



Chief Executive Board for Coordination

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UN System-Wide Strategy on Sustainable Urban Development

prepared by the High-Level Committee on Programmes
under the leadership of UN-Habitat

Introduction

1. At its 36th session held at IFAD, Rome, the High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) of the Chief Executive Board (CEB) approved the proposal to develop a system-wide strategy for sustainable urban development, for consideration at HLCP's 37th session. This should build upon an earlier analytical work and ensure alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other relevant global agreements as well as reflect several global policy developments. HLCP called for a time-bound, consultative inter-agency process through an HLCP task team and requested UN-Habitat to lead a consultation process through an HLCP task team. Since HLCP carried out its earlier analytical work in 2016, the General Assembly adopted the *New Urban Agenda* (GA/Res/71/256) and the resolution on *Repositioning the United Nations development system* (GA/Res/72/279) to ensure greater coherence across the UN system to better support Member States achieve the SDGs (Agenda 2030). At its 6 June 2018 session, the *Senior Management Group* recognized urbanization as a “mega trend,” and called upon UN-Habitat to facilitate cooperation among agencies to advance UN system-wide coherence for sustainable urbanization. The mandate of the task team is to prepare a paper that will guide how the UN system coordinates its efforts to assist Member States to harness the opportunities and meet the challenges of rapid urbanization for the attainment of the SDGs and other global agendas.
2. To carry out its mandate, agencies participating in the task team completed a brief survey on sustainable urban development. In their responses, agencies clarified how they are addressing urban issues and what they view as the major challenges to working in cities. They also indicated what strategies they plan to implement to ensure they can fulfill their respective mandates in a rapidly urbanizing world.
3. The paper follows the logic of the annotated outline approved by HLCP at its 36th session, beginning with a consolidated overview of the potential sustainable urbanization holds as a transformative force for the attainment of Agenda 2030. In keeping with the spirit of HLCP analytical work, the paper then considers frontier issues that will impact on sustainable urbanization. The subsequent two sections highlight the intended outcomes that can be achieved with greater coherence across the

United Nations system and the means of implementation afforded by the key drivers of sustainable urbanization as endorsed by Member States in the New Urban Agenda. The concluding sections are forward looking. They suggest how the UN can more effectively assist Member States harnessing the opportunities of sustainable urban development by organizing efforts collectively to advance aspects of urban data, policy, partnership and financing. They also contain recommendations for utilizing the reform processes and Strategic Results Groups of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) to advance UN system-wide coherence for sustainable urban development. The paper concludes with suggestions about the role of UN-Habitat in the implementation of the system-wide strategy and promotion of sustainable urban development, and the role of HLCP going forward.

Section 1: The Potential of Sustainable Urbanization as a Transformative Force

4. This section retains the sequencing of the earlier analytical work of HLCP and is organized roughly along the sequential logic of the SDGs. As with the interlinkages between their targets, there is an overlapping correspondence between each of the SDGs and the subsections below; therefore, strict correlations and categorizations have been avoided deliberately.

The Spatial Dimension of Poverty

5. While poverty has fallen dramatically at the global level, urban poverty continues to grow in many countries. Urban poverty is characterized by low incomes, low levels of access to justice, housing, water, sanitation, education and health services, as well as to hunger and malnutrition. Almost half the world's children live in urban areas, many residing in formal settlements, and an estimated 300 million live in slums. Poverty also has a strong spatial dimension, with high concentrations and entrenched marginalization in specific locations. Though many of these challenges also affect rural dwellers, the price of food, health services and education are usually higher in urban areas, often outpacing their income gains. Even when such services are available, they may be unaffordable and inaccessible to the poorest, disproportionately affecting children and their families. This is frequently exacerbated by a lack of opportunities for food self-sufficiency and fragmented informal social safety nets. Urban livelihoods are highly dependent upon monetary income, and therefore upon predictable income, which is particularly scarce in informal economies. This makes the poorest households especially vulnerable to internal and external economic factors outside their control. Spatial inequality manifests itself in the different experiences and opportunities that people can have and the rights that they can exercise: access to adequate housing, clean drinking water, sanitation, pollution free living environments, domestic energy, transport, health, education, culture, safety and public space. Yet no country in the world has reached middle income status without urbanizing. Cities presently account for 80 per cent of the world's gross domestic product (GDP)¹. Many developing countries have witnessed high economic growth rates of over 7 per cent per year since 2010, and most of this growth is concentrated around industrial activities of towns and cities, with employment opportunities similarly located. Cities, as the main sources of industrial and high-technology employment, can still be pathways out of poverty. It is often true that the poorest and

¹https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Featured%20Insights/Urbanization/Urban%20world/MGI_urban_world_mapping_economic_power_of_cities_full_report.ashx

most vulnerable lack the skills required for high-tech employment. Nevertheless, if cities are planned and managed correctly, they have considerable power to address poverty at the national level.

Health and Wellbeing

6. Health gaps in cities are increasing due to poor access to health services, inadequate housing, food and nutrition insecurity, malnutrition and obesity, problems with water safety and availability, inadequate sanitation and solid waste disposal services, air pollution, traffic congestion, road safety, epidemics of both communicable and non-communicable diseases and occupational health problems and accidents at work. Poor dietary habits are among the leading risk factors for global deaths and global disease burden.² Besides overweight and obesity, child and maternal undernutrition are also among the top risk factors for the global burden of disease.³ These risks are even bigger in urban settings due to poverty and unequal access to healthy food. The proximity of people living in environmentally poor conditions increases the risk of and vulnerability to maternal mortality, infectious diseases such as tuberculosis (TB) and vaccine-preventable diseases. This is further exacerbated by the congestion and high population densities that often characterize most cities providing an environment for epidemics. Cities especially in developing world are fast becoming hotspots for cholera and other communicable diseases with children mostly affected. Young children are especially susceptible to diseases. They lack immunization coverage and adequate child care facilities and, in the absence of public and green spaces, have limited options for play and leisure. Further, urban environmental pollution is a problem that is particularly egregious to children's physical and cognitive development; 300 million children live in areas where air pollution exceeds the WHO recommended guidelines by more than six-fold. Cities also bear a large and increasing share of the global HIV burden. Deaths due to road traffic crashes account for a high number of mortalities for children between 10-19 and this is more visible in the urban context. All the same, well-planned and managed urbanization offers many opportunities for increasing collaboration between urban planners, health and non-health actors, to reduce health inequalities and increase wellbeing. Fostering education and awareness raising, leveraging traditional knowledge and facilitating participatory processes is equally critical to ensure wider access to health care and wellbeing. Changes in the built and social environments, such as more walkable or bikeable cities and more green space have demonstrable impacts on reducing many non-communicable and infectious diseases, improving environmental conditions, air-quality and traffic incidents. Leadership shown by cities through engaging urban planners and health professionals, has resulted in successes in areas such as reducing obesity, tobacco use, as well as cases of tuberculosis.

Women and the City

7. For women and girls, urbanization is often associated with greater access to education and employment opportunities, lower fertility rates and increased independence. Yet, women's equal 'right to the city' is still far from being realized, especially among lower-income women. This is evidenced, for example, by women's lack of personal safety when using public transport; the frequent discrimination they suffer as workers in public spaces; their limited land and property ownership; and the disproportionately detrimental consequences of the lack of services on their

² Global Burden of Disease, 2016 Risk Factors Collaborators, 2017.

³ Global Burden of Disease, 2016 Causes of Death Collaborators, 2017.

health and well-being.⁴ Those living below the poverty line tend to concentrate in the low-wage, low-skilled jobs in the informal sector and experience more insecurity and vulnerability to violence, including sexual violence, both in the public space, and within the household. Moreover, women in poor communities often do not enjoy the same rights to land, infrastructure and adequate housing. However, the greater cultural diversity found in urban areas can provide an enabling environment to question social norms, promote equal rights, overcome gender stereotypes that hold women back and perpetuate gender discrimination against women, girls and youth in general. Furthermore, cities may offer better social and physical infrastructure, including access to justice, sexual and reproductive health, as well as opportunities for practicing sports, recreation and cultural activities. There are also growing opportunities in cities for women to access fairer wages and engage equally in the labor market, including in high-skilled or leadership positions. Though few cities have mainstreamed gender into their policies, the increase in women's representative role in local governments—both at the political level and in technical departments—has begun to combat discriminations and inequality and raise the bar for expectations of gender parity.

