Introduction
Researchers, policymakers, urban communities and civil society organizations, among others, have long been preoccupied with the future of cities, often holding varied viewpoints and charting divergent paths—and yet all geared toward realizing a better urban future. In recent times, the massive disruption and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and communities across the world has underscored the importance and urgency of securing sustainable urban futures.

COVID-19 has provided a rare inflection point; an opportunity to look back, correct mistakes of the past and transform cities globally for future resilience, inclusion, green and economic sustainability. The pandemic has not only laid bare major challenges facing our cities, it has also added a sense of urgency for a radical shift from unsustainable practices if the vision of sustainable urban futures is to be realized.

Despite the devastating impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on urban areas across the world, cities are here to stay, and the future of humanity is undoubtedly urban, but not exclusively in large metropolitan areas. Cities are central to sustainable development as they account for more than half (56 per cent) of the world’s population and are expected to absorb virtually all the future growth of this population.

Whilst cities are diverse—in terms of history, geography, culture, context and institutions, among others—an emerging commonality amid this pandemic is that they should be adequately equipped to respond effectively to a broader range of shocks and threats and to transition to more sustainable, just, green, resilient and healthy future.

Sustainable urban futures will be determined by inclusive and transformative policies to eradicate poverty and inequality; productive urban economies that provide opportunities for all; greener investment and sustainable consumption and production patterns; responsive urban and territorial planning; collaborative and integrated systems of urban governance; prioritization of public health; inclusive deployment of innovation and technology; and building resilience, which enables cities to build resilience in order to respond to and withstand a wide range of shocks.

Building economic, social and environmental resilience, including appropriate governance and institutional structures must be at the heart of the future of cities. These basic ingredients for achieving sustainable urban futures are all encapsulated in the global agendas, particularly the New Urban Agenda (NUA) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (in SDG11). The effective implementation of these global agendas provides a pathway to transformation in our cities. The failure or weakness in implementing these frameworks partly accounts for the inability to effectively respond to existing and emerging urban challenges, many of which have been amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is against this backdrop that the Eleventh Session of the World Urban Forum (WUF11) has been themed: Transforming our cities for a better urban future. This important conference on cities and human settlements will be hosted by the City of Katowice, Poland.

The World Urban Forum
Organized and convened by UN-Habitat, the World Urban Forum has become the foremost international gathering for exchanging views and experiences on sustainable urbanization in all its

ramifications. The inclusive nature of the Forum, combined with high-level participation, makes it a unique United Nations conference and the premier international gathering on urban issues.

The objectives of the World Urban Forum are:

i. Raise awareness of sustainable urbanization among stakeholders and constituencies, including the general public;

ii. Improve the collective knowledge of sustainable urbanization through inclusive open debates, sharing of lessons learned and the exchange of best practices and good policies;

iii. Increase coordination and cooperation between different stakeholders and constituencies for the advancement and implementation of sustainable urbanization.

**Thematic Objectives of the Eleventh Session of the World Urban Forum**

*To be developed*

**WUF 11 Dialogues**

**Transforming our cities for a better urban future**

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The dialogues at the Eleventh Session of the World Urban Forum will explore how cities can be transformed for a better urban future. Drawing on examples and case studies around the world, the dialogues will explore how cities can respond to the underlying challenges of inequality and poverty to as a basis for achieving more equitable and prosperous urban futures; the role of cities in securing greener urban futures that entail the transition to net zero emissions, improved natural resource efficiency and safeguarding critical ecosystems and biodiversity; the pervasive role of innovation and technology in the transition to more sustainable urban futures; how can cities create inclusive economies that are resilient to shocks and how sustainable urban futures can be adequately financed; the role of urban planning and governance in achieving a resilient future across the urban-rural continuum; and building urban resilience across various dimensions—economic, social and environmental, including appropriate governance and institutional structures.

**Dialogue1: Equitable urban futures**

Over the past decade, “urban equity” has been a central theme underlying major urban fora. The Seventh Session of the World Urban Forum on “Urban equity in development: cities for life” was held amid concerns about growing inequalities at all levels across the world. Participants considered how to integrate issues relating to urban equity effectively into the development agenda in an increasingly urbanized world.

The *Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Cities 2030* rekindled these concerns by drawing attention to various forms of inequality as a persistent challenge facing cities and communities. These include inequitable access to various benefits of the city, insufficient protection from human rights violations, “including forced evictions, and inadequate inclusion of people living in poverty, persons with disabilities and other

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3 Held in Medellin, Colombia (2014).
4 e.g., decent jobs, public space, affordable and adequate housing and security of land tenure, safe, efficient and accessible public transport and mobility systems, infrastructure and other basic services and goods that cities offer.
disadvantaged groups in urban planning, design, and legislation processes.”\(^5\) The Tenth Session of the World Urban Forum\(^6\) noted that while progress was being made in creating more inclusive cities, inequality was “greater than ever,”\(^7\) and still rising; 75 per cent of the world’s cities were more unequal in recent times compared to the two previous decades.\(^7\)

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated poverty and deepened existing inequalities. It has laid bare the fault lines pervasive in many urban areas. The health, economic and social consequences of the pandemic had a disproportionate impact on vulnerable low-income households, informal sector workers, women and girls, migrants, indigenous peoples, persons with disability, older people and the poor.

In this regard, recovery efforts that entail progressive urban social programmes can trigger the long-overdue transformation needed for a better future for these groups. To achieve a more egalitarian society, well-designed socio-economic policy measures that ensure fair and equitable redistribution of resources and opportunities to these vulnerable groups are an imperative. These serve to counter market forces by giving priority to poor neighbourhoods and underserved areas in the provision of urban infrastructure and social services that will reduce inequality and enhance social inclusion.

Social protection is urgently needed and should be mainstreamed in domestic resource frameworks as it is a necessary investment in people, not a burden.\(^8\) In the US, for instance, the social protection measures kept millions from poverty in 2020; poverty declined from 11.8 percent in 2019 to 9.1 percent in 2020 on account of government relief efforts.\(^9\)

The path toward equitable urban futures will require a shift towards a wider sense of empathy and recognition of the interconnectedness of our communities and societies—our shared sense of solidarity.\(^10\) Urban futures can only be equitable for all when the rights of vulnerable groups in cities are protected. When gender equality is promoted. When there is broad-based civic participation. When persons are protected against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. When marginalized groups like slum dwellers, the homeless, indigenous people, youth and minorities are empowered.

