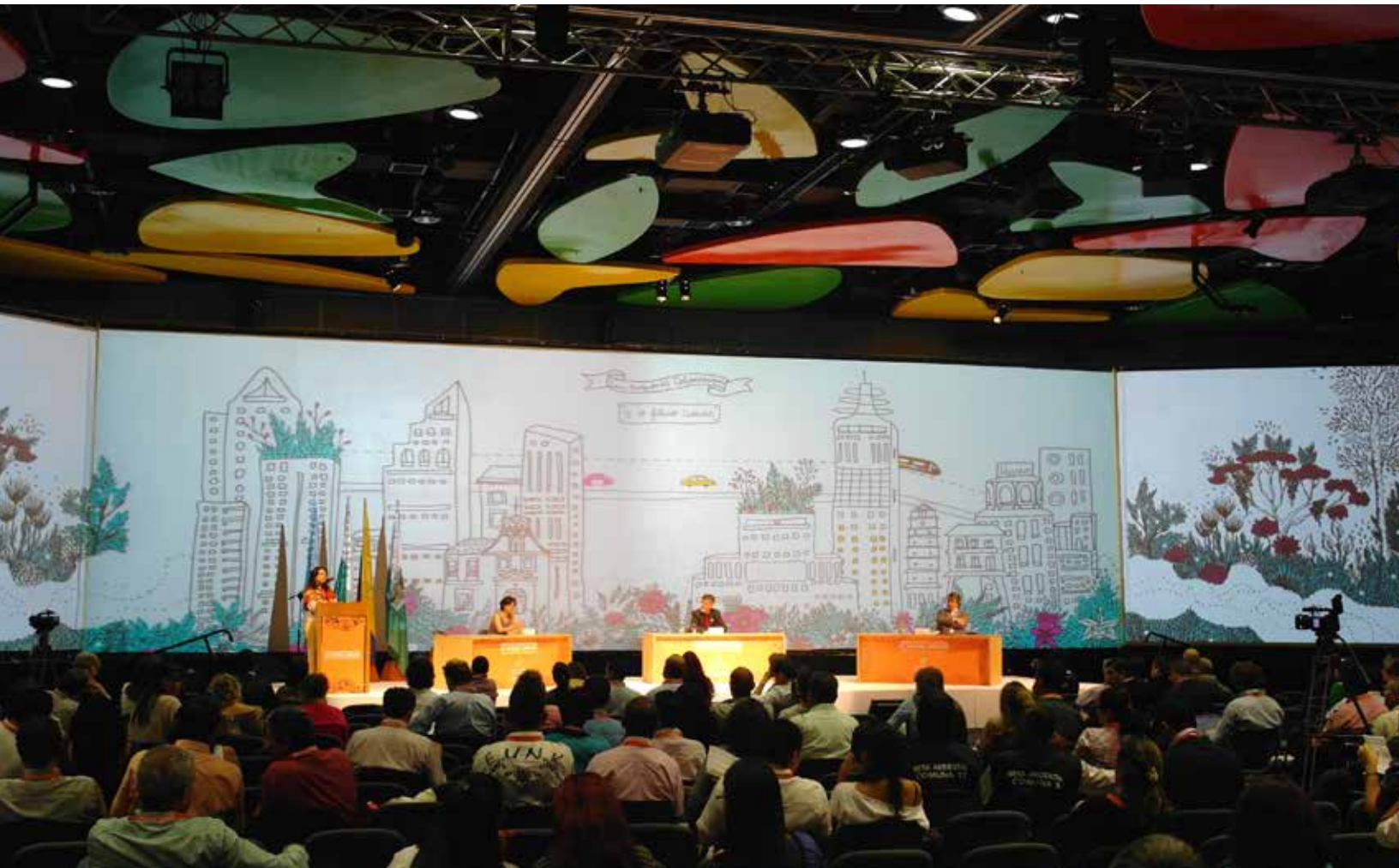


GUIDELINES NATIONAL
**URBAN
FORUM**





Cityscape of Alesund Norway ©Tatiana Popova / Shutterstock.com

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NATIONAL URBAN FORUMS TOWARDS HABITAT III

BACKGROUND

In the context of an increasingly urbanized world, high dynamism in urban policies and programming is being experienced by developed and developing countries. This requires inclusive policy debates, integrated by sustained advocacy and capacity development efforts as well as cooperation and coordination among different actors.