Urban (In)equality

8. In many cities there is a growing concentration of overlapping forms of social exclusion and marginalization of homeless persons, immigrants, ethnic minorities or indigenous people, young people at risk, LGBTIQ communities, minorities, women-headed households, older persons, persons with disabilities and unemployed and underemployed populations. Unfortunately, racism, discrimination, xenophobia, homophobia and intolerance are being exacerbated by populism. As long as large proportions of urban populations are socially and economically excluded they are vulnerable to violence, stigma and discrimination, sometimes as a result of heavy-handed responses by police forces. For youth in particular this can mean self-harm or crime. At an extreme this may involve the trafficking of guns, drugs, and trafficking in persons. In addition, intolerance contributing to violent extremism and terrorism can have drastic consequences on communities. This said, many cities are combatting exclusion and promoting economic, social, and cultural rights, with regards to adequate housing, education, tenure security and water and sanitation as well as sexual rights. A human rights-based approach to urbanization is vital to make cities work for people as places of equal opportunity for all, where people can live in security, peace and dignity. It is also gaining more traction in many cities and countries and city governments, which, through their autonomy, networks and proximity to populations, are increasingly effective in combating discrimination and integrating social cohesion into sustainable urban development strategies.

Infrastructure and Connectivity

9. Cities and regions are more and more interconnected, not only through their physical infrastructure such as transportation, power and communication facilities, but also to distant and multiple locations through financial capital, resource flows and commodity chains. The landscape of urbanization is rapidly changing, affecting the scale, rate, location, form and function of human settlements. This is true between regions, across the rural urban continuum and within the same city. Spatial inequalities in cities and across territories perpetuate other forms of social, economic, political and cultural inequalities with the poorest and marginalized populations mostly affected and which in turn could lead to social tensions and eventual violence. Placing people at the core of planning policies and

⁴ UN Women (2018), *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

strategies is essential to tackle spatial, economic and social inequalities as well to enhance the livability of the urban environment, building on the diversity of cultural activities and urban heritage and promoting tailored, place-based planning solutions. Cities that are better connected with each other, with their regions and with the rest of the world can add to productivity growth, mutually beneficial trade of good and services and more effective and accessible service delivery. The benefits of agglomeration, when combined with smart industrial and economic policies, open opportunities to enhance human well-being and prosperity. However, cities and towns must also ensure that their citizens equally benefit from agglomeration factors—that networks of roads and infrastructure reach low income settlements, that urban spaces also provide the poor with productive opportunities and that regulations allow them to be service providers as well, including adequate infrastructure for markets. Cities may also need to tackle issues such as over-capitalization of housing and land speculation that heavily impact affordability in cities and the rights of citizens to an adequate standard of living and housing. By being physically, socially and economically connected, the expected growth in cities can be better distributed among all stakeholders, including low-income communities. Urbanization, though balanced territorial policies, can transform territories, bringing services and infrastructure within reach of the rural poor. As cities constitute a common space for a diversity of actors, with corresponding impact on the resources available to those actors, it is essential that cities be built for citizens, investors and visitors alike, with special consideration for the special needs of the poor and most marginalized populations.

Housing and Slums

10. In much of the developing world urban expansion is increasingly beset by informality, whether due to lack of planning and/or affordability measures. 880-some million slum dwellers suffer from poor sanitation, inadequate access to clean water, food insecurity, lack of educational facilities, poor health, crime, unemployment, insecure tenure and overcrowding.⁵ Meanwhile, speculative behavior and inadequate financial regulation triggered a financial crisis that have led to the foreclosure on millions of homeowners, evictions and homelessness as well a shortage of housing even for the middle class. Speculative behavior in many countries continues to finance urban expansion beleaguered by poor street and infrastructure connectivity, excessive mobility and high rates of resource use. Moreover, decades of considering housing as a commodity and not as a human right, coupled with a lack of infrastructure planning and a gap between policies and the realities of housing markets, has led to an increase in housing demand which has exacerbated housing unaffordability.⁶ Unfortunately, neither the public nor the private sector have been able to provide affordable housing for the poor at the scale that the current crisis requires. More than half of city space is composed of residential areas. Despite and indeed because of this, urban housing brings an opportunity for social, economic and spatial integration. In recent years approaches to housing policies have expanded beyond criteria of affordability to include, inter alia, security of tenure, accessibility, habitability, cultural adequacy and access to healthy food. When appropriately planned and designed, housing can contribute to optimal densities that enhance the benefits of agglomeration including proximate livelihood opportunities, reduced infrastructure costs, preservation of public space, and better public and non-motorized transport. However, it is essential that urban expansion does not infringe upon the legitimate land tenure rights of people including, inter alia, residents of informal settlements, local smallholder farmers and indigenous peoples. Community-based slum upgrading processes

⁵ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2018>

⁶ [source from Christophe Lalande]

build upon informal settlements' human, social and cultural capital as a driving force to gradually upgrade services and improve living conditions in urban neighborhoods.

Crime and Violence

11. Cities are host to significant levels of multi-layered crime and violence, including extortions, robberies, drug and human trafficking, sexual violence, violent extremism which can lead to terrorism, and the criminal depredation of urban spaces and infrastructure perpetrated by gangs, organized criminal groups, armed individuals and militias, and sometimes even state security and law enforcement agencies themselves. They affect overwhelmingly the most deprived urban communities, where city governments and law enforcement agencies fail to fulfill their public security role, while richer sections of society resort to private security provision, often operating outside of legally-defined boundaries.⁷ Disadvantaged children living in cities are among the most vulnerable, facing heightened risk to exploitation, violence, crime, and drugs. Cities play a crucial role in maintaining law and order. Integrity in law enforcement entities is a prerequisite for public trust, and for maintaining peace and security; local police forces and local governments must be aware of the eroding risks associated with corruption and should initiate appropriate responses to address these risks. Abuses of power carry potential for radicalizing youth and pushing them towards violent extremism. As such, cities need to consider implementing anti-corruption policies to ensure the integrity and human rights compliance of their law enforcement forces. To achieve meaningful and sustainable solutions to violence, cities must tackle its root causes and through integrated preventative strategies. Multi-stakeholder and multi-disciplinary initiatives at the city government level have resulted in increased community engagement and support mechanisms that extend the reach of law enforcement, improve response to criminal incidents and include close cooperation with civil society to prevent armed violence. These initiatives also tackle dimensions of urban life critical to creating safer public spaces and environments, including job-creation, education, culture, health and access to justice.

Agglomeration and Efficiency

12. In developing countries, where the second urbanization wave is well under way, cities are facing the need to invest on a massive scale in new urban infrastructure to meet the rapidly growing needs of expanding populations and economies. In 2012 it was estimated that 60% of the built environment required to meet the needs of the world's urban population by 2030 still needed to be constructed⁸. In light of the already enormous infrastructure backlog facing many growing cities, this is an alarming figure. A very dynamic system is emerging in which the form and functioning of cities is being determined by institutional and corporate decisions and choices, which are sometimes corrupted by vested interests, thereby limiting individual choices. This complexity requires solution-driven approaches that bring together all these actors, their processes and the impacts of individual and institutional decision-making. Fortunately, urban agglomeration allows cities to lever proximity and scale for greater productivity and innovation at lower costs. In fact, well planned urbanization is a cost-effective mean of extending infrastructure and services across an entire nation, improving the living standards, productivity and overall wellbeing of the whole population. The concentrated

⁷ UN-Habitat, *Global Report on Human Settlements 2007: Enhancing Urban Safety and Security*. Earthscan, London, 2007.

⁸ Fragkias, M et al. (2013). A Synthesis of Global Urbanization Projections. In T. Elmqvist et al (Eds.), *Urbanization, Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services: Challenges and Opportunities*. Netherlands: Springer

demand for goods and services in a limited area allows urban areas to combine greater productivity and innovation with lower costs. With the right degree of innovation and entrepreneurship, synergy in infrastructure development, management and service delivery can reduce overall material consumption while at the same time improving the well-being of citizens.

Natural Resources and Ecosystem Health

13. Urbanization can produce environmental challenges associated with intensive and inappropriate land uses, resource and energy consumption, and rising difficulties in ensuring efficient and sustainable food systems. When not well planned and managed, urbanization can even increase environmental health hazards, damage ecosystems and deplete natural resources. The material flows—of people, goods, food and environmental and other services and waste—required by cities’ functioning draw deeply on their hinterlands, complicating and blurring the transition between urban and rural areas. In many ways these transactions are depleting critical resources—fresh water, nitrogen, phosphorus, arable land—and endangering the survival of other species and indeed viability of entire ecosystems. However, the concentration of traditionally compact, mixed-use cities can limit the overall spatial footprint of urban development, allowing for the preservation of valuable peri-urban agricultural land and habitat in which countless, often unacknowledged, ecosystem services are delivered. Furthermore, the economies of scale inherent to cities make possible reduced per capita rates of resource use and energy consumption, large-scale reuse and recycling of materials. When combined with a policy environment that enhances urban-rural linkages, cities can even champion sustainable food production and consumption systems. Urbanization is a process that can transform territories, connecting human settlements across the urban-rural continuum, including small market towns, intermediate cities and main urban centers, and ensuring access to adequate and affordable housing, basic services and infrastructure to all. In this way cities offer fertile ground to put the circular economy into practice.

