Guest Column by Professor Ralph Horne

Alongside the strengthening partnership between UN-Habitat and RMIT in Melbourne (see right) is a rapidly growing collaboration with the UN Global Compact, Cities Programme. This is the urban arm of the United Nations Global Compact, the UN’s flagship corporate social responsibility initiative formed in 2000. The international secretariat is hosted in Melbourne at RMIT and since January this year I have had the honour of taking on the Directorship of the Cities Programme.

The fit is a good one – RMIT has the largest and strongest research concentration across the urban and design disciplines amongst Australian Universities, and has a global reach with campuses in Vietnam, a research facility in Barcelona, and a strong network of city relationships across Latin America. RMIT urban research is both global and local, and we are currently compiling a global review of state-level urban policy frameworks in a project with UN Habitat; at the same time we are closely engaged locally with the Melbourne 108R project.

RMIT’s urban research is focused on public good outcomes for cities; resilience, sustainability, inclusion and good governance. These qualities are also the focus of the Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact as they apply to the current 300+ signatory cities worldwide. The Cities Programme country contact points, global advisors, urban scholars, interns and staff collectively work with these signatory cities on progressing the Ten Principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti corruption and governance (e.g. see http://citieprogramme.contacts/research/cities-for-the-future). Our most recent tool is the City Scan, a self-diagnostic for cities to assess progress across the development, sustainability and good governance, and a baseline setting tool for designing and implementing future initiatives.

A unique aspect of the Cities Programme is that it is based on a platform of cross-sectoral collaboration and is part of a much larger initiative focused on mobilizing the private sector. We are part of a network of over 8,000 firms globally across some 90 countries, all of whom have committed to advancing the Ten Principles, and as such recognize the need to prioritise sustainability and good citizenship in their operations. Working with this network, we focus on cross-sectoral partnerships in fostering resilience and sustainable development initiatives.

In common with urban networks everywhere, we are in for a busy 2016 in supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, and in the run-up to Habitat III. As part of these preparations, we are hosting an Urban Thinkers Campus in February 2016, focused on “Ethical Cities”, drawing on the expertise of leading Global Compact cities such as Medellin, Porto Alegre and Barcelona and partners, World Vision International. I welcome you all to come to Melbourne and join the dialogue.

With global urban challenges more pressing than ever, it is imperative that we bring our resources, networks, knowledge and experience together across as wide a range of organisations as possible, around common goals to improve the resilience and sustainability of our cities. I welcome the growing collaboration between UN Global Compact, Cities Programme, and the City Resilience Profiling Programme, and our many affiliates, in this endeavour.

Best wishes
UN-Habitat and the City Resilience Profiling Programme

The Smart City Expo World Congress (SCBCW), considered as one of the most important global meetings on urban innovation, gathered more than 200 companies and institutions.

In this fifth edition of SCBCW, CRPP was contributing to several events during the Congress, engaging city representatives and private sector representatives across UN-Habitat’s work on urban resilience.

As agreed in previous editions, UN-Habitat, through its City Resilience Profiling Programme (CRPP), teamed up with the organizers of the SCBCW to ensure that a focus on resilience and sustainable human settlements was also included in this edition. In this regard, CRPP brought together panels on “How can we achieve more resilient and sustainable cities?”

High-level session, Raising Resilience in Urban Areas:
2 Dec, (Resilience Day), 12:30-13:30, Dutch Pavilion (hosted by the Dutch government).

The objective of this session is to spotlight the progress on strengthening the resilience of their communities and economies. Convening a panel of high-level stakeholders across government and financial and development institutions, the session will activate a new platform for knowledge exchange by showcasing how cities across the world are fostering innovative, transformative resilience solutions. The session will further illuminate new opportunities for collaboration among cities and a wide range of partners to turn strategies into action and unlock investment opportunities.

Speakers include high-level representatives from the Dutch Government, UN-Habitat, World Resources Institute, World Bank, Rockefeller Foundation, OECD, and UNISDR. Invited Mayors/Cities include: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Dhaka, Bangladesh; Mexico City, Mexico; Minas Gerais, Brazil; Quito, Ecuador.

Where to find us in COP 21

The Launch of Cities Alliance Joint Work Programme on Urban Resilience, online resilience tools and Local Governments’ Pocket Guide to Resilience, 8 December, 12-13:00, ICEC Pavilion (under the leadership of UN-Habitat).

The purpose of this session is to engage cities in a new Cities Alliance Joint Work Programme on Resilient Cities (NP), comprising 15 city and community organizations dedicated to serving local government’s efforts to build their resilience to multiple shock and stresses, including the impacts from climate change. An overview of the functions of the city-level panel discussion will be building resilience in informal settlement communities. The session will further serve as a platform to launch a new online platform for resilience tools and a Local Governments’ Pocket Guide to Resilience.

Speakers include high-level representatives from: Swiss Economic Cooperation and Development Division (SECO), IIEC;Local Governments for Sustainability, UN-Habitat, Cities Alliance, Slum Dwellers International, and the World Bank. Invited Mayors/Cities include: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Dhaka, Bangladesh; Mexico City, Mexico; Minas Gerais, Brazil; Quito, Ecuador.

Barcelona Resilience Week

Building on the success of the International Workshop “Barcelona’s Experience in Resilience” held at Sant Pau Art Nouveau Site in February 2015 it has been agreed by the organizers the City Council of Barcelona, in partnership with the UNESCO Chair and the CRPP, to convene a new edition of the International Workshop to be held at Sant Pau Art Nouveau Site (Barcelona) in February 2016.

Joint Work Programme (JWP) on Resilient Cities

The new partnership between the Medellin Collaboration on Urban Resilience (MCUR) and the Cities Alliance (CA) Joint Work Programme (JWP) on Resilient Cities will produce, as a first result, an online platform that will provide city governments access to a wide set of tools and knowledge networks.

This new online platform will introduce city governments to resilience concepts, terminologies and tools that contribute to three key issues central to sustainable development:

- Improving awareness among local governments to what resilience entails.
- Promoting the importance of sound urban planning and design to avoid the creation of new layers of risk.
- Focusing local authorities’ attention on how to do more with existing resources, whilst improving their knowledge of how to unlock new revenue streams.

This project will make a direct contribution to the urban-related goals of the post-2015 agreements on Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and Climate Change, by fostering the development of city-level strategies that are conducive of multiple shocks and stresses linked to the impacts from rapid unplanned urbanisation, disasters, and rising level of global greenhouse gas emissions. It will also complement the implementation of the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), taking place in Quito, Ecuador in October 2016.

Urban Resilience Week

An overarching theme of the city-level panel discussion will be building resilience in informal settlement efforts to build their resilience to multiple shock and stresses, including the impacts from climate change. The purpose of this session is to engage cities in a new Cities Alliance Joint Work Programme on Resilient Cities (NP), comprising 15 city and community organizations dedicated to serving local government’s efforts to build their resilience to multiple shock and stresses, including the impacts from climate change.

Chair: Simeon ninth, Executive Director, Urban Resilience Institute (URI).
Speakers: Habitat III Conference, October 26-28, Quito, Ecuador.

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