At the global level, in the last 12 years, the World Urban Forum (WUF) has been an extremely powerful platform to advocate for the centrality of sustainable urban development in the global political and media agenda. The seventh session of the WUF gathered more than 22,000 attendees, among national, regional and local governments, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, professionals, academia and media, from 142 countries. It reaffirmed the role and importance of sustainable urbanization vis-à-vis the discussion on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, creating a formidable momentum ahead of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III).

Habitat III will take place in October 2016, in Quito (Ecuador), with the objective to discuss and deliberate on a new global urban agenda which addresses the challenges of a rapid urbanization while leveraging its enormous development potential.

The Habitat III preparatory process at the country level includes the establishment or reviving of National Habitat Committees (NHC) to initiate national consultations and prepare Habitat III National Reports to assess progress on the implementation of the Habitat Agenda of 1996 and to address new and chronic challenges at the urban level. Detailed process guidelines have been shared with Governments since November 2013.

One of the leading principles permeating the Habitat III preparatory process is the inclusivity of the debate to mobilize support from an engaged and fully aware wide range of stakeholders. In that respect, in order to complement the work of the NHCs and extend the scope of the entire process other important tools were recommended namely the holding of National Urban Forums as well as National Urban Campaigns.

Following up on the recommendation made to the Secretary General of the Conference by member states (GC24/14) to strengthen mechanisms for enabling the effective participation and contribution of all stakeholders, the National Urban Forums have been included as one of the main elements of the Habitat III dimension of country engagement in the preparation process. They have been recognized as relevant multi-stakeholders platforms to mobilize national support and gather inputs to the New Urban Agenda.

The Forums will be monitored and supported by the Habitat III Secretariat in order to strengthen the country's substantive preparation and contribution to Habitat III widening the debate and outreach of this global initiative.

To this aim, countries are encouraged to organize NUFs during the period ahead of Habitat III and to create space for discussions and dialogues related to the country contribution to a New Urban Agenda. This may include feeding the preparation of the Habitat III National Report and contributing to its dissemination and divulgation.

The NUFs held in the lead up to the Conference will be an excellent opportunity for stakeholders and policy makers to reflect on the country urbanization trends of the last 20 years, identifying achievements and impacts as well as solutions for positive transformation.

Substantive outcomes from the various Forums will constitute a robust contribution to the New Urban Agenda and they will be collected and disseminated through the Habitat III digital platforms.

Along with all categories of stakeholders, UN system agencies and programmes operating in the country will be invited to contribute to the debate. This will strengthen the linkages and understanding of the integration between the New Urban Agenda, the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the climate change initiative.

Box 1

STRENGTHENING LINKAGES WITH HABITAT III

The following are some of the main elements that should be taken into consideration when organizing National Urban Forums in order to strengthen the linkages with the Habitat III process:

NUF PROGRAMME

// Specific sessions can be created in the programme to discuss National contributions to the New Urban Agenda and global development frameworks, including:

- Preparation, discussion and/or dissemination of Habitat III National Reports
- Linkages with Post-2015 Development Agenda and Climate Change

// Special Habitat III background documents can be disseminated also in preparation for the session.

// Urban Journalism Academies can be implemented for media practitioners on how to effectively communicate the urban agenda and engage the public.

PARTICIPATION AND OUTCOMES PRODUCTION

// Ensure that a NUF final declaration is issued capturing any way forward and/or substantive contribution towards Habitat III, that was discussed and shared by participants.

// Foster country preparations and engagement towards Habitat III.

// Support improved inclusivity of the Forum especially vis-à-vis the Habitat III national debate [see proposed list of main stakeholders to engage.

MOBILIZATION AND PROMOTION

// Brand your activities and campaigns with the "Together Towards Habitat III" stamp;

// Create a NUF Communications Kit for media and stakeholders. The kit may contain the Forum's background documents, reports, statements, programme, etc.

// Create a NUF Social Media Kit for bloggers and stakeholders. Elaborate messages, pics and select a hashtag.

// Establish partnerships with media and stakeholders for a wider dissemination of the Forum.

// Share your communications materials with the Habitat III Secretariat for further dissemination.

// Support the parallel implementation of national and local urban campaigns

The Habitat III Secretariat should be contacted in order to request support and ensure that the event and its outcomes are officially included in the results framework of the process leading to the New Urban Agenda. habitat3secretariat@un.org



1. WHAT IS A NATIONAL URBAN FORUM

The National Urban Forum (NUF) is a multi-stakeholder platform to support sustainable urban development processes and debates at the country level, including feeding national contributions and participation to global development strategies.