Climate Change, Natural Hazards and Disaster Risk Reduction

14. Cities are both significant contributors to and victims of climate change. They are generally high consumers of energy and producers of pollution. In fact, the IPCC, in its 2018 special report, has identified urbanization as one of the four megatrends that need to be addressed to achieve the target of limiting the average global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees.⁹ At the same time, urban areas are inherently more vulnerable to risks and stresses, as set out in the Sendai Framework, brought about by climate change and natural hazards due to their high concentrations of population and economic activities. This is exacerbated by the fact that cities are frequently located in low-lying coastal areas, with particularly vulnerable populations often living on outright hazardous land. Nevertheless, many cities are extremely well positioned to affect both mitigation and adaptation measures. Cities that are compact and achieve a mix of residential and commercial uses offer reduced per capita rates of resource use and greenhouse gas emissions as compared to other non-urban settlement types. Moreover, cities’ economies of scale and propensity to innovate make possible the use of renewable energy, recycling of solid waste and—particularly with information communication technologies (ICTs)—the detection, forecasting, and delivery of early warnings of natural disaster to policymakers. Even more importantly, when they incorporate nature-based solutions into their design and management, urban systems can benefit from multiple ecosystem

⁹ <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

services including carbon sequestration, local climate regulation, storm water capture and water and air purification.

Migration

15. Human mobility, whether forced or not, has historically shaped urbanization. However, its development potential can only be harnessed with policies and frameworks that ensure that migrants, irrespective of their status, are able to integrate into and contribute to their communities. Migrants are disproportionately affected by spatial inequality, tend to settle in poorer areas with inadequate housing and limited access to land. It is therefore important that urban governance and national urban policies consider the effects of and needs of migrants in order to ensure inclusive and prosperous cities. If no one is to be left behind, cities and urban areas must be inclusive in their policies and service provision from health to housing and from social protection to education. However, decisions related to migration are often state-led, which limits the ability of cities to act. Higher levels of government need to empower cities as first responders to migration by providing them with the necessary legislative frameworks, competencies and financing. Countries need cities with the capacity to leverage the potential of cultural diversity and ensure social cohesion. To achieve this, a whole-of-government approach to migration governance is essential, including at the local level with a view to enhancing both horizontal and vertical policy coherence.

Cities in Crisis, Displacement, Resilience and Peacebuilding

16. Global crises are increasingly complex and multi-dimensional. They are cyclical, recurrent, interconnected across geographical and regional boundaries and increasingly protracted. They are also increasingly urban in nature: as cities are exposed to an ever-wider variety of hazards they are accumulating more and more risk. Countries in fragile settings have very high rates of urbanization—fueled often by crisis-related displacement. Extreme weather events, conflicts, forced evictions and land grabbing are displacing growing numbers of people—internally displaced (IDPs) and refugees—across and into urban areas. In fact, cities have become the preferred choice of IDPs, and refugees, with 80 % of the 38 million internally displaced persons¹⁰ (IDPs) as well as 60 % of the 22 million refugees residing in urban areas¹¹, hoping for better livelihood opportunities, housing and shelter, safety as well as access to services. Cities often lack the capacity to respond to demands for infrastructure, housing and livelihoods, particularly when the shocks are acute. This is particularly true for secondary cities that had weak urban management capacities and systems to begin with. In crisis situations, inequalities in access to services, housing, and livelihood opportunities get exacerbated, undermining social cohesion and stability. These displacements can create societal and cultural tensions with host communities, which are sometimes ignited or worsened by political discourse. Cities have a unique opportunity to manage and integrate urban displacement into sustainable urban development strategies. During a crisis response, there is always a risk that specific neighborhoods, in particular informal settlements, get re-engineered to change their demographic set up or to make space for profitable development projects. Any crisis response and recovery process offer opportunities to ‘build back better’ and strengthen overall resilience, calling for a better alignment also of humanitarian and development efforts. Cities in post-conflict settings however can become critical spaces for rebuilding the social contract, more accountable

¹⁰ <http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/Habitat-III-Issue-Papers-report.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2017/10/the-refugee-crisis-is-a-city-crisis/544083/>

inclusive institutions and transitional justice mechanisms all in support of peacebuilding. Safeguarding cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, can also be an enabling condition for peace building and intercultural dialogue as well as to guide and nurture post-conflict or post-disaster reconstruction and recovery processes.

Regional and Local Governments

17. In many countries the functional accountabilities between national and city governments remain unclear. Even when they are clear, they are rarely matched with adequate financing. This can be doubly disadvantageous because financial decentralization without sufficient capacity for financial control also carries the risk of corruption. Smaller and remote administrative units may be unable to address the integrity challenges associated with strict financial management requirements, particularly in public procurement. Conflicts of interest at the local level are numerous as close interaction with the private sector and revolving door practices continually challenge the integrity of local governments. However, Chapter II of the United Nations Convention against Corruption provides a framework for local governments to effectively identify, manage and prevent corruption risks. Meanwhile, urban local governments are emerging as key institutional drivers of more equitable growth and concrete action. Increasingly their work, vision and solutions are transcending local political confines and exerting regional and global influence. As they are increasingly decentralized, representative and autonomous, local governments are also generally more responsive because they can be held more directly accountable for delivering progressively higher standards of living for most of their citizens—and suffer the short-term political consequences if they fail.

Section 2: Frontier Issues

18. There are several risks and opportunities for sustainable urban development associated with mega trends of urbanization and technology innovation, where the UN needs to look ahead to grasp their long-term impact on sustainable urbanization. Frontier is a concept in the making, in this section acknowledged in its different forms of innovation — social, technological, political or environmental. Frontiers can be positive or negative for sustainable urbanization. They can be imagined but only to a limited extent predicted and measured, making the effort of anticipation an utmost necessity. This section identifies key frontier areas for engagement by the UN system in support of member States. Each frontier issue by itself is a force to reckon with and requires forecasting and foresight, a better in-depth understanding of its impact on the future of cities and people, to better calibrate the UN's actions in the short term. An UN integrated response is crucial to enhance the ability to capture these outlier events, mitigating their threats and maximizing their potential.

Digital transformation and new technologies¹²

19. The global economy is transforming into a digital economy and the future of work¹³ is one of the major structural changes. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is at the heart of it and likely the next disruptive technology. The reproduction of human intelligence by computer controlled-robots that can discover

¹² <http://www.un.org/en/newtechnologies/images/pdf/SGs-Strategy-on-New-Technologies.pdf>

¹³ CEB/2018/HLCP36/CRP.3 UN Strategy on the Future of Work. Draft

meanings, generalize approaches and solve problems will shape deeper and more fundamental changes in cities, from self-driving autonomous vehicles, urban aerial ridesharing, to public safety systems informed by behavior patterns. With new technologies come risks and challenges. What will our cities look like when AI is everywhere? Will self-driving cars eliminate parking and free space for parks, pedestrian paths, and bike lanes? Are the data that drives deep learning in AI biased? Is there any ethical concern over collecting the necessary data when developing AI applications? As new technologies are moving most of retail online, what will the ultimate impact be on brick and mortar retail and mixed lively neighborhoods? The answer to these questions hinges on the uptake of the mega technology trends and how this work best in each city and each country. Yet, critically, sustainability in cities will not be primarily about tech-filled buildings, cars and tools, but people, communities, mixed walkable neighborhoods and interconnectivity.

20. AI and other emerging technologies can play an important role in sustainable urbanization and in making cities ‘smarter,’ more inclusive and more sustainable. Technological innovations, especially those in the realm of information and communication can help to change the urban space in terms of connectivity, proximity and distance. It can strengthen inclusiveness for people with disabilities. Geo-spatial and mapping technologies coupled with AI can further our understanding of urbanism, how the urban environment affects people, how it’s affected by people and the precise location of where such events happen. This in turn can provide new ways for local policy makers to engage in a two-way communication with their citizens and increase accountability. Tools and systems that can master housing preferences, land markets and the impact of urban revitalization will inform decision makers on topics such as taxation, infrastructure engineering, and public service delivery. AI solutions can help to optimize energy usage. AI-enabled Internet of Things can give marginalized population groups access to social, health care, and financial services that would otherwise be out of reach.
21. It is vital to align the embedded values in these new technologies to universal values. Collective efforts are needed to increase the understanding of the impact of the digital transformation and new technologies on the future of urbanization and its potential. Efforts¹⁴ are needed to maximize the value created by AI and new technologies in support of more sustainable, inclusive, lively and non-discriminatory societies and cities, in particular also for the urban poor and other marginalized groups. The focus should be on solutions and market mechanisms that go beyond technology and their systematic application where they are most needed without affecting the rights of inhabitants, including their right to privacy and work.

