

<b>Talking Points</b>	<b>UNEP Science Policy Business Forum</b>	<b>Friday 19 September 15:00-18:00 (entire event) 17:15-17:40 (ED's panel)</b>
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### ***Agenda***

1. How do we bring nature back to cities and what is the price of inaction?
2. How integrated urban solutions can help cities achieve better circularity and resource efficiency?
3. The ambitious policies to pave the way
4. Conclusion and open floor

### **Agenda items 1 and 2 (15:00-17:15)**

1. [no intervention]

### **Agenda item 3: The ambitious policies to pave the way (17:15-17:40)**

ED will have five minutes to speak, as the first of five panelists. Minute adjustments might be needed to stress points raised by the moderator and previous speakers (especially HE Mr Sveinung Rotevatn, Minister of Climate and Environment of Norway and UNEA President, and Mr Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, CEO of the GEF).

**Proposed statement (675 words/5 minutes):**

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that cities and city leaders hold the key to ‘making peace with nature.’ However, if we want transformational change, we need to start now and set even greater ambitions if we do not want to end up living in dead cities.

We believe that if cities are to have a future, we will need to incorporate models of urbanisation based on the circular economy, encourage proximity production, champion shorter supply chains and adopting integrated planning approaches for environmentally sensitive urban development. Many governments will have to implement corrective policy measures and incentives such as carbon pricing and the elimination of perverse fossil fuel subsidies. But these cannot be achieved by cities or national governments alone. They will require an all for society approach - collaborative, multi-level governance of a degree that the pandemic has demonstrated is possible.

The Secretary-General’s Policy Brief on *COVID-19 in an Urban World* reminds us that long-term pandemic recovery cannot come at the price of climate inaction. Indeed, short-term stimulus measures need to have green strings attached. Bringing nature back to cities will be instrumental for both climate change adaptation and mitigation. In fact, nature-based solutions could provide one third of the net reductions in Green House Gas emissions required to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement.

Fortunately, cities are uniquely positioned to drive this transition. They agglomerate resources, capital, data, and talent within shorter distances. Optimal densities make infrastructure and urban services work efficiently, while potentially reducing resource use and greenhouse gas emissions. They can also reduce the degradation of ecosystems whose services support urban communities, often vulnerable ones. Urban expansion must be managed in harmony with nature, protecting and restoring ecosystems, and ensuring an adequate supply of green open spaces and clean air.

For its part, UN-Habitat is strongly committed to adding its value to a better urban environment through its flagship programmes. In particular the programmes on *Resilient Settlements for the Urban Poor* (RISE-UP) and *SDG Cities* will take a number of smaller pilot projects to scale. Both will include the acceleration of technical advisory services, building of new partnerships and mobilisation new funding – including through UN-Habitat’s new Cities Investment Facility. UN-Habitat’s Public Space Programme has also been working with cities in Africa and Asia. Increasingly we are working with coalitions of cities that comprise metropolitan regions, as these are more closely aligned to the scale of ecological systems. Such approaches must be scaled up to deliver the necessary impact.

We also continue to work closely with UNEP in numerous programmes and projects, including the *Building Climate Resilience of Urban Systems through Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) in the Asia-Pacific Region* which is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The project aims to develop proof of concept for comprehensive ecosystem-based adaptation in least developed countries, with a strong emphasis on reducing the vulnerability of poor urban communities. In so doing UNEP and UN-Habitat have combined forces with environmental management and urban planning tools. In the UN system at large, particularly within the biodiversity sphere, we are pleased with the support for building for better peri-urban regulation, planning and management. The GEF will continue to be a critical source of financing for this ambitious work.

Still closer to home, we are collaborating with UNEP in the Go Blue project funded by the European Union to ensure a holistic land-to-sea waste management programme to ensure better quality of life both on land and in the sea!

I agree with the call to action by my UNEP counterpart - there is no excuse anymore not to take action and we can live in peace with nature! For our part, we are convening the Council on Urban Initiatives. Composed of thirty experts around the world, it will provide intellectual and scientific leadership which in turn will invigorate programming for the future. In this and in other initiatives, we very much look forward to working with you all.

Thank you.

**Agenda item 4 (17:40-18:00)**

1. [no immediate intervention foreseen - possible intervention based on other questions from floor]

<b>Prepared by</b>	<b>Reviewed/Revised by</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Version</b>
Andrew Rudd	Bernhard Barth; Runze	Revised by Neil Khor	Fri 19 February 2021 590 words / 5 minutes