

Summary

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

Wednesday 18 May 2022, Conference Room 10, United Nations Headquarters

The President of the General Assembly (PGA) H.E. Abdulla Shahid convened the third and final meeting of his Advisory Committee on Sustainable Urbanisation on 18 May 2022, at Conference Room 10, United Nations Headquarters.

The purpose of the Advisory Committee is to provide strategic guidance 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 third meeting of the Advisory Committee explored:

1. Concrete steps for the Advisory Committee members, collectively and individually, to take forward the momentum generated, and the actions identified at the General Assembly meeting, at future intergovernmental meetings, processes, and global platforms.
2. How to leverage and support the Urban Agenda Platform, and the newly established Group of Friends, to inspire more action and wider mobilizations for the New Urban Agenda.
3. How to improve coordination and synergies among New York-Nairobi-Geneva Member State delegations and UN Offices.

Some of the key takeaways from the meeting include:

The 28 April High-Level Meeting and its Impact

- The members of the Committee expressed their gratitude and congratulations to Presidents of the General Assembly and ECOSOC, and the Executive Director of UN-Habitat on the success of the 28 April High-Level Meeting on the New Urban Agenda, applauding the strong coordination between them which resulted in a greater political momentum. High level, in-person participation by Member States and high levels of inscriptions for the event illustrated that **urban agenda issues and particularly SDG-11 truly matter to Member States**.
- The convening of an **event on 21 April 2022 by ECOSOC to discuss urbanization issues** a week before the High-Level Meeting was timely as it **demonstrated a positive message** that two major organs of the United Nations (GA and ECOSOC) are working in cohesion, in their collective efforts to mobilize actions towards the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Similar cohesive and harmonized efforts were suggested for other processes, where both organs have a role.

- Attendees stressed the important role the PGA’s Advisory Committee played in preparing for the High-Level Meeting, and its inclusive approach. **The members also urged the importance to continue this momentum after the High-Level Meeting and take forward the outcomes of the High-Level Meeting in the lead up to the World Urban forum and beyond.**
- **The engagement of World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments in the High-Level Meeting was applauded by members**, as mayors and governors from across the world were able to share recommendations from their perspective to the deliberations of the High-Level Meeting.
- The Advisory Committee **referenced some commitments made** during the 28 April High-Level Meeting, including:
 - The announcement by the **Deputy Secretary-General** that UN resident coordinators and country teams will lead a dedicated effort to integrate urbanisation more systematically into common country analyses and development cooperation frameworks, and that the Local2030 Coalition led by UN-Habitat and UNDP will mobilize and bring together the actions of local and national governments, businesses, social entrepreneurs, and networks of neighbourhood organizations.
 - Announcement by **Egypt as COP27 President**, that it will launch an initiative on “sustainable cities” which aims at drawing linkages between climate and urban developments. The Advisory Committee’s members reflected that greater financing for resilient urbanization would be required, as well as towards reshaping national strategies to consider and facilitate urban strategies for mitigation and adaptation much more clearly
 - Announcement by **Germany, the current Group of 7 President**, that for the first time in the group’s history, a G7 ministerial meeting on sustainable urban development will be convened.
 - **Qatar, host of the LDC-V** conference to be convened in March 2023, stressed that conference will work towards addressing LDC’s needs on sustainable urbanization.
- At the High-Level Meeting, the Slovak Republic, Botswana, and Grenada announced the **creation of the Group of Friends of UN Habitat, the New Urban Agenda and Sustainable Urbanization**, with the aim to bring together Member States, and interested stakeholders such as CSOs, youth and women, in regular discussions with UN-Habitat and other relevant UN agencies. This initiative has generated interests from more than 30 Member States.
 - The Advisory Committee noted that encouraging more Member States who are on UN-Habitat’s Executive Board (based in Nairobi) to become members of the Group of Friends would help promote the High-Level Meeting’s outcomes **and increase synergies between New York, Nairobi and Geneva to accelerate action.**

- It was also noted that this might lead to further discussions on issues such as **decentralization and shifts in competencies and legal frameworks** which are happening in many countries in post-conflict but are not currently being reflected in discussions in New York. There are significant advancements happening and lessons learnt that can be reflected and benefitted from.

