

UN HABITAT FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

PRESS RELEASE

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London, 4 October 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, which will be launched at the Siemens Crystal building in London’s Docklands area, 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 launch event will take place in a temporary 'station' built as part of an exhibition to commemorate the 150 year anniversary of the London Underground at the Crystal which will open to the public on 8 October. The exhibition showcases what metro travel of the future could look like with focus on technologies that make public transportation more attractive and flexible plus a live size model of an underground train.

Hosted by Siemens, it will feature a presentation of the key findings of the report by UN-Habitat’s Head of Urban Basic Services, Andre Dzikus, and a panel discussion with some of the agency’s key partners and actors in the field of global transportation including the International Transport Association (UITP), the European Bank for

Reconstruction and Development, Transport Research Laboratory, Transport for London and global construction firm Arup.

Background

The *Global Report on Human Settlements* provides an up-to-date assessment of conditions and trends in the world's cities and other human settlements. These reports are essential tools and references for researchers, academics, planners, public authorities and civil society organizations around the world.

The theme of this year's publication, Planning and Design for Sustainable Urban Mobility, is also the topic of this year's World Habitat Day, celebrated annually on the first Monday of October to reflect on the state of human settlements and sustainable urbanization.

Current urbanization patterns are causing unprecedented challenges to urban mobility systems, particularly in developing countries. The report calls for a paradigm shift to understand the role of transportation within cities. Cities need to envisage their long-term futures, crafting visions that are eventually articulated into spatial plans and specific-land use initiatives. Mobility is not just about developing transport infrastructure and services, but about overcoming the social, economic, political physical barrier to movement. The purpose of 'transportation' and 'mobility' is to gain access to destinations, activities, services and goods; access is the ultimate objective of all transportation.

As the United Nations Human Settlement Programme, UN-Habitat is the United Nations agency for sustainable urban development. UN-Habitat is working in human settlements throughout the world, focusing on building a better future for developing villages, towns and cities of all sizes, which are most in need to support in guiding the process of urbanization.

For more information please visit www.unhabitat.org or to request an interview with Andre Dzikus, contact Jeanette Elsworth on +254 (0)723 268 135, email: jeanette.elsworth@unhabitat.org