Sharing, Privatization and Anti-multilateralism

22. Cities, since their first incarnations as trading centers, have always been premised on sharing: their inhabitants sharing space itself, the infrastructure embedded in it and the resources flowing through it all.¹⁵ However, there is an increasing tendency to privatize public goods, such as open space and water supply, commodify human rights such as housing and food, and increase dependence on monetary income. Large scale corporate purchases of urban land and property sharply increased after the 2008 crisis, essentially functioning as storage space for capital. Similarly, an increasing number of mega real estate developments tend to support segregation, reproducing more unsustainable urban

¹⁴ HLCP is finalizing a system-wide strategy on AI capacity development for developing countries to respond to these needs.

¹⁵ <https://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/ylpr/vol34/iss2/1>

models and undermining public control over planning and public space. The overall effect of this type of privatization, risks to de-urbanize cities, reducing publicly owned space and small-scale more complex organic growth.¹⁶ Simultaneously, existing welfare and other social protection floors are further weakened, accelerated by austerity measures, causing loss of wellbeing and ultimately, productivity. This privatization is exacerbating socioeconomic vulnerability and is being exploited by xenophobic populist movements that pit one group against the other, drawing increasingly hard lines based on ownership, and leading to resistance to trans-local cooperation (anti-multilateralism). This is making it harder and harder for cities to deliver on something they are uniquely good at—facilitating sharing. It remains to be seen whether pluralistic cities can help the world re-embrace multilateralism when it is needed the most.¹⁷

Cities without Fuel: Land Use and Resource Scarcity

23. Across all regions, urban land expansion rates are higher than or equal to urban population growth rates, suggesting that urban growth is becoming more expansive than compact.¹⁸ This dispersion has both enabled and been accelerated by the segregation of land uses. Together, the two are making cities less and less resource efficient.¹⁹ This sprawling settlement pattern is predicated on a 20th century assumption of limitless resources, that land and oil were virtually infinite, and that people could live virtually anywhere since they could still access increasingly remote jobs and services thanks to cars and computers. Although technologies allowing for telecommuting and low-carbon public transport can mitigate the impact, ultimately technology cannot trump geography—the current reality is one of dwindling fossil fuels, increasing air pollution, growing emissions, ever scarcer arable land and diminishing rare earth metals. In cities in emerging economies with growing middle classes, development continues in ignorance or defiance of increasing scarcity. What will happen after peak oil, when people can no longer afford to commute such long distances? When land that has been paved with impervious material is suddenly more valuable for the soil beneath it?

Cities at the frontline of climate change: adaptation, de-carbonization and migration

24. The IPCC Special Report²⁰ on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, reminds us that cities are among the most vulnerable places to the impacts of global warming. If the current rate of warming continues, the world could be 1.5°C warmer as early as 2030. Regional warming could be double the global average in certain places. At least 136 megacities (port cities with a population greater than 1 million in 2005) are at risk from flooding due to sea level rise unless further adaptation is undertaken,²¹ affecting 280 million people, including many informal

¹⁶ Saskia Sassen in “*The Quito Papers and the new Urban Agenda*”, UN-Habitat, 2018, pg. 26-31.

¹⁷ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/01/populism-is-poison-plural-cities-are-the-antidote/>

¹⁸ <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0023777>

¹⁹ <https://www.pnas.org/content/early/2017/01/03/1606035114>

²⁰ *Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty* (www.ipcc.ch/sr15)

²¹ *Ibid.* pg. 231

settlements.^{22 23} The economic and social viability as well as absorptive capacities of some cities may be seriously compromised. Ongoing urbanization, especially in low-lying coastal areas, seems to ignore climate change and its impact, rapidly increasing vulnerabilities and exposure to hazards. Death and illness from extreme weather including heat waves exacerbated by urban heat islands would increase significantly. The population suffering water scarcity would double, while food insecurity due to decreased crop yields and nutrition would result in significant increases in rural to urban migration.

25. The IPCC report states that to stay under 1.5°C and prepare for warming, drastic measures to transform the way we build and manage human settlements are needed. It requires cutting carbon emissions almost in half over the next 12 years, transforming our urban and rural economies and ways of living. This should be unprecedented in scale and speed to ensure social stability, economic prosperity and ecosystem integrity in the face of rapidly changing weather patterns. More work is needed to rethink current and planned urbanization, carbon-neutral building and climate-resilient infrastructure, which all can play a major role in mitigation and adaptation. Awareness raising, education and knowledge generation will be key to promote shared values and shifts in attitudes and life styles, at par with the needs to transform our economies and the way we plan and build.

Nexus between frontier issues

26. It is important to further explore the nexus between the different frontier issues presented, as to advance the overall debate on the future of urbanization, the challenges it poses for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and other global agendas, and the role the UN can play. This is particularly the case for the nexus between urbanization, climate change and migration. Climate-induced drought, flooding, sea level rise, shifts in global food production for instance all result in massive loss of habitat,²⁴ generating new accelerated migration flows. Combined, the frontier issues increase the likelihood for social and political upheaval, regional and local conflict, and consequent further displacement. In some parts of the world this is compounded with extreme violence and protracted conflict. They present a daunting future for humanity, reshaping our urbanizing world and its demographics, presenting a massive obstacle to sustainable urban development. Any attempt to leave no one behind will be complicated exponentially. It strengthens the argument to scale the United Nations' collective efforts to support Member States, and other stakeholders, in pursuing sustainable urbanization fully embracing the challenges and opportunities provided by the frontier issues. It offers the United Nations concrete opportunities to leverage each other's knowledge and expertise and align its actions, building on the respective mandates.

Section 3: Expected Outcomes

²² Fifty per cent of the world's population lives within 3km of a surface freshwater body, and over forty per cent live in coastal areas (Barragan, J.M. & De Andrés, M. (2015). *Analysis and trends of the world's coastal cities and agglomerations*. *Ocean and Coastal Management*, 114, 11-20). *Out of the world's twenty-two megacities with a population of more than ten million, fifteen are located along the ocean's coasts* (Brown, S., Nicholls, R., Woodroffe, C., Hanson, S., Hinkel, J., Kebede, A.S., et al. (2013). "Sea-Level Rise Impacts and Responses: Global Perspective". 117-149. In: Finkl, C.W. (ed.). *Coastal Hazards*. Netherlands: Springer.)

