

Summary

Second Meeting of the President of the General Assembly's Advisory Committee on Sustainable Urbanization

Wednesday 9 March 2022, Conference Room 10, United Nations Headquarters

The President of the General Assembly (PGA) H.E. Abdulla Shahid convened the second meeting with the Advisory Committee on Sustainable Urbanisation on 9 March 2022, at Conference Room 10, United Nations Headquarters.

The purpose of the Advisory Committee is to seek advise and receive inputs on the preparations for the High-Level Meeting to assess progress on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda mandated by the General Assembly resolution 75/224; and identify key messages for advocacy in the build up to the High-Level Meeting and other strategic engagements related to urbanization during the 76th session of the General Assembly.

In this context, the second meeting of the Advisory Committee discussed the key messages to be delivered through the High-Level Meeting and solicited feedback from the members on the preparations for the meeting. The meeting heard from the Executive Director of UN-HABITAT on the key findings of the Secretary General's Quadrennial Report on the progress on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (2019-2022), the President of the Economic and Social Council on the preparations for the ECOSOC Special Event on Urbanisation, and the Executive Director of United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (on behalf of the regional commissions), on the preparations being undertaken by the UN Regional Commissions.

Representatives from the delegations of Egypt and Mexico were also invited to address the meeting, in their capacities as the host of the 27th session of the Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC (COP27) and the President of the [UN-Habitat Assembly](#)¹ respectively.

Some of the key takeaways from the second meeting include:

Build-up and Preparations for the HLM

- Raising awareness about the New Urban Agenda is important. In this regard, briefings hosted by UNECE, UN-Habitat & the Geneva Cities Hub for Geneva-based delegations and UN offices were noted with appreciation.
- Leveraging digital connectivity for better coordination between UN offices in New York, Geneva, and Nairobi and stakeholders can help make 2022 a landmark year for the New Urban Agenda.
- Youth engagement; smart cities; digital divides; enhancing digital literacy for better urban planning, financing, city management and service provision; climate resilience, adaptation and mitigation, particularly for infrastructure; gender-informed policy; and more multi-level

¹ <https://unhabitat.org/governance/un-habitat-assembly>

stakeholder partnerships are important elements to be considered for discussion at the High-Level Meeting.

- Upscaling engagement and implementation of the New Urban Agenda will require simplifying its contents, increasing delegations' knowledge of its workings, identifying the key actions with positive ripple effects across the agenda which must be prioritized, and building foundations for more multi-stakeholder partnerships and coalitions centered on overcoming technical, financing and capacity gaps that Member States can partner with.
- Results-oriented discussions at the High-Level meeting will be captured through a Summary of the PGA, with the aim of helping the international community chart the way forward.

*The Secretary General's report on progress on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda*²

- Governments and all local and non-State actors should harness the pandemic's lessons and trends to reorient and accelerate the New Urban Agenda's implementation, including through increased space reclamation, greening and inclusive use of public space, and tele-working to reduce commuting. Long standing issues, like air pollution, continue to be major health risks to cities and exacerbate COVID-19's impacts.
- Public transportation and sustainable infrastructure are central to climate action in cities by tackling emissions and air pollution concerns simultaneously.
- Progress on lifting urban populations out of slum conditions in developing countries has slowed down. In developed countries, housing has become unaffordable for many. **It is estimated that the global housing deficit will be 440 million homes by 2025.** Violations of land and housing rights have persisted globally throughout the pandemic, despite calls to halt displacements. Many national governments are providing financial tools to upgrade homes, but they are not reaching everyone and risk leaving many behind.
- Urban displacement is an increasingly common feature of disaster and conflict, with growing numbers of refugees, migrants and internally displaced people living in cities. **During 2020 more than 82 million people were displaced due to persecution, conflict, violence and climate change.** Member States were urged to amplify implementation of the New Urban Agenda in countries in post-conflict and post-disaster situations, such as through the Global Compact on Refugees.
- Cities raised expenditures dramatically for emergency social security measures yet had lower tax revenues due to economic decline. Local revenue capacity continues to be strained, especially in small and intermediary cities. National legal frameworks restrict the capacity of subnational governments in their efforts to borrow money, issue municipal bonds, and raise endogenous revenue. **Effective urban financing depends on more nuanced approaches to fiscal decentralization that has not adequately progressed.**