Equitable urban futures can be realized by taking forward the “right to the city” and reforming institutional frameworks that entrench poverty and inequality. The “right to the city” underpins the social value of urbanization and implies that all people, particularly vulnerable and marginalized groups, should have equal opportunities and access to urban resources, services and goods. Local governments that embrace the “right to the city” can create more equitable outcomes.\(^11\)

It is feared that inequalities are likely to be greater in the post pandemic era if governments do not take decisive actions now.\(^12\) Recent analysis of the potential increase in poverty due to the effects of COVID-19 shows that as much as half a billion people or eight per cent of the world’s population could fall into poverty.\(^13\) Economic growth in itself will not reduce poverty or increase wellbeing if it is not accompanied

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\(^6\) Held in Abu Dhabi, UAE (2020).


by equitable policies that allow low-income or disadvantaged groups to benefit from such growth.\textsuperscript{14} Therefore, investing in human capital formation and fostering sustained economic opportunities for poor and underprivileged populations is key to ensuring that the envisaged recovery leaves no one behind.

Cities will not be able to offer a bright urban future if the needs of the most vulnerable are not met. UN-Habitat’s report \textit{Cities and Pandemic Report: Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future} makes a case for universal social protection in the form of universal basic income, universal health insurance and universal housing as part of a new social contract as cities seek to recover from the impacts of the pandemic.\textsuperscript{15} The feasibility of these initiatives, especially universal basic income is a hotly debated issue and need to be analyzed and understood in different contexts. According to the World Bank, no country currently has universal basic income, rather what exists are small-scale pilots and a few larger-scale experiences.\textsuperscript{16}

\begin{table}[h]
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\begin{tabular}{|c|}
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\textbf{Dialogue 1 Equitable urban futures} \\
\hline
\textbf{Key Issues} \\
“Urban equity” continues to be a central theme in major urban fora implying inequality is still growing unabated and a lot of work still needs to be done. While urban areas offer significant opportunities to generate prosperity, which in turn can be leveraged to eradicate poverty, the equitable distribution of benefits and opportunities remains a challenge in both developed and developing countries. \\
An unequal city cannot optimize the urban advantage for all its dwellers. For sustainable urban futures to be realized, measures are needed to address issues relating poverty and inequality. It is thus crucial to institute redistributive policies, promote rights-based policy approaches (such as the “right to the city”), promote a more equitable distribution of the urban advantage among residents of a given city. \\
Sound institutions are key for leveraging and distributing the benefits associated with urbanization. Sound institutions as called for in the NUA determine the efficacy of urban policies and programmes implemented by all levels of government, including non-state actors. \\
Both the SDGs and the NUA offer a roadmap to equitable growth and prosperity. They explicitly acknowledge the importance of ensuring the distribution of opportunity in the urban development processes for the benefit of all. Implementing these global agenda should thus be a priority at various levels of governance. \\
\textbf{Objectives of the Dialogue} \\
This Dialogue will explore how cities can address the challenges of poverty and inequality so that a future that is prosperous, inclusive and equitable can be realized for all. \\
\textbf{Initial Questions} \\
This Dialogue will address the following questions:
\begin{itemize}
  \item How can cities respond to the underlying challenges of poverty and inequality to ensure that no one is left behind especially in midst of the multiple crises? What role can that subnational and city governments can play in eradicating poverty and reducing inequality? \\
  \item What are the new and transformative approaches that can be taken to address the needs of the most vulnerable groups? How progressive urban social programmes be scaled up? \\
  \item How can cities promote people-centred and place-based interventions? \\
  \item How can urban governance institutions reform to be and pro-equity in the post-covid recovery? What interventions are necessary? \\
\end{itemize}
\end{tabular}
\caption{Dialogue 1 Equitable urban futures}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{14} UN-Habitat (2020) \textit{World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization}, UN-Habitat, Nairobi, https://unhabitat.org/wcr/ \\
\textsuperscript{15} UN-Habitat (2021) \textit{Cities and Pandemics: Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future}, UN-Habitat, Nairobi, https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2021/03/cities_and_pandemics-towards_a_more_just_green_and_healthy_future_un-habitat_2021.pdf \\
What is the role of local community in building equitable and inclusive urban futures?

How is the built environment and existing urban systems deepening inequalities?

Strategic Partnership (Text for this section will come for the concept note prepared by the Dialogue Focal Points)

Dialogue 2: Greener urban futures

Urbanization transforms society’s relationship with its environment, impacting the wellbeing of urban and rural dwellers in multiple ways—any effort to drive the planet toward an environmentally sustainable future must therefore consider the role of cities. Today’s investment choices shape tomorrow’s world. Nowhere is this maxim as visible as in urban infrastructure. Climate change, a top priority in every development agenda, changes our thinking about the future but not at sufficient speed. In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, there is a risk of perpetuating the old ways of doing things: carbon lock-in, loss of biodiversity, resource and energy-intensive consumption patterns, high levels of pollution, and carbon emissions show no sign of abatement.

Moreover, perpetuating the old ways of doing things means a lost opportunity to build a better urban future for all, addressing sustainability and inequality in tandem. Rapid and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, improved natural resource efficiency, mitigating the negative impacts of climate change, and safeguarding critical ecosystems and biodiversity are all needed to address the global environmental crisis. Already, faster global warming is being observed, with chances of global temperature expected to cross 1.5°C of warming level over the next decades. IPCC further warns that limiting warming to close to 1.5°C or even 2°C will be beyond reach unless there are “rapid and large-scale reductions in GHG emissions.”

The COVID-19 pandemic provided a unique opportunity to observe the impacts of reduced emissions—although short-lived. Lessons from it show that a green economic recovery can yield long-term environmental benefits for the future of cities and are likely to influence mitigation strategies. The temporary reduction in carbon emissions and pollutants resulting from the COVID-19 induced lockdowns have had minimal effect on the trajectory of global greenhouse emissions.

Greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere continue at record levels, setting up the planet to future warming and compounding climate hazards. Lasting reductions in greenhouse emissions requires deeper and longer-term behavioural and institutional change, but the bulk of the action has been watered down to minimal no-regrets measures in the best case, and “greenwashing” in the worst ones. A sense of skepticism towards the appropriation of the sustainability discourse for economic gain is now widespread.