The work of the National Urban Forum, which may include local, regional and national consultations, workshops and other capacity building and advocacy activities, is expected to culminate in a public national event held for two or more days, ideally every one or two years.

The advocacy and awareness efforts of a National Urban Forum can be integrated by the set-up of a National Urban Campaign and other ad-hoc campaigns addressing specific themes and target audience.

In accordance to the increasing importance of regional dynamics and contexts, Urban Forums can also be established at regional level and periodic events held with involvement of multiple national and local governments as well as other stakeholders.

2. OBJECTIVES OF A NATIONAL URBAN FORUM

The overall objective of the NUF is to raise the profile of urban development issues at the country level promoting inclusive debates towards improved sustainable urbanization strategies, policies and programs.

The above overarching objective can be further elaborated according to the priorities determined by the NUF stakeholders and based on the country's specificities. Below are some proposed expected accomplishments related to four main dimensions identified, namely *Knowledge base building, Engagement, Awareness raising and Policy advice*

KNOWLEDGE BASE BUILDING

This dimension of the NUF is essentially about increasing the understanding on sustainable urbanization issues as well as the production and sharing of evidence based knowledge both at the level of policies and practices.

Expected Accomplishment: Knowledge, capacity and understanding on sustainable urban development issues is increased among different stakeholders.

Proposed areas of activities:

// Facilitation of development, critical discussion and dissemination of urban sector studies and researches, including situation analyses for policy and programmes as well as benchmarking;

// Promotion of monitoring and evaluation tools on urban issues including policies and programmes;

// Furthering collection and analysis of disaggregated urban data in national population as well as housing and urban development surveys;

// Exchanges of experience and training to enhance capacity of stakeholders and policy makers;

// Facilitation of increased understanding on sustainable urban development issues, including through monitoring of national trends;

// Documentation and wide sharing of good practices on urban development.



ENGAGEMENT

This dimension is based on the assumption that only through an active participation of multiple stakeholders in dialogues on sustainable urban development can produce the necessary consensus to support decision making processes.

Expected Accomplishment: Active participation and consensus building on policies and programmes is increased among stakeholders towards an improved urban agenda.

Proposed areas of activities:

// Ensuring that all main categories of stakeholders are invited to participate in the discussion, including vulnerable groups;

// Creation of a conducive space for an inclusive and open dialogue among all stakeholders;

// Facilitation of consensus building among the parties;

// Partnership facilitation and creation of networking opportunities for all stakeholders at national and international levels;

// Development of urban stakeholders' national mapping and surveys.

POLICY ADVICE

This dimension concerns the capacity of the NUF to substantively support and influence, through focused and consensus based recommendations, policy making and interventions at national and local levels. This can include feeding national contributions to global development frameworks.

Expected Accomplishment: The advisory role on urban policy making and programming is effectively exerted by the National Urban Forum from an informed and shared perspective

Proposed areas of activities:

//Facilitating national and local consultations to gather inputs and recommendations to housing and urban sector policies, draft laws and guidelines, informed by sector's studies;

// Ensure a strong linkage and contributions to international strategic and policy frameworks, such as the Post-2015 Development Agenda and Habitat III;

// Gathering substantive inputs to the National Habitat III reports to be considered by the NHC and facilitate the dissemination;

// Gather substantive inputs for the sessions of regional ministerial conferences on housing and urban development and other intergovernmental bodies and international events;

// Coordinate inputs towards enhanced country contribution and participation to the sessions of the World Urban Forum;

//Ensure that relevant national and local reports are presented and disseminated at international conferences and events;

// Promote debates on the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda vis-à-vis the national challenges and progress;

//Targeted discussions and recommendations towards streamlining sustainable urbanization issues into poverty reduction strategies and national development plans as well as United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks when appropriate.

AWARENESS RAISING

Awareness raising, strictly linked and synergetic with engagement, is oriented to ensure that stakeholders are increasingly made aware of important urban issues in order to increase their mobilization and ensure they play an informed role in support of decision making.

Expected Accomplishment: Awareness on sustainable urbanization issues is raised among different stakeholders.

