

UN HABITAT FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

PRESS RELEASE

New York, 23 September 2013: Planners should focus on access and not transport to provide efficient and effective mobility in urban areas, says new report by the United Nations Human Settlements Programmes, UN-Habitat.

In the *Global Report on Human Settlements 2013 – Planning and Design for Sustainable Urban Mobility* – UN-Habitat says the greatest challenge to urban mobility comes from the fixation with building or expanding transport infrastructure, over increasingly long distances, rather than ensuring people greater access to destinations and facilities that satisfy their needs. The report suggests that urban planners and decision-makers must realize the human right of people to equitable access and make the fulfillment of that right the focus of their efforts to improve urban mobility.

“Mobility is not just about developing transport infrastructure and services; it is about overcoming the social, economic, political and physical barriers to movement, such as class, gender relations, poverty, physical disabilities and affordability,” says UN Under-Secretary-General and UN-Habitat Executive Director, Dr Joan Clos. “The right to equitable access is about empowering people to exercise their basic human rights to the fullest.”

The report states that there is a huge disconnect between transport needs and investments, where – despite over half of all passenger and goods trips being by foot, bicycle or rickshaw – the bulk of transport investments focus on cars.

“The solution to urban mobility prescribed in most countries up until now has been to build more infrastructures for cars, with a limited number of cities improving public transport systems in a sustainable manner”, says Dr Clos. “However, the transportation sector is also responsible for a number of other challenges that are not necessarily solved by the construction of new infrastructure and these must also be addressed.”

The report also makes recommendations regarding the impact of the transport sector on the environment and socio-economic aspects of urban life such as climate change, traffic accidents and community bonds.

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