Evidence suggests that global green spending is so far incommensurate with the scale of ongoing environmental crises: climate change, nature loss, and pollution. A recent study by UNEP of largest 50 economies found that only $368bn of $14.6tn COVID-induced spending — or just 2.5 per cent of total spending (both rescue and recovery) — in 2020 was green while only 18.0 per cent of recovery spending was considered so (see Figure 1). Further reports show that 15 major producer countries continue to provide significant policy support for fossil fuel production; their production plans and projections would

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lead to about 240 per cent more coal, 57 per cent more oil, and 71 per cent more gas in 2030 than would be consistent with limiting global warming to 1.5°C.\(^{21}\)

*Figure 1* Recovery spending over the course of the pandemic with total green spending, 2020

![Graph showing recovery spending over the course of the pandemic with total green spending, 2020](image)


Climate change burdens cast shadows on the quest to transform our cities for a better urban future. For example, climate change is a “threat multiplier” that could lead to conflicts and political instability in fragile settings. At the same time, the global challenge of climate change can also encourage a more open, cooperative world, with an important role for cities in which multilateralism determines outcomes, funding operations together and burden sharing.\(^{22}\) Currently, over 10,000 cities from various regions of the world under the auspices of Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy have committed to reduce, by 2030, 24 billion tons of CO2 emissions. Most of these cities are developing renewable energy systems, divesting from fossil fuels, and making efforts to develop cleaner and more inclusive public mobility systems, among other raft of measures.\(^{23}\)

Cities can transition to sustainable urban futures characterized by net-zero GHG emissions and much reduced impacts on the environment. Besides sustainable consumption and production patterns, this transition can also be facilitated by the spatial structure of cities and regions. Denser and more compact cities drastically reduce the urban carbon footprint. Policies and planning processes that integrate cities into the ecosystems of subnational regions foster resilience and can contribute to the transition toward a circular economy.\(^{24}\) Indeed, the quality of life in cities can be improved while ensuring that they remain climate resilient and resource efficient.

Strengthening the resilience to climate change is a major aspect of improving the overall resilience of cities.\(^{25}\) Given the vulnerability of infrastructure networks to frequent flooding, drought, heatwaves and intense rain events along with other climate-related hazards,\(^{26}\) as well as the role of infrastructure in building resilience, investment in critical infrastructure offers a pathway to securing greener and more resilient urban futures. These climate change hazards could create a variety of humanitarian disasters with important population flows from environmental refugees to more secure cities, prompting national and local responses

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\(^{26}\) National Intelligence Council (2021) *Global Trends 2040: A More Contested*

for different forms of humanitarian aid and resilience mechanisms. Resilient infrastructure design should be prioritized against major climate change risks. An investment in climate resilience strategies could have a triple dividend of: preventing future losses; generating economic benefits through reducing risk, increasing productivity and driving innovation; and delivering social and environmental benefits.  

Sustainable transport systems have a key role to play in reducing energy consumption, pollution and GHG emissions, given that transportation generates about 15 per cent of all global greenhouse gas emissions with road transport accounting for three-quarters of these emissions. Greenhouse emissions from transportation are increasing faster than any other energy-using sector. Decarbonizing how we move around in cities is essential if we are to transition to net-zero emissions.

Nature-based solutions represent an integrated approach to deliver environmental value across the urban-rural continuum. Nature-based solutions halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity and restore urban ecosystem services. In urban areas, they have been associated with positive effects on both urban biodiversity and human health. Investment in ecosystem services and natural infrastructure are not only a cost effective and sustainable way to improve resilience to climate impacts, they also offer employment opportunities similar to human-made infrastructure investments. A recent study shows that ecosystem restoration creates 3.7 times as many jobs as oil and gas production per dollar (see Figure 2).  

Figure 2 Job comparison between green and unsustainable investment types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Investment Type</th>
<th>Jobs as Fossil Fuels per $1 million</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building efficiency</td>
<td>2.8 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial efficiency</td>
<td>3.4 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solar photovoltaics</td>
<td>6.8 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrades to existing grids</td>
<td>2.5 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wind energy</td>
<td>2.0 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrian-only infrastructure</td>
<td>3.5 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycle-only infrastructure</td>
<td>2.6 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass transit</td>
<td>1.1 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railways</td>
<td>1.8 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric vehicle manufacturing</td>
<td>2.5 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battery cell manufacturing</td>
<td>2.2 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric vehicle charging infrastructure</td>
<td>1.9 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecosystem restoration</td>
<td>3.7 times</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: WRI, 2021

Dialogue 2: Greener urban futures

Key Issues

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To make headways in achieving greener urban futures, various levels of governments should align spending with existing pledges to build back better; the current COVID-19 recovery efforts should be aligned to climate change and air quality strategies to reduce risks from compounding and cascading climate hazards, and gain health co-benefits. Lasting reductions in GHG emissions can only be achieved by deeper and enduring behavioural and institutional change. Sustainable consumption and production patterns are therefore an imperative; they are as key as investments in critical infrastructure and ecosystem services.

Countries can deliver greener urban futures by investing in cleaner and more resilient forms of renewable energy that will create lasting solutions, reduce the risks of future crises, and adequately mitigate the impacts of climate change. This builds long-term resilience that enhances the wellbeing of urban and rural dwellers alike.

Net-zero emissions imply that emission control or mitigation and carbon sinks must be implemented concurrently. Whilst cities in a net-zero carbon future will still be generating emissions, viable measures are needed to remove or offset these emissions, and this is where the real challenge lies.

In order to leave no one behind, prioritization of the disadvantaged segments of the urban population is needed in the delivery of environmental benefits. Urban poor must therefore be represented, and their needs prioritized in any decision-making process to achieve inclusive greener urban futures.

Objectives of the Dialogue
This dialogue should explore how cities can transition to sustainable urban futures characterized by net-zero GHG emissions and much reduced impacts on the environment.

Initial Questions
This Dialogue will address the following questions:

i. How can cities transition to sustainable urban futures characterized by net-zero GHG emissions and much reduced impacts on the environment?

ii. How can cities implement nature-based solutions and other measures to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity and restore urban ecosystem services?

iii. Can a new form of governance frameworks emerge based on resource management, environment protection and sustainability with cities articulating global responses?

iv. What kind of recovery investments should cities and countries be making to tackle climate change, nature loss, and pollution? What spending pathways are needed achieve an inclusive greener economic recovery and secure environmental sustainability?

v. How can cities foster innovations that builds on enduring behaviour and institutional change that will secure green urban futures?

vi. What role can cities and various actors play in reducing greenwashing sustainability (which often leads to a less green economy)? How can a coherent policy framework be developed to achieve this?

Strategic Partnership (Text for this section will come for the concept note prepared by the Dialogue Focal Points)

Dialogue 3: Innovation and technology

Innovation and advances in technology and urban futures are inextricably linked. Throughout history urban areas have been homes of various technological breakthroughs as well as centres of innovation. They have also been major beneficiaries of a wide array of rapidly evolving technologies. Cities are at the centre of the technological changes occasioned by the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) and are rapidly deploying technologies in the delivery of public services and addressing a wide range of urban challenges.

