A side event at the 1st PrepCom for Habitat III | 18th September 2014, 8:30-9:30am

Organized by:



BACKGROUND

Over half of the world's population now lives in cities, a share likely to reach 70 percent in 2050. Ninety percent of the growth in urbanization comes from developing countries as a result of rapid economic growth and increasing migration from rural to urban areas. This unprecedented pace of urbanization is a major shift since the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted, and this is placing heavy demands on urban services for transport, energy, water and sanitation, housing, and solid waste management. It is also creating severe challenges of inadequate and unequal access to these services across urban populations, particularly the urban poor. Addressing the themes of sustainable cities & human settlements and rural development in a complementary and mutually reinforcing manner will be essential in the elaboration of a transformative SDG framework of universal value.

Therefore, considering the need to change course to accelerate progress, what are the channels by which a Sustainable Development Goal on Cities & Human Settlements can provide for more sustained, long term approaches and interventions within the framework of the Post 2015 Development Agenda?

Moving from sectoral interventions to city-wide approaches. The MDG Target 7 (d) has shown the benefit of focusing on slums, but additional slum dwellers indicate the need to more systematically address the sheer scale and pace of urbanization. There is a need for advocacy and awareness targeting policy and decision makers to move from sectoral approaches that focus on symptoms to approaches that tackle root causes of slum deficiencies and water and sanitation service shortages in cities and other human settlements.

Adopting sustained, longer term approaches and solutions for the majority. Sustainable cities must plan and implement a variety of technical solutions to improve functionality and to achieve sustainable urban forms that connect jobs, people and their neighbourhoods and create economies of scale for infrastructure and service delivery, and thereby prevent the formation of slums. Although solutions can vary according to local conditions, the New Urban Agenda has identified a number of key interventions in various areas to assist the transition away from the current urbanization model that is unsustainable on many accounts. Within the framework of a reinvigorated notion of urban planning and legislation different types of interventions can be envisaged that promote more compact forms in cities with increase in population density, encourage social diversity and mixed land-use and plan infill developments and guided expansions.

Use the transformative power of urbanization. The fact that today the majority of the world's population is living in urban spaces is significant beyond its quantitative dimension. It brings to the fore the galvanizing power of density, proximity as well as the economies of urbanization and agglomeration – all of which constitute the basis of the transformative power of urbanization. Cities are also the world's engines for business and innovation. They are vibrant instruments for economic, social and human development. They attract investment and create wealth. They enhance social development and harness human and technological resources, resulting in unprecedented gains in productivity and competitiveness. Indeed, urban areas have become the repositories of knowledge and agents of social, political and economic change. When harnessed and optimized, urban economic drivers will provide a strong economic and fiscal basis to expand and sustain public goods, services and amenities for all.

The catalytic effect of urbanization in rural areas. Urbanization is a process of social and economic transformation affecting all sizes of human settlements, from rural villages, through rural service centres

and small and medium-size towns, to large metropolitan areas and megacities. The growth of urban centres is closely linked to rural areas, in social, economic and environmental terms. For example, urban centres are real rural poverty fighters. Their growth and prosperity leads to greater demand for agricultural inputs into urban-based industries and value chains. Rural to urban migration affects both rural and urban areas, including through the resulting remittances. Also, the impacts of some of the most pressing global challenges such as climate change – to which cities make a significant contribution – do not discriminate between urban and rural areas. Likewise, the sustainable use of land, energy and water resources are of mutual concern to both rural and urban residents, as they need to share these resources.

Well-planned urbanization, a key component of sustainable urban development. The inability of many developing countries to address sustainable development challenges stems largely from the absence of national urban policies and adequate urban planning systems. Robust urban policy and implementation frameworks are needed to address these challenges – they cannot be successfully addressed in a sectoral way. Well-planned urbanization requires a clear legal framework with laws, norms and regulations that expand and preserve common goods. It also requires quality planning and design for all, with a business model that ensures long-term financing, and a spatial approach that drives economic efficiency and equity. This provides a firm foundation for social, economic and environmental well-being and the prosperity of cities. Well-planned urbanization is a sound strategy to support the implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, including the Sustainable Development Goals, using human settlements and urbanization as a vehicle for change. A different approach to slums, water and sanitation is critical to ensure sustainable urban development, which is vital for sustainable development to take place.

AGENDA (TBC)

8:30 Welcome & Opening Remarks

Mr. Raf Tuts, Coordinator, Urban Planning & Design Branch, UN Habitat

Ms. Maruxa Cardama, Executive Project Coordinator, Communitas Coalition

8:40 Looking Ahead: The Impact of a Sustainable Development Goal on Cities & Human Settlements

Dr. Cynthia Rosenzweig, co-Chair, Sustainable Cities Initiative, UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network

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

Mr. Michael Replogle, SLoCaT Partnership on Sustainable Low Carbon Transport

Ms. Rose Molokoane, National Chairperson, South African Homeless People's Federation and Board Member, Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI)

9:10 Q&A / Discussion from the Floor

9:25 Wrap-up / Conclusions