Taking the High-Level Meeting's Momentum Forward

- The committee's members noted the importance of taking forward the political momentum and calls for greater prioritization and action on sustainable urbanization through the biennial consideration of the Agenda Item entitled "Follow-up to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)" in the **Second Committee**, as well as in **Fifth Committee** budget negotiations and during the **High-level Political Forum**.
- It was vital to link sustainable urbanization to **the SDG Summit** and **the Summit of the Future** given the issue's centrality to the future of humanity
- To encourage more countries to provide **Voluntary National Reports on the implementation of NUA**, it was proposed to explore applying the **'twinning approach'**, i.e. pairing a country that has presented the report with country who is aspiring to make their report. This will give a greater chance for country to formulate their report by learning from the experience of others.

Stakeholder engagement and the New Urban Agenda Platform

- All UN discussions and meetings on sustainable urbanization must be fully leveraged to the extent possible, as **opportunities for strategic advocacy, partnership formation and expansion and capacity building initiatives** to mobilise urgent change on the ground. It is important to not fall into the 'Conference Trap' and think convening international meetings will suffice. Follow through is critical.
- Such efforts must also involve **mobilizing millions of new advocates for the New Urban Agenda**. In this regard, **the Information Note** the President of the General Assembly requested UN-Habitat to prepare on the occasion of the High-Level Meeting will **support in making the New Urban Agenda widely accessible** by helping Member States and stakeholders identify avenues of support, knowledge and resources available, so that actions may be accelerated.¹
- The Advisory Committee's members stressed the importance of scaling up the **New Urban Agenda Platform** for wider outreach, noting the need to also elevate the partnerships with the private sector to assist urbanization projects financially and strategically. UN-Habitat expressed its willingness to assist in making it a platform of processes and database for best practices, which will encourage more countries to submit their national reports. Proposals included:

¹ <https://www.un.org/pga/76/wp-content/uploads/sites/101/2022/04/HLTD-on-NUA-Information-Note-1.pdf>

- Refocusing of the platform to elevate partnerships with the private sector and supporting access to IFIs and MDBs financing scheme for sustainable urbanization projects.
 - Highlighting and supporting South-south Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation with regard to implementation of the New Urban Agenda.
 - Engaging national and regional centres of excellence.
 - Including grass roots organisations as a constituency, and supporting cross-constituency discussions and information sharing, including direct dialogues and townhalls to bring together professionals, grassroots, local and regional governments for specific joint actions. These convenings may be organized in conjunction with regional and global meetings such as the next COP of UNFCCC in Egypt, the CSW in March 2023 and so on.
- The High-Level Meeting’s call for more ‘professional’ engagement and the recognition by Member States of the need for more technical support was highlighted as very important. There is a need to match demand and offer and strengthen technical capacity available to Member States, which is the main goal of the Habitat Professionals Forum Roadmap.² In this regard, stakeholders requested greater clarity on how to navigate the UN context (including on which offices in which countries for what purposes).

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

1. H.E. Mr. Cristian Espinosa, Permanent Representative of Ecuador
2. H.E. Mr. Michal Mlynár, Permanent Representative of Slovakia
3. H.E. Ms. Mathu Joyini, Permanent Representative of South Africa
4. Mr. Edgar Sisa, Mission of Botswana, on behalf of the President of the Economic and Social Council
5. H.E. Mr. Mohammad K. Koba, Deputy Permanent Representative of Indonesia
6. H.E. Ms. Njambi Kinyungu, Deputy Permanent Representative of Kenya
7. Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director of UN-Habitat.
8. Dr. Mona Rady, Chair of the Habitat Professionals Forum.
9. Ms. Violet Shitutse, Chair of the Huairu Commission.
10. Ms. Emilia Saiz, Secretary General of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), representing the Local and Regional Governments constituency

² https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2022/04/final_hp_f_roadmap_220426.pdf