Innovation and the deployment of technologies is enhancing efficiency of urban operation and services, promoting competitiveness, reducing carbon emissions and facilitating the ecological transition, increasing access to affordable housing, enhancing participation in policy making for city dwellers, among other

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aspects that hold the potential to transform our cities for a better urban future. It is expected that the future of cities will be knowledge-based, driven largely by innovation and the widespread use of new technologies and digitization of virtually all facets of our urban space.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been accompanied by a blossoming of new innovations and an accelerated adoption/deployment of technologies. These include areas such as contact-tracing, digital payments, remote working, distance learning and telehealth care as regulators waived restrictions on online medical care, among others.\textsuperscript{35} The acceleration of technology and digital solutions have occurred in countries with a fairly developed digital ecosystem. Already, in these places, the deepened use of digital technologies is altering the world of work ushering in the transition to telecommuting and digital transformation of service activities—all of which have significant implications for the structure of urban labour markets. However, a large disparity exists in the availability and usage of technology solutions (even to support the pandemic response) between high and low-income countries.\textsuperscript{36}

The ever-increasing application of data is driving the phenomenon of “smart cities,” which, can guide better decision-making with respect to prosperity, sustainability, resilience, emergency management or effective and equitable service delivery.\textsuperscript{37} The global demand for smart city solutions is growing rapidly at almost 25 per cent annually and is expected to reach US$463.9 billion by 2027.\textsuperscript{38} This is driven mainly by governments investing in technology to meet the demands of a rapidly urbanizing world. Technology firms are also increasingly focussing on cities as markets for smart city technologies as smart cities progressively feature in the discourse on the future of cities. This notwithstanding, most of smart city projects have often taken a top-down, surveillance-based approach, which raise serious issues related to digital rights and inclusion. Consequently, results of smart city experiments have been mixed and particularly poor when these efforts are technology- rather than people-driven.\textsuperscript{39}

While the deployment of innovation and technology has enhanced resilience in some cities, it has exposed the deepening digital divide and social inequalities within cities and across the urban-rural continuum. As “the future of technology is the future of cities,”\textsuperscript{40} it is imperative to address digital divides and exclusion to ensure that digital revolution in cities is inclusive and leaves no one behind. Some cities are already making strategic investment to deploy technologies that ensure that minority groups are not digitally excluded. For instance, in 2020, the Toronto District School Board, in Canada, distributed 60,000 devices to its students during the spring transition for remote learning to ensure that no child is left behind in the learning process.\textsuperscript{41}

Some cities are taking a strategic and people-centred approach to technology and innovation—for example, developing digital transformation strategies to ensure that technology initiatives benefit all urban residents, especially marginalized communities. The City of Warsaw (Poland), for instance, recently adopted a Digital Transformation Policy aimed at offering all users highest level of digital services by 2030. The European Commission, through the Digital Cities Challenge initiative, has also helped 41 EU cities to create a strategic vision and roadmaps for digital transformation.

Putting people at the centre calls for concerted efforts by cities to close the digital divide (within cities and across the urban-rural continuum, as well as within various population groups); to empower people by building their digital skills; to support job creation in the digital sector; to use digital platforms to deliver services equitably; to protect the most vulnerable online; to mobilize new financing models to reach the

unconnected; and to invest in affordable technology solutions. Ultimately, the people in a city are a city’s greatest resource when it comes to achieving sustainable innovation and technological transformation for a better future. They provide new ideas for innovation, act as the eyes or ears of the city, help monitor conditions on the ground and are a key asset for priority setting. Putting people at the centre is thus vital to supporting homegrown innovation systems that spur contextual solutions in urban areas.

While innovation and advances in science and technology are crucial and can facilitate the achievement of the global development agendas, the past few years have clearly demonstrated that these developments are also fraught with risks that, potentially, can disrupt important facets of life (economy, politics and society). This essentially implies that as governments strengthen diffusion mechanisms for emerging solutions, they need to have adaptive legal and regulatory systems in place to tackle ensuing challenges. Cities are developing regulatory mechanisms for urban tech companies to rein in their disruptive power with mixed results. Ongoing review of institutional and regulatory arrangements is thus necessary to guarantee broader protections for rights of individuals as well as support for society’s moral and ethical concerns.

Some cities are also starting to address the issue of digital governance by putting in place ethical and digital rights frameworks related to digital platforms and data, using digital tools to meaningfully engage residents in decision-making, ensuring transparent and open processes for handling data and finding new ways to regulate the technology sector so as to maximize societal benefits.

### Dialogue 3: Innovation and technology

#### Key Issues

Innovation and technology are key to the transition to more sustainable urban futures. There is an increasing appreciation that innovation and leveraging new technologies is essential for the effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda and realization of the SDGs. Whilst technology has the potential to contribute to sustainable urban development, this is not the reality in some places.

Large disparities exist in the availability and usage of technology solutions between and within countries, and between and within cities. The lack of physical and digital infrastructure in low-income countries, for example, is deepening the existing digital divide and social inequalities within cities and across the urban-rural continuum.

The COVID-19 has had an accelerating effect with significant shifts in technological innovations. Rapid deployment of technological innovation witnessed over the last one and half decades is expected to increase in the years to come. However, an aggravation of urban inequalities in the future portends if measures are not taken to bridge the digital divide by putting people at the centre of technological advancements.

Advances in technology is rewriting the rules of the game for the delivery of public services, community engagement and entrepreneurship in cities. Rapidly deploying new technologies presents opportunities for service delivery and addressing a wide range of urban challenges. At the same time, significant threats to sustainable urban futures also arise, for example: changing labour markets, cyber security and protection of digital rights (broader than just privacy), the rapid pace of change outstripping regulatory systems and the risks of unregulated artificial intelligence, risks associated with automated vehicles as well as other disruptive technology solutions.

Some cities, especially in developing countries, are rolling out ambitious futuristic schemes dubbed “smart cities” at great expense; yet key urban challenges— such as housing, adequate infrastructure, employment, poverty etc. —
have not been adequately addressed. Such projects end up being exclusive enclaves for the elite and ruling class; thereby, further deepening the digital divide.\(^{48}\)

**Objectives of the Dialogue**

This Dialogue will explore role that innovation and technology can play in the transition to more sustainable urban futures. The future of cities will be knowledge-based, driven largely by innovation and the widespread use of new technologies and digitization of virtually all facets of our urban space. Drawing on COVID-19 crisis, the dialogue will also explore how the deepening digital divide and social inequalities within cities and across the urban-rural continuum as well as between high and low-income countries can be addressed.

**Initial Questions**

This Dialogue will address the following questions:

i. How can cities leverage innovation and new technologies achieve more productive, prosperous and resilient urban economies in different contexts?

ii. What role can disruptive technologies play in enhancing social inclusion, more equitable cities and quality of life? How can innovation and technology contribute to environmentally resilient urban development?

iii. What kind of urban futures do we envisage in technological terms? What kind of futures do we envision for resource-limited cities? What kind of technology can be deployed in different urban contexts in view of the large disparities that exist in the availability and usage of technology solutions?

iv. How can cities mobilize new financing models to reach the unconnected; How can cities invest in affordable technology solutions? How can build robust pipeline of such technologies for urban applications?

v. How can a ‘people-centred’ approach to smart cities that is grounded on commitment to rights and inclusion be advanced?

vi. How can cities apply their own civic technologies and encourage innovations to address their problems before pursuing private sector technology products?

