

Background Note on Efficient, Inclusive and Sustainable Urbanization

The world is faced with challenges in all three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These challenges threaten global prosperity and security, not only for this generation, but also for the future generations.

We would need to galvanize global transformative actions to deal with these challenges, and these actions must be integrated across the three pillars of sustainable development.

In this regards, the United Nations is leading a global process to define a sustainable development agenda for period beyond 2015.

Among these challenges, how to manage an efficient, inclusive and sustainable urbanization exemplifies the imperative of an integrated approach to sustainable development.

Today, more than half of the world's population lives in cities, and this ratio will continue to rise in the future.

Urbanization has in the past served as an important engine for development. No countries could have developed without undergoing a successful urbanization process.

Urbanization provides jobs and opportunities for millions of people, and has contributed to poverty eradication worldwide.

However, at the same time, rapid urbanization adds pressure to natural resources, and increase demand for energy, water, and sanitation, as well as public services, education and health care.

In many cities of developing countries, institutional capacities are in significant shortage for providing access to sound infrastructure and decent jobs, unable to reduce vulnerability to pollution and disasters.

Climate change has also increased cities' risks, in both developed and developing countries, and puts further stress on the adaptive capacities of the people, particularly the poor people.

To move toward efficient, inclusive, and sustainable urbanization, we would need investment in such areas as renewable energy, efficiency in the use of water and electricity, efficient public transportation, and waste and recycling systems.

More importantly, we would need an integrated and coordinated response at the local, national and international levels.