² The report has been issued as Document A/76/639 and E/2020/10

Localizing the New Urban Agenda

- A summary of deliberations on the New Urban Agenda during the Regional Sustainable Development Forums will be issued prior to the High-Level meeting. This summary will serve as a tool for accelerated implementation, and to build and expand partnerships and coalitions on sustainable urban development that Member States and stakeholders can partner with.
- It could be important to develop regional targets and tools to avoid “one size fits all” approaches. In this regard, the [Second Forum of Mayors](#)³ which will be held on 4-5 April 2022, was noted.
- Some regions are also working on declarations that bring together all stakeholders. In this regard, UNECE is currently working on a Declaration to be adopted by Member States at UNECE’s Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management, containing *Principles for sustainable urban design and architecture in support of sustainable, safe, healthy, socially inclusive, climate neutral and circular homes, urban infrastructure, and cities*. The declaration will be signed onto by urbanization professionals all over the world, as an equivalent to the ‘Hippocratic oath’ committing architects, engineers and other practitioners building cities to a common code that inspires and guides their actions.

Enhancing linkages between the NUA and various themes and processes in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

- Adaptation, mitigation and resilience should be incorporated within urban planning to accelerate climate action. The 6th IPCC report notes that interactions between changing urban form, exposure and vulnerability can create climate change-induced risks and losses for cities and settlement, and that global urbanization can offer an opportunity to advance climate resilient development.
- In this context, strategic urban planning, utilizing digital technologies and intelligent retrofitting, could greatly support climate action while addressing pollution on land and at sea.
- Synergies and coordination between various processes and meetings related to urbanization is important. For example, the UN HABITAT Assembly could carry forward the recommendations from the High-Level meeting. [The 7th Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction](#)⁴, to be convened in Bali from 23-28 May 2022, was also highlighted as an important opportunity to take forward the HLM’s key messages and recommendations.

Stakeholder Engagement and Partnerships

- ‘Sister City’ relationships were noted as important means of city-to-city cooperation.

³ <https://forumofmayors.unece.org/>

⁴ <https://www.undrr.org/event/seventh-session-global-platform-disaster-risk-reduction-gp2022#:~:text=The%20seventh%20session%20of%20the,Government%20of%20Indonesia%20and%20UNDRR.>

- Interest was expressed in convening [the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments](#) on 27 April 2022, one day before the High-Level meeting, to leverage its momentum.
- The private sector is keen to engage with the High-Level meeting and could share examples of public-private partnerships that have delivered meaningful progress in areas such as sanitation, affordable housing and connectivity. [The International Chamber of Commerce will be launching a paper on effective connectivity partnerships to end the digital divide.](#)⁵
- Stakeholders' presence in New York for the High-Level meeting and related side events should be strategically leveraged to allow for the announcement of commitments, and to lay foundations for more partnerships.
- [The 11th World Urban Forum](#)⁶ in Poland from 26-30 June 2022 was highlighted as a multi-stakeholder moment to take forward the HLM's findings.

The meeting was attended by the following members of the Advisory Committee:

- H.E. Mr. Cristian Espinosa, Permanent Representative of Ecuador
- H.E. Mr. Arrmanatha Nasir, Permanent Representative of Indonesia
- H.E. Mr. Brian Wallace, Permanent Representative of Jamaica
- H.E. Ms. Amal Mudallali, Permanent Representative of Lebanon
- H.E. Mr. Michal Mlynár, Permanent Representative of Slovakia
- H.E. Ms. Mathu Joyini, Permanent Representative of South Africa
- Mr. Ishmail T. Dabutha, Deputy Permanent Representative of Botswana, on behalf of the President of the Economic and Social Council
- Ms. Njambi Kinyungu, Deputy Permanent Representative of Kenya
- Mr. Geoff Black, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Canada
- Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director of UN-Habitat.
- Ms Olga Algayerova, Under Secretary General and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Europe, on behalf of the Regional Commissions.
- Dr. Mona Rady, Chair of the Habitat Professionals Forum.
- Mr. Berry Vrbanovic, Mayor of Kitchener, representing the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments
- Ms. Rohey Malick Lowe, Mayor of Banjul, representing the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments
- Ms. Violet Shivutse, Chair of the Huairu Commission.
- Ms. Maria Fernanda Garza, First Vice Chair, International Chamber of Commerce.

Guests

1. Dr. Obaida Abdullah Eldandarawy, Deputy Permanent Representative of Egypt
2. Mr. Jorge Arturo Ríos Badillo, Third Secretary, Permanent Mission of Mexico

⁵ In fulfillment of a commitment announced during the 75th Session of the General Assembly: <https://iccwbo.org/media-wall/news-speeches/icc-joins-global-commitment-calling-for-a-people-centered-approach-to-achieve-meaningful-connectivity/>

⁶ <https://wuf.unhabitat.org/>