**Strategic Partnership** (Text for this section will come for the concept note prepared by the Dialogue Focal Points)

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**Dialogue 4: Future urban economy and finance**

Cities are primary catalysts or drivers of economic development and prosperity across the world— they generate enormous economic value as the world’s platforms for production, innovation and trade, creating both formal and informal employment.\(^{49}\) As a nation’s economic prosperity is intimately linked to that of its cities, urban economic resilience is therefore imperative for the prosperity of countries and the global economy.

The prevailing trends, however, point to a wide range of unexpected threats and shocks whose nature, magnitude and complexity cannot be known in advance affecting the economy of urban areas. The COVID-19 pandemic and its accompanying containment measures, as an example, illustrate the scale of economic impacts of such shocks. The widespread job loss in urban settings that followed the strict lockdowns, as well as the supply-chain disruptions has exposed the vulnerable underbelly of cities; the hardest hit sectors are those that are closely associated with the economic wellbeing of cities and towns.\(^{50}\)

The pandemic has also accelerated some preexisting trends that have significant implications on the urban economy. It has triggered a steep increase in national debt and greater government intervention in

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\(^{50}\) Such as wholesale and retailing; vehicle repairs; real estate; business and administrative activities; manufacturing; tourism and food services; transportation, storage and communication; and arts, entertainment and recreation.
economies. It has enhanced focus on building and management of urban economic resilience (Figure 3). Additionally, it has also brought to fore the need for greater diversification in supply chains, and in some instances, it has given impetus to the political push for deglobalization of supply chains in favour of regional and national supply chains.  

Figure 3 Conceptualization of urban economic resilience

Urban economic resilience is capacity and related capabilities of cities or urban communities to plan for, anticipate negative shocks, including long-term stresses, to their economies, allocate, reallocate and mobilize resources to withstand those shocks, recover from the shocks, and rebuild better, while placing their economies on the path to sustainable economic growth and simultaneously strengthening their capacity to deal with any future shocks.


Countries have responded by implementing rapid economic rescue measures aimed at providing essential liquidity and protecting livelihoods in the face of abrupt losses of income. At the same time, cities and countries have been faced with the delicate balancing act of managing the economy and health concerns; the “complex choreography” of reopening economies safely while minimizing the virus’ resurgence. This undertaking has been fragmented across board as various jurisdictions have varying levels of liquidity, as well as policy and fiscal space. To confront future shocks and threats of a similar magnitude, an emerging lesson points to the importance of multilateral capacity as the fiscal room required to salvage the economy while keeping vast sectors of the population at home (as was the case with this pandemic) is beyond the individual strength of some nations.

The COVID-19 crisis has also shown that stimulus recovery packages can redress the economy of cities. Thus, even as the world transcends this pandemic, developing a range of tailored economic support and relief packages to help smaller businesses, informal workers and at-risk sectors is vital for building resilient

urban economies. In the present setting, this should be done with two-fold purpose: rebuilding urban economies in the “new normal” and doing it “better” by promoting the transition to greener, more equitable urban economies.55

Policies and programmes designed to ensure access to sustained productive employment; nurture the talent and skills required to thrive in a modern urban economy especially in the face of the new normal; develop endogenous latent resources; ensure effective management of urban growth; identify and overcome the impediments that prevent cities from maximizing their productivity potential, including the effective management of urban diseconomies — all supported by digital technology — have a key role to play in building resilient urban economies.56 The crises precipitated by the pandemic should be an opportunity for cities to adopt innovative ways of driving their economies. In New York City, for instance, sidewalk dining is set to be permanent feature even during winter.57 This is seen as a bold initiative in reimagining public space in city where space on streets and sidewalks is a premium.

Economic diversification can an important role building up resilience to weather the downturns resulting from such multifaceted shocks in the future. The lack of diversity in economic structure of cities and livelihood options increases the vulnerability and scale of economic decline.58 Cities can thus utilize existing and potential resources to diversify their economies in order to create jobs, enhance access to goods and services and reduce poverty and inequality. Greater economic diversity improves productivity and safeguards against major crises and shocks.

The informal sector is a lifeblood of many cities, yet its nature is a major challenge for workers’ rights, and it is often not included in public policy interventions (such as government measures to save jobs, bankroll enterprises and provide workers with income support). 59 Besides disrupting the livelihoods of millions in the informal sector who often have little or no safety net, the COVID-19 pandemic has introduced new forms of vulnerabilities associated to the nature of work and the workplace itself.

Moving forward, instead of replicating these flaws, the crisis offers an opportunity to construct a future urban economy that is “more robust, just, ethical and equitable.”60 Effective and equitable governance of the informal sector, spaces and actors is important for achieving the SDGs, especially Goal 11, and advancing the NUA to realize a better future. In this regard, urban planning must learn to embrace informality in the many parts of the world where it has become the dominant form of urban growth in employment. 61 Various levels of governments therefore need to explore ways to strengthen capabilities of all urban dwellers by reforming legal and regulatory frameworks as well as integrating urban planning and design with measures that provide greater security to workers, particularly those operating in the informal economy.62

In the same vein, countries can also focus on expanding capabilities for marginalized social groups (such as minorities, indigenous peoples, migrants, women, among others) whose realities continue to be shaped by inequalities and discrimination. A better urban future can be realized when adequate measures are in place to expand capabilities of such socially and economically vulnerable groups through improved health, education and access to technology in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.63

55 UN-Habitat (2021) Cities and Pandemics: Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future, UN-Habitat, Nairobi
60 UN-Habitat (2021) Cities and Pandemics: Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future, UN-Habitat, Nairobi
62 UN-Habitat, 2018
63 UN-Habitat (2021) Cities and Pandemics: Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future, UN-Habitat, Nairobi
Various levels of government can invest in employment and social protection measures e.g., sustained support for at-risk workers and enterprises, as well as social security and safety nets. It can also create tailored strategies that respond to different forms of vulnerability as well as unexpected shocks. These measures should be nuanced and wide-ranging to ensure that the different risks associated with gender, age, ethnicity, migratory status and other characteristics are effectively identified and addressed in urban welfare programmes.\(^{64}\) For example, planning for an ageing urban population requires innovation, infrastructural and architectural changes as well as devoting adequate resources to geriatric care and other social services.\(^{65}\)

Countries must support their ageing populations in line with the SDGs’ overriding principle of “leave no one behind” and the New Urban Agenda’s commitment “to addressing the social, economic and spatial implications of ageing populations…and harnessing the ageing factor as an opportunity for new decent jobs and sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, while improving the quality of life of the urban population.”\(^{66}\) Regions characterised by an ageing population and urban shrinkage, and are under the looming threat of urban economic blight, can—in addition to strategic actions aimed at retaining young and skilled persons and reducing their outflow from cities—increase the openness towards external migrants and integrating them into the cities as a part of reurbanization and revitalization strategies to compensate for the depopulation process.\(^{67}\)

Today, major economic activities are increasingly concentrated in large urbanized regions, or “mega-regions,” that are centred in and around large cities. The “winner take all” approach propels such places to growing economically faster than others creating more localized development as opposed to allowing more diffused spatial development across territories.\(^{68}\) Such asymmetrical development is compounding the urban spatial divide, especially with regard to secondary cities. To realize sustainable urban futures, various levels of government can develop and implement national urban policies as can strategies that ensure integrated spatial growth and development to harness the economic potential of such urban centres within national systems of cities.

