

Draft Background Paper: World Urban Forum

Background:

In its resolution 18/5 of 16 February 2001, the Commission on Human Settlements requested the Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) to, *inter alia*, promote a merger of the Urban Environment Forum and the International Forum on Urban Poverty into a new urban forum, with a view to strengthening the coordination of international support to the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. The World Urban Forum provides a penetrating analysis into urban life throughout the world. Serving as an advisory body to the Executive Director of UN-HABITAT, the World Urban Forum is held biennially in the years in which the Governing Council of UN-HABITAT does not meet. It facilitates the exchange of experience and the advancement of collective knowledge among cities and their development partners (HSP/GC/18/Annex IV).

As an initiative in global civic engagement, the World Urban Forum places strong emphasis on the participation of Habitat Agenda partners and relevant international programmes, funds and agencies, thus ensuring their inclusion in the identification of new issues, the sharing of lessons learnt and the exchange of best practices and good policies. Reports and recommendations from the World Urban Forum are then submitted by the Executive Director to the Governing Council for consideration and appropriate action. The full report of the Second World Urban Forum was made to the Twentieth Session of the Governing Council Session as HSP/GC/20/add 2.

The success of the World Urban Forum can be attributed to the fact that it provides a unique opportunity for dialogue between government leaders, local authorities, non-governmental organizations, grass-root movements, urban professionals, youth and the private sector. As such, it occupies a much coveted niche between the World Social Forum, which does not involve governments, and World Economic Forum, where participation is by invitation only. Through a variety of large and small-scale events, participants have an unparalleled opportunity to discuss and debate with leading thinkers from around the world on the future of our urbanizing world.

WUF III proposed Theme and Sub-Themes:

Following a series of discussions between UN-HABITAT and the Government of Canada, and the Committee of Permanent Representatives, it is strongly felt that issues of urban sustainability are most timely considering the legacy owed to the 1976 Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements. Solutions to water needs, sanitation, housing, transportation, security, adequate income and disaster mitigations that do not pass the tests of sustainability are short term at best, and only serve to compound the plight of future generations. As cities engage in global networks with other cities, the mutual, economic interdependence is reinforced. Dynamic, urban governance that includes all citizens, and societal sectors, become a cutting-edge advantage. Cities' environmental impact does not respect any borders; it is evermore becoming a common, global concern. The evidence from the Millennium Development Project is clear: we must accelerate our tangible efforts in this regard.

WUF III should assert that thoughtful, evidence based, and rigorously evaluated programmes and policies are the measures of success. WUF III should reach out and include those who are illustrating the future we seek today, and give them prominence in the discussions. Key to these discussions should be an underlying effort to "*Turning Ideas into Action*". This is not to underestimate the challenge of transforming the World Urban Forum into an action-oriented event, when by its very definition conferences are opportunities for talk. But it is nevertheless a challenge that must be met. In order to have a more coherent and tightly focussed programme, it is suggested that there be no more than three sub-themes linked to the issue of **Sustainable Cities**.

Main theme: **“Our Future: Sustainable Cities – Turning Ideas into Action”**

Sub-Theme 1:

“Sustainable Cities; Land, Housing and Infrastructure for All”

The Sub-Theme refers to the *social* dimension of the WSSD’s definition of sustainable development. This Sub-Theme is closely related to the MDG Goal 7, in particular to Target 10 and 11. There will be two parallel Dialogues under this Sub-Theme, namely:

“Affordable Housing and Slum Upgrading– A Road Map to Achieving the MDG”

Affordable housing is a cross-cutting issue for most cities. Cities’ capacity to provide affordable, serviced and well located housing is closely linked to social sustainability. Slum upgrading is a core mandate of UN-HABITAT, as is the development of the pilot phase of the Slum Upgrading Facility, along with other related activities. The ongoing assessment of the progress in achieving Target 11 will be highlighted, in search of better ways of achieving the Target.

“Inclusion – The Right to the City”

This Dialogue will focus on the need for recognition and inclusion of all citizens, be they international migrants, the poor, marginalised groups such as i.a. women or national minorities. The underlying assumption is that social sustainability requires a broad participation to enable all urban inhabitants to contribute to urban prosperity and enjoy the benefits cities have to offer, and that civic rights have to encompass all. (GC 20, Res. 20/16)

Sub-Theme 2:

“Sustainable Cities; Governing the Environment for All”

The Sub-Theme refers to the *environmental* dimension of the WSSD’s definition of sustainable development. Any city’s environmental performance has become a global concern. This Sub-Theme is closely related to the MDG Goal 7, Target 9, 10 and 11. There will be two parallel Dialogues under this Sub-Theme, namely:

“Energy – Local Action, Global Impact”

This Dialogue is in response to an emerging realisation of the paramount importance of the energy dimension of cities and urban life styles. Energy use at all levels, including for transport, influences the natural environment and contributes to i.a. global warming. Household energy is a major issue in many cities, as concerns cost and health risk at the household level (GC 20, Res.20/20) Energy is a subject of the CSD 14 - 15 process.

