

UN-HABITAT

INPUT TO POST-2015 UN DEVELOPMENT AGENDA : WORKING GROUP B

Introduction

The objective of this note is to provide a focused input to Working Group B of the UN Task Team on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The ideas presented below were initially conceived in the context of UN-Habitat's contribution to Rio + 20.

Sustainable urban development can be defined as the spatial manifestation of urban development processes that creates a built environment with norms, institutions and governance systems enabling individuals, households and societies to maximize their potential, optimize a vast range of services so that homes and dynamic neighborhoods, cities and towns are planned, built, renewed and consolidated restraining adverse impacts on the environment while safeguarding the quality of life, needs and livelihood of its present and future populations.

Sustainable Urban Development in the International Development Agenda

The outcomes of the main summits on sustainable development related to cities include: Agenda 21 (1992) including chapters 6, 7, 21 and 28; the Istanbul Declaration (1996) and Habitat Agenda; Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (2000), including Goal 7, Targets 7C and 7D; the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) (2002); the annual UN GA resolutions with the title "Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme", the MDG Summit outcome document (2010); and the Nagoya Plan of Action on Cities and Biodiversity (2010).

With regard to gaps in implementation, the following brief assessment can be made:

- Agenda 21, chapter 7, adequate capacities by 2000: not achieved. In many places, capacities remain inadequate to address the issues.
- Agenda 21, chapter 7, universal provision of environmental infrastructure by 2025: to be reached, this goal would need efforts beyond the end date of related MDGs. For example, universal sanitation coverage will not be achieved in 2015.
- Agenda 21, chapter 6: a subset of the indicators recommended in Agenda 21 have been included in the MDGs (child and maternal death, tuberculosis), but they are not systematically monitored for urban areas specifically. Others are not monitored or centralized systematically (e.g. violence and crime).
- Agenda 21, solid waste: targets for capacity: unknown, but probably unmet. None of the targets for waste treatment are well on track. The monitoring systems for waste are weak (data on solid waste is fragmentary or does not exist in many countries).
- Agenda 21, chapter 28. According to surveys carried out by ICLEI, several thousands of Local Authorities have adopted and implemented local sustainability action plans.
- MDG7C: access to drinking water is well on track. Access to sanitation is not on track.
- MDG7D: likely achieved, but the goal was very vague and clearly not consistent with the needs (many more than 100 million people have joined slums since 2000), nor adequately formulated (static formulation versus dynamic growth of cities). There are more slum dwellers today than in 2000.

The **Habitat III Conference** scheduled in 2016 will mark a critical moment and provide a concrete opportunity to strengthen cooperation mechanisms, partnership arrangements and other implementation tools which will help implement the sustainable urbanization agenda.

Addressing New and Emerging Challenges

The demographic and economic shifts of the last two decades have transformed cities and urban centres into the dominant habitats of humankind. As a result, the mode of urban development has a critical bearing on the processes leading to the attainment of sustainable development. It is therefore more critical than ever that Member States and UN Agencies come together to promote sustainable urbanization. The cities of the world's emerging economies are becoming the drivers of the global economy at the same time as the planet's resources are fast depleting. We must urgently find a way to achieve further economically and socially equitable growth without further cost to the environment. Cities, their spatial frameworks and infrastructural and governance systems constitute a key lever for delivering this transition.

When managed poorly, urbanization can be detrimental to sustainable development. However, when managed properly, it can contribute positively to sustainable development, for example through the reduction in per capita greenhouse gas emissions compared to rural areas. Urbanization is also one of the few solutions for effectively dealing with the huge increase in world population.

In this regard, seven points regarding good management of urbanization and its relationship to sustainable development are worth considering: 1) countries should elaborate a national urban (not just housing) strategy, as many cities do not have enough capacity to do it themselves; 2) cities should develop city-region plans, because the urbanization patterns in regions surrounding many cities are often chaotic - when there is no clear separation between cities and the surrounding regions, an uncontrolled "no-man's land" develops; 3) planned city enlargement, or expansion, is necessary as a long-term strategy for preventing the growth of slums, which are home to 30-40 per cent of the world population; 4) urban job creation is critical to economic and social development; 5) effective urban legal frameworks are critical to guaranteeing institutional capacity for the delivery of housing and basic services; 6) urban energy and urban mobility plans are important for sustainable development and for meeting the requirements for urban growth; and 7) it is important to improve the economic governance of local authorities in order to increase the financial capacity of cities to provide basic services and sustain infrastructure.

In this way, sustainable urbanization can provide one of the key unifying forces to integrate the three pillars - i.e. economic, environmental and social - of sustainable development. Efforts to create jobs, reduce ecological footprint and improve quality of life are most effective when pursued in tandem. Prioritizing sustainable urbanization can also help to ensure coherence between sectoral policies such as energy, water, sustainable consumption and production, biodiversity, natural disaster preparedness and climate change adaptation. It is important that this emerging opportunity be recognized and endorsed at Rio+20.

Contribution of Cities to a Green Economy and Poverty Eradication

It is acknowledged that cities are centres of national economic and social development. They attract investments, generate jobs and create wealth. They harness human and technological resources, promote innovations and offer specialised services, which have resulted in otherwise unprecedented gains in productivity and competitiveness. Cities are therefore a major nexus in the promotion of a green economy whose central tenet is that environmental sustainability and economic growth can develop harmoniously. The two are not inherently mutually-exclusive. This can be accomplished by decoupling the rate of economic growth from the rate of energy and material use and environmental degradation. Because the world can no longer depend on cheap fuel for growth, and economic growth will almost certainly be driven by cities, sustainable urban development must incorporate these emerging dynamics.