Sustainable urban futures are contingent on viable sources of finance. However, cities face multiple constraints such as insufficient and unpredictable transfers from central government, weak fiscal management, poor revenue generation and legal constraints. The COVID-19 pandemic has undeniably exacerbated the precarious financial environment for cities, yet their investment needs to address their persistent social, economic and environmental challenges remains as critical as ever. Today, the ”scissors effect” of rising expenditure and falling revenues is observed in most cities.\(^{69}\)

While government revenues remain the primary source of financing for most cities, the vast investment needed to achieve sustainable urban futures will not be met entirely through the means of the public sector or traditional financing. The path to long-term sustainable financing in cities requires diversification of sources and mobilization of resources from a range of actors. Employing innovative financing mechanisms are thus an imperative.

A proposed policy for unlocking new capital investment in the context of COVID-19 is the expansion and redistribution of liquidity from developed to developing countries through Special Drawing Rights. New capital can also be unlocked by the establishment of multilateral funds such as the Fund Against COVID-

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\(^{64}\) UN-Habitat (2021) Cities and Pandemics: Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future, UN-Habitat, Nairobi
\(^{65}\) IMF (2017) Regional Economic Outlook – Asia and Pacific: Preparing for Choppy Seas, IMF, Washington, DC
\(^{67}\) WUF11 preconcept paper
Economics that has been proposed by the Government of Costa Rica. Another policy action relates to strengthening regional and subregional cooperation by improving the lending and response capacity of regional, subregional and national development banks and other regional institutions. To ensure effectiveness and coherence, these policy initiatives should be linked to build forward better and greener.

### Dialogue 4: Future urban economy and finance

**Key Issues**

There is little doubt that the Covid-19 pandemic has negatively impacted urban economies across the world. Practically, all have experienced a decline in economic output, a drop in employment, a shrinking fiscal space, and growing pressure on public finances. Divergences in the scale of the pandemic’s economic impact has largely been attributed to the economic structure of urban areas, their exposure to global markets, preexisting inequalities, fiscal and financial health of various levels of government, as well as employment and social protection measures, among others.

Moving forward, instead of replicating the flaws (that perpetuate poverty, inequality and exclusion, and unbalanced spatial patterns that reinforce asymmetrical economic development in the national systems of cities, among others) that cast a shadow on better urban futures, various levels of government have a role to play in ensuring that the future urban economy is resilient and contributes to inclusive prosperity for all. For those at the bottom of the economic ladder, the economic value of urbanization lies in its contribution to poverty reduction, whether through formal or informal employment. Various levels of government should thus create conditions that allow for more economic opportunities for all.

As envisioned in the global agendas, better economic future for cities is possible. A future where economic aspirations and ambitions are realized for all, including economic opportunities for marginalized groups. This translates to poverty reduction. It also means expanding capabilities as well as reducing worker vulnerability through adequate employment and social protection measures.

Deliberately addressing the vulnerabilities that the crisis has exposed is integral to putting our cities on a path to economically resilient urban futures. Fundamental to building a robust reimagined post-pandemic economy is keeping in mind the simultaneous and often self-reinforcing objectives of productivity improvement and inclusion.

Financing sustainable urbanization is an investment in the present and future wellbeing of all nations. It is important to address how urban futures can be adequately financed in the face of dwindling local government revenues amidst COVID-19, increasing national budget deficit and decreasing foreign investment among other fiscal constraints.

**Objectives of the Dialogue**

This Dialogue will explore how to achieve inclusive urban economies that are resilient to shocks in light of the economic realities the COVID-19 has triggered. Drawing on perspectives from different parts of the world, the dialogue will also explore how sustainable urban futures can be adequately financed.

**Initial Questions**

This Dialogue will address the following questions:

i. How can urban economies be strengthened and made inclusive following the impacts of COVID-19?

ii. What is the path to a resilient future that guarantees shared prosperity?

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71 ECLAC (2021)


iii. How can the economy of cities be fully fit for purpose to withstand shocks and have the necessary financial resources to provide a wide range of public goods and services and achieve sustainable urban futures?

iv. What does the future of cities hold for the informal sector and its workers especially in the context of the new normal who consider public space as their “workplace”?

v. What new innovative sources of municipal finance can be unlocked for the future of cities

**Strategic Partnership** (Text for this section will come for the concept note prepared by the Dialogue Focal Points)

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**Dialogue 5: Urban planning and governance**

Inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements as set out in SDG 11 are the outcome of good governance that encompasses integrated urban and territorial planning, jurisdictional and multilevel coordination, inclusive participation, effective leadership, as well as adequate financing. In the NUA, urban and territorial planning are introduced as key levers to promote sustainable urban development; with central relevance in economic growth, environmental sustainability and social equity, and vital to addressing a myriad challenges that cities face. These global agendas recognize the role of urban planning and governance in spurring necessary changes needed for a sustainable future.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a renewed focus on the nexus between urban planning, governance and health in public policy discourse. The pandemic’s disruptive nature has redefined the urban landscape in many ways including how we interact in public space. It has also exposed the weaknesses of the current urban planning and governance systems in addressing complex emergencies. This has been evident from the fragmented response to the crisis at various levels of governance and across jurisdictional boundaries.

The purposes of planning and how it is undertaken are shaped by the wider context of governance. Weaknesses of urban planning systems in effectively addressing such crises reflect failings in the society’s governance structure. In essence, the foregoing underscores the need for urban planning and governance frameworks to continuously adjust to the new realities and forces refashioning the global context so that we do not continue on the current trajectory of disfunctions. Thus, it is so vital for planning to be rooted in a global perspective, not parochial, to effectively help cities adjust to the new normal foisted on us by the pandemic and in the global efforts to leverage recovery that is greener, more inclusive and more sustainable. Better urban futures call for planning paradigms that are responsive to changes in the urban realities—these can play a vital role in addressing multiple and evolving challenges and improving resilience across the urban-rural continuum. This kind of urban and territorial planning will improve preparedness and empower cities to adequately respond to all hazards, including public health threats and future systemic shocks.