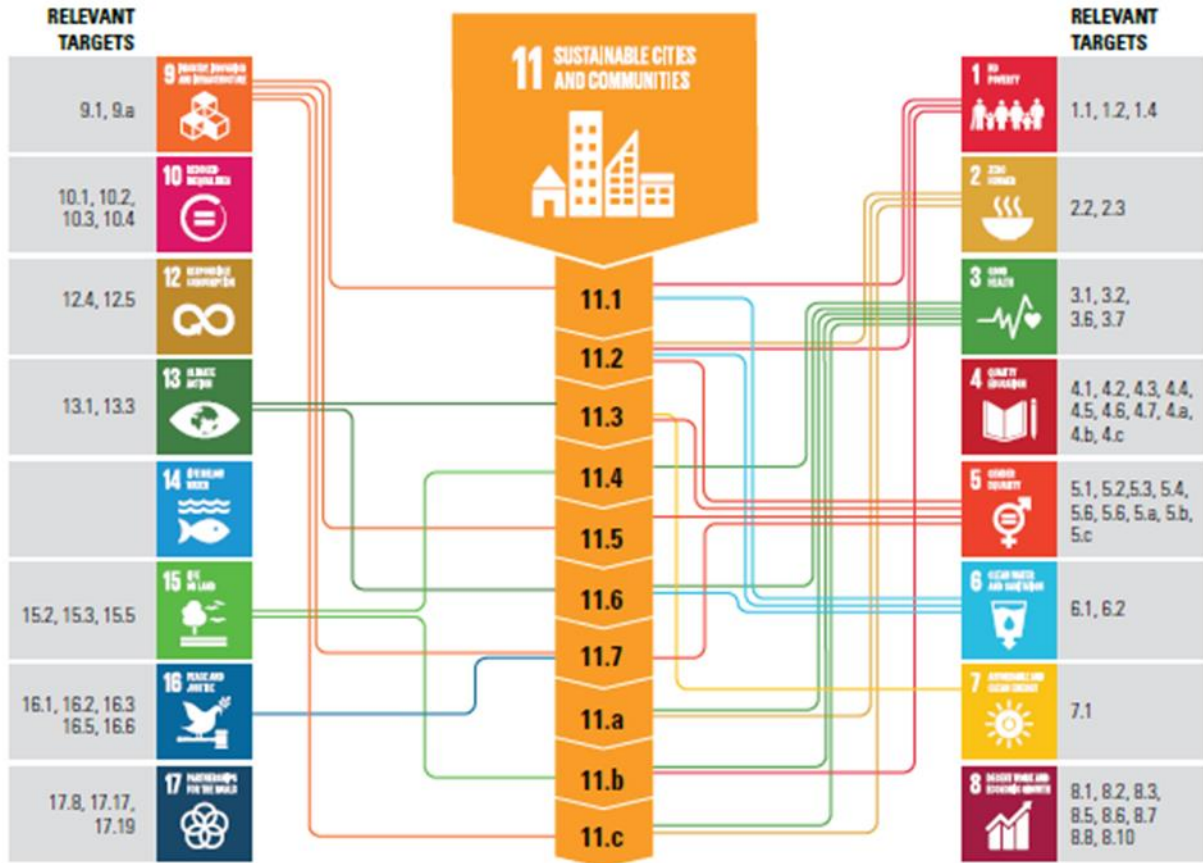
²³ 8.7 million people expected to be displaced by 2050 due to sea and water level rise in Asia alone. Asian Development Bank (ADB) (2017). *Impacts of Sea Level Rise on Economic Growth in Developing Asia*. Manila: ADB.

²⁴ Saskia Sassen in "The Quito Papers and the new Urban Agenda", UN-Habitat, 2018, pg. 26-31.

27. There is a need to enhance coherence and coordination across the UN system in its efforts to assist Member States in the achievement of Agenda 2030 and related global agreements through better planned urbanization drawing upon the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Global Compacts for Refugees and Migrants and the New Urban Agenda. It is understood that harnessing the transformative force of sustainable urbanization, as set out in Section 1, through the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, can accelerate progress towards the social, environmental and economic dimensions of Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals. It is key also to the fulfilment of the goals and targets of the other agendas, all of which have important urban and territorial dimensions. Those interrelations and the interdependencies amongst the global agendas offer a powerful instrument to articulate the coherence across the mandates and expertise of different UN agencies and entities. Understanding the range of interdependencies among them is key to unlocking their full potential and optimizing resources within the United Nations system and across all sectors and stakeholders.
28. The Sustainable Development Goals contain an integrated set of goals and targets. The achievement of the targets under SDG 11 “to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” -- to get our cities right -- has a transformative impact on the achievements of targets under other goals (see figure 1). There are equally several ‘urban-critical’ targets under other goals which are essential to the attainment of good urbanization (see figure 2).²⁵ It is increasingly understood that achieving the SDGs requires their localization, and collaboration with local actors, including local governments, and that it is within cities that the localization of the SDGs can be most effective.

²⁵ One could argue that all targets of the SDGs have an urban dimension. The goals/targets captured in Figure 1 and Figure 2 are therefore indicative and should be viewed as strategic entry points to other targets and goals.

Figure 1. Interlinkages between SDG 11 and other SDGs



29. If sustainable urbanization is seen as a driver of development and peace, to improve living conditions for all, then the above can be broken down into four overarching expected outcomes to guide joined up UN efforts, building on the transformative commitments of the New Urban Agenda:

- Reduced spatial inequality and poverty in communities across the urban - rural continuum;
- Enhanced shared prosperity of cities and regions;

- Strengthened climate action and improved urban environment; and
- Effective urban crisis prevention and response.

30. Human rights and gender, as well as specific attention to those groups at the risk of being left behind including children, migrants and displaced persons, youth and older persons and persons with disability, will underpin these expected outcomes to ensure inclusive societies and cities and harness the role of these groups, particularly women and youth, as key actors of social transformation.

Expected Outcome 1 People: Reduced spatial inequality and poverty in communities across the urban-rural continuum.

31. Sustainable development cannot be achieved without addressing the basic human rights of the millions of urban dwellers living in poverty and marginalization, by improving access to adequate housing, healthy food, basic services and infrastructure, high quality public spaces, livelihood opportunities, mobility options, nutritious food, culture and education as well as safe and healthy living environments. “Leaving no one behind”, as a key principle of the 2030 Agenda, has its spatial equivalent. This calls for the UN to promote more territorial and integrated sectoral approaches at country level, understanding the spatial dimensions of poverty and marginalization, across regions, across the rural urban continuum and within the same city, and creating collective outcomes that connect across relevant goals and targets. To achieve this, the UN should support more inclusive and people-centered decision making and planning processes, that maximize connectivity, integrate segregated formal and informal urban areas and diverse socio-economic and marginalized groups. They should address the needs of communities across the urban-rural continuum in a coordinated way – taking advantage of synergies in mutually beneficial exchange of goods and services – to help eradicate poverty in all its spatial forms.

Expected Outcome 2 Prosperity: Enhanced shared prosperity for cities and regions

32. Urbanization contributes a disproportionately high share of GDP. Well planned and effectively managed urbanization can generate wealth, maximize the benefits of economies of scale and agglomeration, allow for integrated territorial development and connect rural and urban development. Genuinely inclusive, well-connected and prosperous cities have the capacity to transform lives across territories, overcoming inequalities. The prosperity of cities is closely related to the prosperity of regions, with infrastructure supporting spatial connectivity and productivity of both urban and rural economies, including food systems. This calls for the United Nations to assist countries to optimize urbanization to transform their respective economies. That is, transitioning from agrarian to sustainable industrial systems of production; from agriculture-based employment to economies that combine services, smart agriculture and green industry; or from heavy industry to a sustainable and inclusive industrial society. This will require country-specific strategies to leverage the subtle, interdependence of formal and informal sectors, to adopt a social and solidarity economy²⁶ to re-balance economic, social and environmental objectives, to apply a whole-of-government approach to migration governance, and to mobilize digitalization and new technologies.

²⁶ http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/cooperatives/projects/WCMS_546299/lang--en/index.htm

This should help to create collective outcomes that connect across urban-related targets of associated goals, generating decent jobs and livelihoods, while putting overall wellbeing of people at the center.

Expected Outcome 3 Planet: Strengthened climate action and improving urban environment

33. Cities, including its buildings and infrastructure, can play a catalytic role in contributing to climate action, both in terms of mitigation and adaptation, as evidenced also in the Nationally Determined Contributions put forward by Member States. Sustainable urbanization is also not possible without addressing unsustainable consumption and production patterns, loss of biodiversity, and pressure on ecosystems. Sustainable management of natural resources in cities and human settlements protects and improves the urban ecosystem and environmental services, reduces greenhouse gas emissions and promotes disaster risk reduction and management. A stronger focus is needed on water and air pollution and causes for the spread of (non-)communicable diseases in urban areas. This calls for enhanced collective action by the UN to maximize the contribution of sustainable urbanization to climate action, to healthy urban environments and to encourage supportive measure on transitioning to a circular economy that connect across relevant goals and targets.

Expected Outcome 4 Prevention / Response: Effective urban crises prevention and response

34. Sustainable urbanization is considered key to address some of the underlying risks to natural and man-made hazards and/or root causes of instability and conflict, such as social and spatial inequalities, unplanned growth, unequal access to land and public goods, inadequate housing, and lack of basic services, and pressure on natural resources. Sustainable development, and urban development strategies, can play a key role in mitigating drivers of conflicts, mitigating disaster risks and crises, building long-term resilience and contribute to the collective responsibility of sustaining peace (GA 71/243). If crises do occur, it is key to base humanitarian response on a proper shared understanding of the urban crisis environment and to focus on fast tracking recovery and a return to more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient urban development trajectories. Effective crisis prevention, preparedness, response and recovery requires a much stronger focus on social cohesion, disaster risk reduction, institutional resilience and inclusive planning and policies. In addition, addressing the needs of migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons, and returnees, requires a full integration into urban development strategies, to leverage their positive contribution to sustainable development. This calls for collective outcomes articulated across the humanitarian, peace and development side of the UN that connect across urban-related targets of associated goals.