“Planning – A New Local Governance Paradigm”

Planning in general, and physical planning in particular, is emerging as a vital tool for reducing the environmental foot-print of cities, and of urban life. Not only are there different environmental systems to choose between, the lay out and organisation of a city will influence consumption patterns for many years to come.

Sub-Theme 3:

“Sustainable Cities; Financing Development for All”

The sub-theme refers to the *economic* dimension of the WSSD’s definition of sustainable development. Only in cities with a sound economic performance can investments in housing and infrastructures be made in an environmentally friendly way. Local economic development can be achieved when people from all sectors work together to stimulate local commercial activity, resulting in a resilient and sustainable economy. It is a way to help create decent jobs and improve the quality of life for everyone. This Sub-Theme is closely related to the MDG Goal 7, Target 9, 10 and 11. There will be two parallel Dialogues under this Sub-Theme, namely:

“Urban Safety – A Prerequisite for Urban Development”

Investment by both the private and public sectors is discouraged by an unsafe urban environment. The threat of urban crime or demonstrated vulnerability to man-made and natural disasters make capital flee to more attractive locations and increases the costs, both tangible and intangible, of normal urban interactions. This Dialogue will

examine the drivers of perceptions of urban insecurity and look at proven, innovative methods of improving urban safety. (Proposed sub-theme for GC21)

“Tenure and Property Rights – Creating Space for Marginalised Groups”

Tenure, property rights and legal empowerment are issues closely linked to the economic dynamics of any city, and to mobilisation of household and domestic resources. This Dialogue will focus on how the legal rights of all citizens can be recognised and included in a transparent framework, and thus allowing them to take a commensurate space in urban development.

It should be stated, that the Theme and the Sub-Themes are provisional, and that they might be modified. Other Sub-Themes might be added, as a result of the ongoing consultative process with Governments, Local Authorities, and other Habitat Agenda Partners, to be finalised at least six months before the World Urban Forum III (GC 18, Annex IV)

WUF III structure – Provoking exchange and focusing the debate:

In order to stimulate participants to move from ideas to action, it will be important to shape the programme to maximize the exchange of ideas and examples. Delegates should leave WUF III with more ideas and more tools than they came with. This can be accomplished by recognizing that while we are all learners, we are all teachers too. The programme will be designed to facilitate the greatest possible participation of delegates in respectful discussion and debate. There are certain methods that encourage exchange with a diverse audience. Among these methods are presentations that explore real-life situations and case-studies in a dynamic and interactive manner. Learning from recommendations made from the evaluations undertaken from previous events, it is suggested that the World Urban Forum be structured with the following components:

Opening/Closing Sessions: <i>To be concise and scene-setting, in plenary.</i>	(Monday AM & Friday PM)
Round Tables: <i>(Parallel Round Tables for i.a. Ministers, Mayors, Private Sector representatives, NGOs, Women, and Youth will be held to review progress made, focussing on MDG Goal 7, and challenges ahead. Chairs' reports are the expected outcome).</i>	(Sunday PM and Monday PM)
Key-Note Addresses: <i>(A daily 1 hour high-level Key-Note Address featuring one or two world renowned speakers addressing the Theme, and the Sub-Themes of the day.)</i>	(Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday AM)
Dialogues: <i>(Dialogues will follow the Key Note address and utilize interactive moderators and be focused on engaging the audience in debate. Two Dialogues will take place in parallel, focusing each on one of the two Sub-Themes of the day).</i>	(Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday AM)
Networking Events: <i>(A wide range of events organized primarily by Habitat Agenda Partners. These events will take place in the afternoon with a break to encourage exchanges. A wide range of learning opportunities will be provided by leading organizations).</i>	(Tuesday – Friday PM)
Exhibition with Speakers' Corner <i>(There will be ample space for exhibitions, close to the main meeting rooms. In the Exhibition Hall, there will be a Speakers' Corner, an Internet café and refreshments available. After the Dialogues, there will be "Lunch Lectures", and between the Networking Events, there will be a break for further lectures, all in the Exhibition Areas.</i>	(Monday – Friday)
Special Events: <i>(A series of receptions, launches, signing ceremonies, field visits and cultural events, primarily to take place after the Networking Events).</i>	(Sunday – Friday PM)

UN-HABITAT invites Governments, Local Authorities and other Habitat Agenda partners to organize networking events, exhibitions and special events, and to suggest speakers for the Speakers' Corner. At this stage proposals can be sent to the WUF Secretariat. Please keep in mind the focus on "Our Future: Sustainable Cities - Turning Ideas into Action", and the sub-themes.

WUF Secretariat

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The Canadian Government has established a National Advisory Committee of prominent individuals who collectively have significant expertise on urban issues from a number of perspectives. Co-chaired by a former mayor of Vancouver and the former president of Canada's development assistance agency, the NAC is providing valuable input into the Canadian Government's planning for WUF III, including how to profile the Canadian experience in urban development.