Going forward, the future of urban planning and governance should therefore be charted as a public good function or at the service of the public good, as opposed to being an instrument of short-term gain benefits of some real estate and housing actions that are detached from sustainable ambitions. It must also address contextual realities to be meaningful. Indeed, planning is only meaningful when it is in consonance with the prevailing socioeconomic milieu, institutional arrangements, local capacities as well as resources available to any given context and all social groups within it. Building upon the International Guidelines for Urban and Territorial Planning, UN-Habitat has crafted a “manifesto” that provides a new a way of looking at and doing urban and territorial planning (Box 1). This enhances the capacities of various actors

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to be adaptive while reconciling and integrating spatial, social, economic, cultural, political and environmental concerns in the urban-rural continuum for a better future.

**Box 1: Manifesto for Urban and Territorial Planning**

- UTP should be rooted in a global perspective
- UTP needs to be rights based
- UTP needs to integrate development with infrastructure
- UTP needs to be focussed on implementation
- UTP needs to be informed by budgets but be robust
- UTP needs to secure political legitimacy
- UTP needs to be tuned to subsidiarity and diversity
- UTP needs to be clear, simple and rapid
- UTP needs to respect and capitalise on the special characteristics of places


Urban planning and governance should play a key role in transforming and improving the resilience of urban “weak spots,” which invariably have a harder time responding to shocks or stresses due to their physical form and the unavailability of services.\(^80\) This means that the planning and management of cities should, for example, urgently address the economic, environmental and social infrastructure needs of slums and informal settlements to avoid the unbearable conditions in these areas that may be posed by future shocks and threats. The current crisis can serve as an opportunity for urban planners and other professionals to seriously consider permanent interventions. Interventions that both enhance the form and function of the city and also respond to the threat of future pandemics and climate risks.\(^81\)

In the same vein, well-planned and managed density delivers agglomeration economies, supports economies of scale in the provision of critical public services and have better experiences with collective and organized living that is amenable to making needed adjustments to adapt to the evolving changes necessitated by multiple threats and shocks to daily life. The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the value of proximity by enhancing accessibility through urban planning and design.\(^82\) In this regard, there is renewed focus on compact, mixed-use neighbourhoods and use of non-motorized transport such as cycling and walking. Centered around proximity, the 15-minute city has emerged as the most important concepts of making cities more sustainable.\(^83\)

Fundamentally, such proposals imply improving the quality and density of public transport links between neighbourhoods and to poorly-connected neighbourhoods (urban “weak spots”), among other raft of measures.\(^84\) Whilst COVID-19 has further stigmatized public transport—as it is perceived as a major gateway for the spread of such diseases,\(^85\)—public transport remains integral to achieving cleaner and greener urban futures. This means that public transport systems should be made accessible, safe, affordable, efficient and reliable, and able to serve diverse demands, both now and in the future. Additionally, it also

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80 UN-Habitat (2021) *Cities and Pandemics: Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi
81 Florida et. al. (2020)
implies that the enormous amount of public space dedicated to private vehicles need to be reconsidered and prioritized for such public transportation systems and other uses like pedestrian walkways, i.e., encouraging a shift to modes of transport with significant health and environmental benefits that can transform cities for a better urban future.

Emerging lessons from COVID-19 pandemic clearly demonstrate weakness of the current urban governance frameworks in addressing complex global emergencies. The fragmented response at various scales of governance calls for strong, effective and inclusive institutions as well as more integrated, cooperative multi-level governance approach. Multilevel governance arrangements, for instance, are instrumental for creating synergies, reducing overlapping and critical gaps between institutions, and promoting trust and accountability that enhance policy coherence. Stronger multilevel collaborations are thus crucial now and going forward to confront future threat and shocks. Effective localization of the global agendas and the realization of the economic, social, environmental, health, infrastructural, and institutional imperatives underlying sustainable urban futures hinges on multilevel governance arrangements.

Innovative governance approaches that include non-state stakeholders (e.g., community groups and civil society) can steer urban areas through the present challenges as well as uncertainty and dynamics of an unpredictable future. This includes harnessing the potential unleashed by civic technologies through portals like Decide Madrid of the Madrid City Council for e-governance.

### Dialogue 5: Urban planning and governance

**Key Issues**

COVID-19 has certainly necessitated the rethinking of the form and function of the city, and is providing lessons on meeting the present urban challenges as well as mitigating the potential impacts of future threats to cities. There is no doubt that cities’ preparedness, response and recovery from future shocks and crises rests on robust urban planning and governance systems. During this pandemic, the fragmentation of actions at various levels have shown that policies to improve urban and territorial planning are essential and “urban planners and leaders must rethink how people move through and in cities.”

The pandemic renewed a focus on urban planning, governance and health in policy discourse, is shaping the visions and future design of the built environment as well as reshaping urban mobility, among others. Importantly, the pandemic has called into question the adaptability of urban planning and governance paradigms to the new realities and forces shaping cities. It has brought to the fore the necessity of repositioning planning to play a more proactive role in the transition to more sustainable urban futures.

Relatedly, it is reinforcing an important lesson: no single city, irrespective of its resources, can address the emerging shocks and threats singlehandedly and stronger multilevel collaboration are an imperative for sustainable urban futures.

The relentless process of urbanization means that the emergence of new urban configurations traversing jurisdictional boundaries of existing cities will be a key feature in the futures. Innovative arrangements that create new forms of governance (e.g., metropolitan governance in applicable contexts) across existing administrative boundaries and sectors thus needed to reinforce cross-jurisdiction cooperation at various levels.

New technologies and innovation hold immense potential for urban planning and governance and can be leveraged to help deliver the SDGs and implement the NUA. On the other hand, emerging technologies can also be disruptive to the governance of cities. To realize these benefits and mitigate against negative disruption, we must interrogate the concepts of data sharing, governance, and management, and develop policy options for the ethical governance of disruptive technologies.

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87 UN-Habitat (2021) Cities and Pandemics: Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future, UN-Habitat, Nairobi
88 https://unhabitat.org/un-habitat%E2%80%AF-report%E2%80%AF-calls-%E2%80%AFfor-cities-post-pandemic-to-lead-the-way-to-a-fairer-greener-healthier
Dialogue 6: Building urban resilience

The COVID-19 pandemic is a stark reminder and opportunity for cities to refocus and build up resilience against unexpected shocks and threats moving forward. “Resilient cities are those able to absorb, adapt, transform and prepare for past and future shocks and stresses in order to ensure sustainable development, well-being and inclusive growth.”