Section 4: Implementation of New Urban Agenda at Regional, National and Subnational Level

35. While the Sustainable Development Goals set out mainly the WHAT we try to achieve, the New Urban Agenda provides more of the HOW when it comes to urbanization. The New Urban Agenda offers great opportunities to increase coherence and coordination across the UN system, working collectively on the **four fundamental drivers of change**, namely 1) developing and implementing urban policies at the appropriate level; 2) strengthening urban governance; 3) reinvigorating long-term and integrated urban and territorial planning and design; and 4) supporting effective, innovative and sustainable financing frameworks and instruments. It focuses on creating synergies across

mandates and strategic plans of different UN entities (ex. making urban planning child-friendly), including actions that are enablers to maximize the impact of the drivers (ex. ensuring accountable institutions). Norm setting is needed to ensure that these drivers are applied with maximum impact. In addition, it is important that the UN supports contextualizing these drivers at the regional or country level and helps identify complementary ones to maximize the transformative potential of urbanization. The UN should also recognize that increasingly urbanization transgresses local and/or national boundaries, requiring new forms of collaboration at different scale levels. The New Urban Agenda also calls for its implementation in countries in situations of conflict and affected by natural and human-made disasters.

36. The UN supports pro-poor and inclusive **urban policies at all levels** to bring together the disjointed energies and potential of urban centers within national systems of cities and to integrate relevant sectoral policies. At the national level, urban policies offer governments an opportunity to plan spatially, to anchor urbanization as a transformative force and to facilitate integration with national development plans. It can guide public and private investments in infrastructure, agriculture, multi-modal transport systems, transit-oriented development and industry to support balanced territorial development. These are excellent instruments not just for resource allocation but also to redress social inequalities and discrimination, within and between urban areas, to align urban and environmental policies, and to integrate urban and rural policies.
37. At local level, municipal governments can address spatial inequalities by adopting urban policies that guide commercial, industrial and residential land use planning, basic service delivery, adequate housing, access to nutritious food, and creative options for urban mobility. It is equally important that sectoral policies articulate their urban and territorial dimensions. Integrated policy support on food systems, for example, will require developing urban policies that have a food dimension. It means linking food to health, water, environment and economic development within a locality to preserve finite natural resources and meet urban healthy food consumption patterns. Effective urban policy also needs to recognize the politics of refugees, migrants and IDPs that often prevents migration and displacement from being part of urban planning, without which spatial inequality is reinforced by the exclusion of migrants in services, jobs and social cohesion. Legal and institutional frameworks for urban development are needed to guide urban development and ensure they respond to real needs, actual capacities, and available resources, based on good governance, accountability, and rule of law.
38. The UN focuses also on supporting adequate and coherent **multi-level urban governance mechanisms**. Urban governance mechanisms should therefore be adapted to the different territorial realities, as poor governance results in waste of resources, inefficient sectoral interventions, exclusion and overall lack of progress. Good territorial and urban governance can deliver sustainable urban development when it is human-rights based, environmentally-friendly, participatory, accountable, transparent, effective, equitable and inclusive, both in law and in practice. The UN often supports a multiplicity of national, regional and local governmental agencies and organizations with competing interests and influence. Improving urban governance requires that the institutional framework be as coherent as possible. The UN works towards strengthening urban governance, with sound institutions and mechanisms that empower and include representatives of urban stakeholders and constituencies, as well as appropriate checks and balances, providing predictability and coherence in urban and sectoral plans to enable food and nutritional security, social inclusion,

sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and environmental protection. The emergence of various global, regional and thematic networks of cities and urban stakeholders allows to accelerate sharing of knowledge and encourage innovation to tackle complex urban challenges. The UN supports this **networked governance**, complementing multilateral collaboration of states.

39. The UN supports **urban and territorial planning and design** as integrative and participatory processes that helps to reconcile competing interests and maximize synergies between different goals and targets within a specific territory or locality. Well-planned and designed cities and human settlements can optimize economies of agglomeration, increase connectivity and facilitate sustainable mobility, protect the natural and built environment, and encourage social inclusion, gender equality and child-friendly cities. A focus is needed on the fastest urbanizing areas that often have the weakest planning systems and capacities. As a driver of change, urban planning and design can strengthen the public good and be rights-based. It must be supported by a renewed and context specific urban governance paradigm.
40. The UN needs a scaled-up focus on helping to develop **effective, innovative and sustainable financing frameworks and instruments** to finance sustainable urbanization. The ability of national and local governments to mobilize, sequence and make effective use of a wide variety of financial sources and instruments is central for the achievement of the sustainable urban development agenda. More and more countries and cities are aiming to use an increasingly diverse set of instruments, such as blended finance, impact investment, public-private partnerships, climate funds, property taxation, land value capture, borrowing, bond issuances and others. Country/city ownership, multi-stakeholder partnership and higher accountability are critical in the use of these funds. Development finance by bilateral and multilateral funds should support innovative projects, pilot interventions and critical capital investments. Financing instruments should be climate-sensitive, connected to environmentally sound activities, founded on human rights principles, and help to overcome inequalities. A key resource is municipal finance. This is especially so in countries where local governments have the authority to levy taxes, utilize public land for coordinated planned extensions (land capture), and issue bond instruments to mobilize capital from private and institutional investors. Also important are community savings invested in improvements in sanitation, housing, and urban basic services at the individual residential level that when aggregated, constitute substantial resources.

Section 5: Collaborative Implementation Framework

41. Many agencies have developed urban strategies to pursue their respective mandates. Whether the mandate concerns education, culture, trade, food security, health, children or migration, these agencies are increasingly orienting their work in ways that meet the needs of rapidly urbanizing populations. The “urban turn” of the UN is a good sign. However, opportunities for synergies are under-utilized and the risk of duplication of efforts by agencies and lack of collective learning are real. In the follow up to the 9th Session of the World Urban Forum, agencies agreed on an informal collaborative implementation framework organized along four functional areas, namely: data, policy and technical support, partnership, and financing. The first Quadrennial Report on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda allowed agencies to map what they are doing to support

sustainable urbanization. Agency responses to the survey prepared for this paper offered further articulation.

Urban Data

42. A key rallying point for coordinated UN action is urban data. There is an urgent need for data collection, management and analysis – and associated capacity building requirements -- to provide a strong evidence-base and understand the inter-relations across global agendas, goals and targets. Central to this effort is the need to generate and interpret data that is disaggregated by geographic location, income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, and disability. Data gaps are apparent across many policy domains and the absence of reliable data needed to inform urban and urban-related policy is significant. Equally challenging is the ability of member States to measure indicators on public space, child safety, migration, etc. Further, there are no agreed standardized methods for aggregating municipal data to establish national estimates on urbanization. Regarding data access and management, countries are only beginning to agree upon open source data and address issues of privacy. At country level, there is no clear mechanism for sharing data across the UN system. The UN itself has not yet fully promoted a human-rights based approach to data.²⁷ There is need for a UN system-wide approach to urban data management, aligning protocols for data sharing globally. A further “data challenge” is an ongoing effort within and outside the UN to increase the data management capacity of local and national governments. The capacity needs include the ability to standardize, analyze, disseminate results.
43. Encouragingly, there is agreed custodianship by different agencies for different relevant SDGs and their indicators has improved coordination across the UN system. Several UN agencies have developed systems of thematic indicators in different policy areas (notably risk reduction, resilience, culture and education), aimed at providing a more transversal understanding of the contribution of public policies in implementing the 2030 Agenda across different SDGs. Progress is being made to develop a global functional definition of urban and rural areas. Over 250 cities have applied the City Prosperity Index (CPI) facilitated by UN-Habitat with the involvement of a growing number of agencies. It offers the beginnings of a unified indicator framework across countries and cities. Big data and information technologies are increasing available and have created the conditions for monitoring trends at the city level. Citizens and their organizations are using handheld devices to enumerate their neighborhoods as the basis for engaging local governments in urban planning.
44. These positive developments are a clear sign of progress. However, many countries lack an understanding of the power of data and therefore do not invest in establishing a base line from which to measure performance of policy options, investments and programmatic interventions. This is particularly relevant given the emphasis placed in Agenda 2030 on leaving no one behind and on the integrated nature of the SDGs. Analysis and policy on urban food systems, for example, require data we often do not have, or which is not systematically aggregated (e.g. energy and natural resources needed to produce commodities and services, or to dispose or reuse surplus). IOM’s Global Migration Data Analysis Center has made considerable progress in disaggregating data at local level and measures movement of rural-urban and follow-on. However, here too there is no common method for analyzing and collecting data on the linkages between migration and urbanization. Migration data in general is already renowned for being difficult to attain with many different areas

²⁷ <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/HRIndicators/GuidanceNoteonApproachtoData.pdf>

of government and other actors collecting partial and fragmented data or no data at all, particularly for harder to reach migrants such as irregular migrants and victims of trafficking and smuggling. This continues to make it difficult to apply an evidence-based approach to policy planning and mitigate negative public perceptions around migration. There remains a similar lack of data on informal settlements. Limited access to data runs the risk of reinforcing historical and spatial inequalities, preventing those left behind from asserting voice and agency.

