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Speaking points

“Sustainable cities, human mobility and international migration”

by

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at the

Commission on Population and Development

New York, 12 April 2018

UN Headquarters

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to speak on behalf of UNECE today.

Currently, 54% of the world's population lives in cities. This ratio is expected to rise to 66% in 2050 and has already reached 82% in North America and 73% in Europe, both in the UNECE region. Today cities are vulnerable to economic, social and environmental risks. They are struggling to address **demographic changes, including ageing, migration, inequalities and security, and challenges arising from uncontrolled urbanization**. Extensive, uncontrolled urbanization hampers sustainable development and climate change mitigation. There is a need for stronger urban governance.

Sustainable urban development is also about social inclusion. Urbanization affects gender equality, adequate and affordable housing, and public health and well-being, particularly for vulnerable groups. This enormous challenge requires a coordinated approach.

At the same time, we live in an inter-connected, globalized world. The digital revolution can help us create intelligent transport and smart energy systems, resource efficiency, and transparent and open societies. However, for this we need common urban standards that work across borders and different systems.

UNECE has a long history of working on smart and sustainable urban development, affordable housing and energy efficiency of buildings and infrastructure. All of these are key components of smart and sustainable cities.

Our Committee on Housing and Land Management and the Working Party on Land Administration are **intergovernmental platforms for policy dialogue. They compile, disseminate and exchange information and experiences on housing, urban development and land administration policies**. The work focuses on standards in the areas of smart sustainable cities, energy, environment and transport and promoting national frameworks for innovation in the member States, which are indispensable for the development of cities. Further, we work

with the private sector, academia and local authorities through our Real Estate Markets Advisory Board.

I would like to mention a key non-legally binding document endorsed by UNECE member States in 2015: **the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing**. The Charter is based on the **principles of environmental protection, economic effectiveness, social inclusion, participation, and cultural adequacy**. It illustrates the region's commitment to access to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services for all, with attention to young people and vulnerable groups, and thereby provides a framework to build smarter and more sustainable cities.

UNECE is engaged in the implementation programme **United Smart Cities**, and the global initiative **United for Smart Sustainable Cities (U4SSC)**. Along with 16 UN agencies and other relevant stakeholders, U4SSC advocates for public policy to encourage the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to facilitate and ease the transition to smart sustainable cities. It aims at generating basic guidelines for the integration of ICTs in urban operations.

The partners of U4SSC elaborated **the indicators for Smart Sustainable Cities, which are a free international standard**. As these indicators fully reflect the SDGs, they help cities to evaluate their performance towards the SDG targets.

These indicators also consider the influx of populations to urban centers, which has dramatically **increased due to international migration**. They provide for research and tools to help new migrants access affordable housing. In-depth research and studies further extend our understanding of urban processes and phenomena.

We are committed to developing the capacities of local authorities in the entire region to implement the SDGs using the indicators to unlock implementation models and financing mechanisms for cities, especially for those with low- and medium-incomes.

The **“Housing for Migrants” study by the UNECE** illustrates practical mechanisms implemented by member States through multiple-stakeholder partnership , such as innovative online platforms to provide housing for new migrants. The study will become available in mid-2018.

UNECE also hosts the **Regional Forum for Sustainable Development** to follow-up and review global commitments, including the **2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda**. This platform can help adapt global frameworks to regional and national contexts.

When people feel the city is their own, they are more likely to get involved. In turn, cities become a better place to live. UNECE is committed to making this a reality. **So let’s work together and leave no one behind.**

Thank you.