Following the effects of COVID-19, building resilience will require a stronger and more effective multilateral system which can complement and reinforce—not undermine—national and local efforts to put the world firmly on the trajectory of sustainable development.

Building resilience must be at the heart of sustainable urban futures. National governments and relevant stakeholders at various levels and in different contexts must take steps to build resilience across various dimensions—economic, social and environmental, including appropriate governance and institutional structures. The interconnected nature of risks and opportunities for transformation calls for a systemic approach to cities in enhancing resilience across all these different, yet interconnected, dimensions. Further, the implementation of the global agendas is crucial in building urban resilience across these dimensions.

Economic resilience can be enhanced through diversification/repositioning the urban economy in the face of the new normal, building strong economies to grow investments, access to productive employment/income generation opportunities, supporting the informal sector, leveraging on new fiscal sustainability frameworks, among others.

Social or societal resilience can be enhanced through policies that address poverty and inequality, including context-specific social protection schemes that cities can use in safeguarding their vulnerable and marginalized groups. In this regard, social resilience should be people-centred, by focusing on the well-

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89 Resilience in the urban context refers to the ability of any urban system, with its inhabitants, to maintain continuity through all shocks and stresses, while positively adapting and transforming toward sustainability UN-Habitat and DiMUR (2020)
being of individuals, enhancing inclusiveness and reducing inequality.\textsuperscript{92} There is a growing consensus that universal basic income, universal health insurance and universal housing should be part of the new normal as cities seek to recover from the impacts of COVID-19.\textsuperscript{93} The promotion of social inclusion and cohesion through social mix—different social categories living in the same neighbourhood should be part of any social resilience strategy.\textsuperscript{94}

Environmental resilience can be enhanced by investment in green infrastructure, including renewable and cleaner forms of energy that will we create lasting solutions, reduce the risks of future crises and strengthen resilience to the impacts of climate change. Mitigation of urban risks at the local level and the identification of feasible solutions for disaster prevention and preparedness.\textsuperscript{95}

Achieving institutional resilience entails building stronger and more nimble forms of multilevel collaboration that respond to sustainable urban futures; harnessing new technologies in steering resilient urban futures; well-funded and resourced local governments; integrated urban planning as a foundation of resilient urban futures that can withstand various threats and shocks; building the required capacity for realizing sustainable urban futures in ways that also help to advance the NUA, SDGs and other development agenda relevant to sustainable urbanization.

Building resilience for sustainable urban futures is a multisectoral, multidimensional and multi-stakeholder effort, which requires effective collaboration and cooperation across all scales, as the various dimension of resilience are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. In practice, well-designed resilience policies can cover these dimensions simultaneously.\textsuperscript{97} For instance, measures designed to drive the urban economy and thus, enhance economic resilience should be aligned with the long-term objectives of achieving net-zero GHG emissions.

**Table 1. Urban Resilience Principles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principle 1</td>
<td>Resilience is not a condition but a state that cannot be sustained unless the system evolves, transforms, and adapts to current and future circumstances and changes. Therefore, building resilience requires the implementation of context-specific and flexible plans and actions that can be adjusted to the dynamic nature of risk and resilience.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Principle 2</td>
<td>Recognizing that cities are comprised of systems interconnected through complex networks and that changes in one part have the potential to propagate through the whole network, building resilience requires a broad and holistic approach that takes into account these interdependencies when the urban system is exposed to disturbances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principle 3</td>
<td>A resilient system ensures the preservation of life, limitation of injury, and enhancement of the “prosperity” of its inhabitants by promoting inclusiveness and fostering comprehensive and meaningful participation of all, particularly those in vulnerable situations, in planning and various governance processes. Such an approach can ensure sense of ownership, thus achieving successful implementation of plans and actions.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


\textsuperscript{93} UN-Habitat (2021) *Cities and Pandemics: Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi


\textsuperscript{95} UN-Habitat and DiMUR (2020)


### Principle 4
Multi-stakeholder engagement

A resilient system should ensure the continuity of governance, economy, commerce, and other functions and flows upon which its inhabitants rely. This necessitates promoting open communication and facilitating integrative collaborations between a broad array of stakeholders, ranging from public entities, private sector, civil society, and academia to all of the city’s inhabitants.

### Principle 5
Strive towards development goals

Resilience building should drive towards, safeguard, and sustain development goals. Approaches to resilience should ensure that efforts to reduce risk and alleviate certain vulnerabilities do not generate or increase others. It must guarantee that human rights are fulfilled, respected, and protected under any circumstances.


### Dialogue 4: Building urban resilience

#### Key Issues
The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that urban areas must continually adapt to various challenges in an integrated and holistic manner. At the same time, use such shocks and threats as inflexion points for transformation of the society to a better future

Urban resilience should not just imply being able to withstand adversity, but without really changing the underlying conditions that created such adverse situation in the first place—i.e., embracing the notion of resilience that seems to favour endurance (more as a palliative) or maintaining the status quo. Rather, it should be transformative.

The idea of questioning/challenging the perspectives on and capacities for resilience is to go beyond ‘building back better’ to building forward differently, in a manner that does not preserve the existing state of affairs, but a real change that confronts structural inequalities in an uneven society and represents a development gain. Resilience building should drive towards, safeguard, and sustain development goals (see Table 1)

This transformative resilience holds the potential to turn the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic into opportunities for growth and innovation that addresses existing challenges in cities, particularly for urban “weak spots” such as slums and informal settlements that disproportionately suffer from the impacts of climate change and natural disasters.

#### Objectives of the Dialogue
This Dialogue will explore building urban resilience across various dimensions—economic, social and environmental, including appropriate governance and institutional structures. It will do this questioning the prevalent notions of resilience with the aim of using lesson from the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to progress and transform our cities for a better urban future

#### Initial Questions
This Dialogue will address the following questions:

i. What policy directions can governments and relevant stakeholders at various levels and in different contexts take to build resilience across various dimensions—economic, social and environmental, including appropriate governance and institutional structures?

ii. How can various level of government implement innovative programmes and policies (such as universal basic income, universal health insurance and universal housing) that have the potential to address inequalities in cities and enhancing societal resilience? What are the obstacles to achieving that?

iii. How can cities build resilience that is more transformative as opposed to one that only favours palliative solutions (thus maintaining the status quo)? What are the supportive structures and capacities required to achieve this in various contexts?

iv. Drawing from the COVID-19 pandemic, what lessons are emerging on resilience building in various cities and regions? How can this inform building sustainable urban futures?

v. What are the necessary supportive structure and capacity required to build resilient urban futures in
different contexts? What are the roles of the different levels of government and relevant stakeholders in ensuring that this resilience is transformative?

vi. How can organizational capacity in building urban resilience be enhanced and sustained in various levels of government?

Strategic Partnership (Text for this section will come for the concept note prepared by the Dialogue Focal Points)