Integrated Policy and Technical Support

45. The New Urban Agenda itself falls short of offering practical strategies and concrete action areas for the UN system to support member States. Member States (GA res. 72/226 para 5) expect the UN system to continue generating evidence-based and practical guidance for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the related dimensions of the 2030 Agenda, including by the further elaboration of an Action Framework for the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda (AFINUA), which was drafted by UN-Habitat in consultation with the UN system before Habitat III. Developing these guidance notes, and their use in support of UN Country Teams, offers concrete opportunities to maximize synergies, avoid overlaps and gaps in UN support to member States, while considering the typology of countries. They can be the basis also to identify ways on how UN planning exercises (e.g. UNDAFs) and coordination mechanisms (e.g. Resident Coordinator Offices) can be supported with urban specific expertise.
46. To make sustainable urbanization policies more robust at all levels of government, a systems approach to development is needed. Stronger collaboration within the UN can support integration of various issues (food, children, environment, education, culture, migration, water, sanitation, disaster risk, health, employment, etc.). There is often a lack of coherence in terms of key policy choices (e.g. social integration, moving away from automotive transport, etc.) across sectors at the national level and across levels of government, hampering the ability of a country to move towards sustainable urban development. This calls for more integrated support to national and local governments and joined up expertise that is easily deployable. Developing integrated policy support, aligning different levels of government, is a significant challenge and needs to consider the widely diverse policy environments. Many countries still have centralized forms of public administration, where municipal governments lack central government support to formulate urban policy and where public access to information vital for inclusive policy formulation is not readily available. Even where devolution of public administration and freedoms of organization exist, there are significant capacity constraints to policy formulation.
47. It is equally important that the urban and territorial dimensions of the implementation strategies and plans for the other global agreements, such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and the Global Compacts for Refugees and Migrants are duly developed and used to maximize the mobilization of the relevant expertise across the UN system. In this regard, the first Quadrennial Report points out that significant positive interactions can be achieved through multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder governance and partnerships. This can be enhanced by promoting more systems-based, territorial approaches. It is also increasingly clear that achieving the SDGs requires the UN system to focus stronger on their localization and working with local governments and local actors.

Subnational Implementation and Multi-Stakeholder Engagement

48. A major focus for the UN going forward – and an important aspect for inter-agency cooperation for sustainable urban development -- will be for the UN to work with municipal and local governments while advocating for enabling frameworks at national level. That is, for the UN in a given country to engage government at the subnational level supporting participatory planning, urban economic development, basic service delivery, and affordable housing among other aspects of sustainable urban development. And then to work with ministries of planning and economic development, agriculture, land, environment, health, industry, gender, education, culture, transport, housing, migration etc. to enhance national legislation and policies that support the work of local governments. The legislation may be as ambitious as constitutional reform aimed at devolution of public administration or more modest in scope such as the development of policy guidelines that help to orient local governments to implement in their localities food, health, education, water, sanitation, or labor policies. By working with government through local governments the UN can be more effective in localizing the SDGs.
49. The partnership strategy that emerges from this way of working is not confined to the public sector. Rather it is to assist local governments to introduce planning processes that include diverse actors at the subnational level. These may include urban social movements, the real estate industry, nongovernmental organizations, diaspora and migrants' associations, institutional investors, professional associations and/or central government line ministries operating at the local level. The approach to partnership facilitation is between local governments and specific groups as well as multi-stakeholder bodies convened by local governments that bring these specific groups together in a planning platform. Again, the partnership strategy at local level should inform how the UN works with partners at the national level, to facilitate for instance public-private partnerships and direct engagement between duty bearers and rights holders and their organizations.
50. Importantly, cities are organizing, and in ways the UN can contribute to and learn from. Thematic city networks and campaigns, such as the Making Cities Resilient Campaign, provide ample opportunities for cities—and public servants and industry—to share knowledge and best practices, augmenting United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and other traditional associations. Cities come together around common challenges and create a joined-up global market for innovation. A new generation of city networking is framing global challenges as an urban question and postulate that cities have leaders to tackle them, most notably climate change. Non-traditional policy partners, including private foundations (e.g. Rockefeller, Bloomberg, etc.) are diversifying the scenario further. Through the proliferation of city networks there is a potential threat of fragmentation that could lead to several parallel tracks, with international organizations and foundations creating and funding their own thematic city networks. For the UN system it will be important to revise its way of collaborating with city networks. Problems of higher complexity require networks of greater heterogeneity and demand a certain level of social capital to enable effective collaborative processes. The UN will have to focus on building trust and establish well-targeted incentives for cooperation to further strengthen the role and potential impact of the city networks.

Local Financing

51. A further rallying point for the UN is local financing. Resources for sustainable urbanization, both new development and regeneration, are immense, and will require massive outlays for infrastructure, utilities and adequate housing. Adding to the mix are costs associated with retrofitting structures and investing in technologies necessary to achieve energy efficiency and carbon neutrality. The UNDS reforms underway, particularly at the country level, seek to equip the UN with the capacity to assist member States to mobilize public and private, domestic and international resources to finance urban development.
52. A particularly important task for the UN – and one that can improve coherence -- is aggregating ad hoc projects into large-scale, bankable programs to attract multiple forms of financing. This will require discipline within UNCTs to overcome the tendency of managing hundreds of small-scale projects, working collectively to package disparate projects into thematic municipal programs. It will also involve consolidating the norms, tools and monitoring systems of various UN agencies into a pre-investment vehicle that the World Bank and regional development banks can use to finance these programs with appropriate loan instruments. Collaborating in this way, the UN and IFIs can lower transactions costs and align investments in ways that increase coherence to support member States. In moving towards larger bankable programs, the UN can as well mobilize domestic capital and public investment. This will entail working with governments and private institutional investors to explore direct investment and debt financing through the issuance of bond instruments. Together with loans from IFIs, these resources can attract the investment needed to achieve scale.
53. Engagement with the private sector needs to be guided by norms, standards, procedures, regulations; and structured as business models that are mutually beneficial. Particularly important players in urban development are private developers with whom the UN should seek to facilitate compacts with local governments in ways to mobilize funding for infrastructure and services. Similarly, capital investment involves creating incentives and enabling regulations for the private sector. There is great potential for the UN to support domestic resource mobilization, including through property taxation, and targeted, land-value capture. This should go hand in hand with a focus on municipal finance instruments, strengthening the fiscal capacity and the development of strong and accountable institutions and participatory governance mechanisms.
54. In addition to resource mobilization, the UN also needs to focus on the effective use of existing finances to ensure public and private investment is deployed in a manner that is environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable, that actively helps to overcome spatial inequalities, that is inclusive of groups with specific needs (ex. children, persons with disabilities, etc.), and that recognizes the assets of communities, including the remittances and investments of migrants and displaced persons. Effective use of finance also necessitates an assessment of risk, and risk transfer and risk-insurance-based systems for the most vulnerable.

Section 6: Implementing of System-Wide Strategy through Existing Structures/Processes

55. The emerging collaborative implementation framework outlined above provides the beginnings of more effective coherence and coordination across the UN system, in support also of stronger, strategic inter-agency partnerships and joint programming. The World Urban Forum, and its regional, sub-regional and national equivalents, and other global forums, such as the High-Level

Political Forum, can take stock of progress made, ensure learning, and advance partnerships within and beyond the UN. This said, the UN does not have at global level a dedicated, inter-agency platform on sustainable urban development akin to the Environmental Management Group. For the short to medium term, the existing inter-agency structures provide the following opportunities to promote integration of relevant elements of the UN systemwide strategy on sustainable urban development into broader UN coordination mechanisms and reform processes, taking account of regional needs, contexts and UN assets. UN-Habitat, as the lead UN entity on this topic, will continue to play a role to facilitate and promote collaboration and coordination toward realizing the implementation framework.