Cities are crucial to the transition to a green economy for four complementary reasons. (1) Virtually all major innovation originates in cities whose density of institutions, people and infrastructure promotes idea sharing and experimentation. (2) When sensitively planned and serviced, urban density reduces the spatial footprint of development and permits shared infrastructure (which reduces emissions and resource use). (3) The agglomeration economies of cities means new technologies can be tested and implemented

more competitively. And (4) cities have the potential to strengthen resilience by reducing dependence on carbon intensive growth by reintegrating systems at lower costs, and stimulating efficiency in resource use and expanding skills. Whereas cities in the developed world may need to retrofit old systems, those in the developing world may leapfrog this and more cheaply increase both resource efficiency and labour intensity.

Improved technology and competitiveness are prerequisites for innovation for “greener” cities. Education is an important lever to foster understanding of “greener” urbanization. The active involvement of youth as agents of change is paramount.

Mutli-level Governance: A Sustainable Urban Development Perspective

At the global and national levels it has been difficult to achieve coherence between the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development. However, urban challenges can only be addressed in an integrated manner, balancing social equity, resource efficiency and competitiveness. Therefore, sound planning and management at the city level offers concrete opportunities to connect the economic, social and environmental pillars at the local level.

At the **local level**: The sustainable development implementation gap can only be closed if the capacity of Local Authorities as a Major Group is strengthened. Indeed, sustainable urban development will not occur spontaneously. It must first define how resources are to be managed, allocated and re-distributed to ensure efficiency and equity, with the strong participation of inhabitants in the governance of the city. It requires more effective and adaptable institutions in the public and private sectors and civil society that are able to promote sustainable development, and reduce poverty and inequality. It also requires innovative urban planning and greater entrepreneurship and clear cooperation of all the spheres of government.

At the **sub-national level**: There are particular challenges at the level of the city-region, a geographical unit that has enormous potential to promote sustainable development principles but is often characterized by overlapping and fragmented governance structures. At this level it is important to develop spatial strategies that promote an infrastructure configuration that maximizes sharing and minimizes excessive mobility and resource use.

At the **national level**: There is a need to integrate sustainable urban development policy as a key component of a national sustainable development policy. In this regard, it is important to align sustainable development policies of the different tiers of government to achieve greater coherence and more efficiency in implementation. It is also important to enhance the coherence of international support to national sustainable urban development plans as part of an overall national sustainable development planning. The establishment of National Habitat Committees can enhance better coordination between line Ministries and agencies, while National Urban Forums could serve as a space for knowledge sharing amongst public, private and community stakeholders and for alignment of international support to sustainable urban development at the country level. National governments also have a role in encouraging cities to act on urban sustainability by benchmarking and monitoring against sustainable urban development baselines.

Sustainable Urban Development at the National Level

In pursuit of the goal of promoting socially, environmentally and economically sustainable urban development, support should be given to member states to develop effective urban development policies, plans and strategies, including the following:

National Urban Policies; National and Regional Spatial Plans for Territorial Development; City-region Development Strategies; City Enlargement and Infill Plans; City Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies; Development of Urban Land Administration; Arbitration of Land Disputes; Population Displacement Response Plans; Urban Management and Governance Reform; Metropolitan

Governance Strategies; Urban Youth and Job Creation Strategies; Strategies for Improving Water and Sanitation Delivery; Waste Management Strategies; Urban Mobility Plans; Urban Energy Plans; Urban Housing Strategies; Design of Slum Upgrading Programmes; Urban Risk Reduction Strategies; Capacity Building Strategies for Urban Local Authorities.

Possible New Commitments in the Area of Sustainable Urban Development

Overall Goal: *Promote cities that are environmentally sustainable, socially inclusive and economically productive*

Proposed Targets:

1. National Urban Policies

By 2030, increase to 50% the number of countries adopting and implementing national urban policies to coordinate different ministerial and sectoral efforts in order to achieve sustainable urban development.

2. Urban Planning and Design

By 2030, increase by half the number of metropolitan regions, cities and towns adopting and implementing policies and strategies for sustainable and effective urban planning (1:50,000) and urban design (1:1,000) in order to respond to expected urban population growth in the next few decades.

3. Slums

Halve the proportion of people living in slums at the city level by 2030, and prevent the formation of new slums.

4. Urban Space

Increase public space up to 40% through adequate urban design, land use and building regulations by 2030.

5. Urban Ecology

Reduce cities' ecological footprints by reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 30%, increasing the share of renewable energy sources by 30% and improving energy efficiency in all public buildings by 20% by 2030.

6. Urban Water, Sanitation and Waste Management

Achieve universal access to safe drinking water supply and adequate sanitation services, and double the availability and use of waste water treatment and solid waste management services by 2030.

7. Urban Energy and Mobility

By 2030, increase by 30% the number of countries coordinating urban growth with planned national energy and transport corridors and guaranteeing access to energy at the urban level, and the number of cities with sustainable urban mobility plans.

8. Urban Job Creation

By 2030, increase by 50% the number of cities adopting and implementing specific policies to improve the lives of urban dwellers through urban job creation based on effective city management and development of basic services.