Flagship UN Reform Processes

56. *System-Wide Strategic Document* provides an opportunity to situate urban among the key mega trends that the UN is addressing to implement the 2030 Agenda. Placing sustainable urban development as part of SWSD demonstrates both the relevance and added value of the UN, specifically, to assist member States achieve SDG11 and urban related targets of associated goals on equality, economy, climate and crisis prevention and response. As highlighted in SWSD, the need for the UN to work at all levels of government allows the system to develop effective responses to assist governments and facilitate effective engagement of local and non-State actors.
57. *UNDAF Guidelines* help to clarify how RCs can ensure UNCTs operate in a coherent manner to assist member States manage the challenges and harness the opportunities of rapid urbanization. The Common Country Assessment, replete with urban data and diagnostic tools, will strengthen how the UN assists governments and local and non-State actors to analyze urban trends and, where appropriate, situate urban development within the UNDAF. The implementation of UNDAFs can promote sustainable development through an integrated, systems approach in which UNCTs assist governments channel urbanization for social cohesion, economic development, ecological sustainability, resilience and political stability.

UNSDG Strategic Results Groups and Funds

58. *SDG Implementation* offers agencies opportunities to cooperate on various aspects of sustainable urbanization and localizing the SDGs. The dedicated Task Team on Integrated Policy Support can align efforts to strengthen municipal policy and planning and, on this basis promote national urban policies. Similarly, the Task Team on Leave No One Behind, charged with developing and field-testing guidelines, provides a space for agencies to contribute to spatial equality and balanced territorial development. The Task Team on SDG Data enables agencies to build upon coordinated monitoring of urban goals and targets and on “methods for delineating cities and rural areas” to develop strategies at country level to strengthen the capacity of national and local government collect, manage and analyze data. And the Task Team on Transitions and Recovery affords agencies opportunities to implement guidelines on land and conflict prevention and other initiatives that further development, humanitarian and peace nexus.

59. *Partnerships* is an excellent vehicle to promote UN system-wide coherence for sustainable urbanization. The Task Team on Multi-Stakeholder Engagement, also tasked with developing guidelines, can identify ways to utilize the various global conferences to incubate, monitor and evaluate partnerships. The World Urban Forum, now opened to all agencies, enables the UN system to engage urban leaders from government, industry, social movements, local government and financial institutions. In addition to participating in WUF, the UN system can bring urban actors into global forums on health, food, children, refugees, migration, women's empowerment, etc.²⁸ The Task Team on Private Sector offers agencies operating in cities to establish standards on mutually beneficial business models.
60. *Financing and Joint SDG Fund* are mechanisms designed to transition the UN system from funding (the UN) to financing (the SDGs). The Joint SDG Fund, its prospective urban thematic window, and the various Task Teams of the Results Groups can help the UN strengthen internal capacity to identify sources of financing and large-scale bankable projects for sustainable urban development. They can as well mobilize networks and municipal level of public and private, domestic and international investment, and facilitate the financing of SDG 11 and urban related targets of associated goals.

Thematic Inter-Agency Platforms

61. *UN Network on Migration* offers a platform to promote the inclusion of cities and other local and regional authorities. This will ensure urban policy planning is inclusive of and capitalizes on the opportunities brought by migration and displacement across all sectoral areas. The network ensures national and global frameworks and cooperation on migration are supportive of and empower cities and sub-national government authorities in their key role as first responders to migration and displacement.
62. *Inter-Agency Standing Committee* is the mechanism that allows agencies adapt humanitarian response to an urbanizing world. It provides opportunities to create a better understanding of urban crisis environments, as a basis for improved collaboration with local stakeholders, including local government and contextualized planning and response. And it offers the basis to better transition into urban recovery.
63. *Joint Steering Committee on humanitarian and development collaboration* is the platform to foster synergies and collective results between the humanitarian and development efforts of the UN. In urban areas it offers great opportunities to fast track the exit out of humanitarian crisis, to strengthen the resilience of urban areas, and to set cities on a more sustainable urban development trajectory. Key for the JSC is ensuring that the management of urban displacement is part of urban development strategies and plans.

Regional Inter-Agency Platforms

²⁸ Among inter-governmental meetings that are organizing local government dialogues, there are High-Level Political Forum (Regional and Local Government Forum), United Nations Environment Assembly (Cities Summit), and the United Nations Habitat Assembly (Mayors Forum). Similar dialogues are likely to emerge at the Commission on the Status of Women, World Health Assembly, and other global bodies.

64. *Emerging Regional-UNSDG Coordination Mechanisms* offer at the regional level the kinds of collaboration platforms of the global UNSDG. These will enable regional representatives of regional economic commissions, the Development Coordination Office, and agencies to promote aspects of sustainable urban development. They will vary by region, some focusing on integrated policy, others on data, financing, and/or crisis prevention.
65. *UN Regional Coordination Mechanism on Urban Development* are emerging in several regions. ESCAP has developed detailed guidelines on integrating urbanization into CCA and UNDAF processes for RCs and UNCTs though out the region. ECLAC works with National Statistics Systems to foster inter-agency collaboration on data/statistics that strengthen regional coordination on measurement and capacity-building related to SDG 11.
66. *ECE, ECA, ESCWA and ECLAC Regional Urban Platforms* are in varying stages of development. All regions are building upon the action plans prepared for Habitat III identifying ways to rationalize regional assets that can be deployed to support sustainable urbanization. In LAC, UNH and ECLAC are working with the regional conference of housing ministers (MINRUVI), and an initiative on localizing SDGs UNH/UNDP. Similar initiatives are underway in other regions.

Role of HLCP

67. HLCP should, as appropriate, review, at strategic level, the implementation of the UN system-wide strategy on sustainable urban development and the UN system's collective impact at the global policy level. This can address (or alert CEB as appropriate) systemic issues or structural hurdles, if any, mitigating smooth implementation.

Section 7. Role of UN-Habitat in the Implementation of the System-Wide Strategy and the Promotion of Sustainable Urban Development

68. The demographic shift of the world's population to urban areas has warranted the attention of the international community evidenced by its decision to adopt a goal on cities and communities. UN system organizations have responded to urbanization by adjusting strategies to fulfill the urban dimension of their respective mandates. As a member of the funds and programmes of the UN established in 1978 to promote housing and urban development, UN-Habitat is keen to define its role to support these efforts. It is committed to strengthen how UN system entities respond to the urban mega trend and channel UN assets in ways useful to member States globally, regionally and at country level. What follows are types of support UN-Habitat will provide to UN system entities. The list is exemplary, not exhaustive. It builds upon ongoing joint initiatives with a view to guide the development of direct collaboration and modalities for joint programming. This can help the UN operationalize the collaborative implementation framework to better serve member States harness the opportunities of sustainable urbanization. Making the best use of these expertise and capacities, UN-Habitat will contribute to supporting the coherent and coordinated realization of this system-wide strategy.

- ***Standardization of Urban Policy, Legislation, Planning and Financing*** will be crucial as agencies seek to operate in cities to further their respective mandates. Rather than re-invent these drivers afresh, agencies can work with UN-Habitat to adopt standard practices and approaches developed by the organization of the past 40 years.
- ***Provision of Advisory Support to Agencies*** can benefit agencies developing strategies to fulfill the urban dimensions of their respective mandates. Agencies are encouraged to work with UN-Habitat to design, implement and monitor urban strategies be these on health, children, environment, culture, employment, or food, etc.
- ***Application of Urban Data and Diagnostic Tools*** will be essential to agencies intent on assisting member States promote urban (health, food, human rights, etc.) policies. UN-Habitat will make tools available to agencies and spearhead inter-agency efforts to promote agreed standards of measurement.
- ***Provision of New Urban Agenda Guidance Notes*** can assist Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams to utilize the New Urban Agenda in practical ways to situate urban data and tools in CCAs and, where appropriate, integrate urban development into UNDAF design, implementation, monitoring and coordination mechanisms.
- ***Harmonized Support to Member States to Monitor Progress on Attainment of SDG 11*** is an opportunity since nearly all agencies have a role to play. Agencies are encouraged to continue to participate actively in monitoring platforms (global and regional) convened by UN-Habitat on the Quadrennial Review of the New Urban Agenda and on the five-year review on SDG 11; and in supporting cities to prepare Local Voluntary Reviews.
- ***Localization of the SDGs*** constitutes an agenda for the UN system of paramount importance since the attainment of the SDGs will be won or lost at the local level. Agencies are encouraged

to include in prospective program partnerships with UN-Habitat capacity development initiatives assisting local governments to strengthen inclusive planning, multi-stakeholder consultation, and mobilization of financing for the SDGs.

- ***Coordinated Engagement with City Networks*** will be extremely useful for the UN as agencies seeks to assist member states harness the opportunities of urbanization. Agencies are encouraged to engage networks directly in consultation with UN-Habitat to improve coordination and align engagements with other city networks.