Proposed areas of activities:

// Preparation of a communication strategy targeting specific stakeholder groups including the general public;

// Organization of national and local urban campaigns to spread messages on sustainable urban development to the general public;

// Engagement of people across all disciplines (culture, art, music, sports, etc);

// Organization of Urban Journalism Academies (UJA) to strengthen journalist and media capacity to analyse and objectively inform on urbanization issues [please, see UJA Guidelines];

// Encouraging media to participate, disseminate and actively follow up the global discussions towards the New Urban Agenda;

// Promote the creation of urban media networks to engage in the path to the Habitat III Conference and beyond;

// Establish partnerships with communications groups and other entities to address urban issues on media (editorials, interviews, stories, etc);

// Use digital and social media to foster inclusiveness and participation to the discussions;

// Undertake field visits to urban development projects' sites, for policymakers and media among others;

//Hold exhibitions and/or knowledge fairs to display latest concepts, methodologies, techniques and products.

A PROPOSAL FOR A RESULTS ORIENTED APPROACH

The set-up and organization of NUFs, either as permanent stakeholder platforms or stand-alone events, should be based on a clear identification of specific objectives and measurable indicators of achievements. To this aim a detailed logical framework should be designed and agreed by the stakeholders in order to facilitate planning, monitoring and evaluations. The Log-frame will allow a continued process of analysis of results and lessons learnt to improve the effectiveness of the Forum. In addition to that, results oriented planning and implementation of a National Urban Forum will ensure efficient utilization of resources and transparent accountability.

Once the general objectives are translated in a limited set of Expected Accomplishments, a simple table can be filled with Indicators of achievements, Baselines and Targets. In addition to that, Data sources, Collection methods and Monitoring frequency can also be indicated. [fig.1]

In the Results Based Management theory, indicators of achievement should be referred to the expected changes at the level of the beneficiaries. However, in many cases it is difficult to measure this since changes may happen later after the event and are not completely attributable to it. Hence it is common to resort to proxy indicators or process indicators to measure the good organization and implementation of the Forum. Here are some possible areas to consider:

Areas for process indicators

- // Level of participation (both qualitative and quantitative)
- // Level of inclusivity of the event
- // Level of diversity (both in terms of substantive contribution and attendance)
- // Level of media engagement

Proxy indicators of change

- // Number of partnerships, networks or projects created at the Forum or as a result of participation
- // Adoption of a final declaration / final recommendations, including level of consensus
- // Participants satisfaction (based on surveys)

After the event or at the end of work plan cycle, once the actual results on the established indicators are collected, recommendations can be drawn depending on the qualitative and quantitative performance. [fig.2]

[fig.1]

Expected Accomplishments	Indicator of achievement	Baseline	Target	Data source for validating indicators	Data collection method	Monitoring frequency

[fig.2]

Expected Accomplishments	Indicator of achievement	Baseline	Target	Data source for validating indicators	Actual results	Recommendations

3. HOW TO SET UP A PERMANENT NATIONAL URBAN FORUM

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Forum can be established through the initiative of the national government, spearheaded by the branch responsible for urban development and steered by a committee composed of governmental and other stakeholder representatives as appropriate.

For the NUF to become a sustainable platform to advance and promote an improved urban agenda in the country, it is important to mobilise all urban stakeholders and establish institutionalised coordination and support mechanisms.

Identification of partners

As a first step, the Government (Ministry in charge of urban development) needs to identify and mobilise the partners that should participate in the NUF. If so required, this can be done through implementing a survey/ census to identify the most relevant actors (the resulting database can be further improved and used for advocacy and communication purposes).

The Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is the body entitled to provide the Forum's governance structure and the mandate for preparation and organization of all activities. It is expected to include inter-ministerial representation as well as other stakeholder representatives as appropriate.

The Steering Committee provides strategic guidance and substantive oversight to the work of the NUF Secretariat, including approval of the NUF Action Plan, calendar of activities and events as well as guidance on resource mobilisation.

A permanent NUF Secretariat

In order to function properly, the NUF needs a permanent secretariat right from the outset. The NUF Secretariat should be located in government office responsible for urban development. Depending on the specific country arrangement, the NUF Secretariat could also be hosted by other institutions including national government agencies, municipalities, NGOs or academic institutions. The best institutional location of the NUF Secretariat should be decided by the Steering Committee in its preliminary meetings. The NUF Secretary serves as focal point for all NUF related matters.

The NUF Secretariat facilitates, on a day-to-day basis, the activities organized by the NUF, including meeting and event logistics, communications (preparation of advertising materials, press briefings, media stories, print materials, etc.) as well as preparation, publication and dissemination of NUF outputs based on the Action Plan.

The NUF Secretariat is also responsible for outreach activities, including working relationships with key actors intending to contribute, sponsor or host NUF events, as well as exhibitors. It is advisable to create an NUF

website and a presence on social networking sites for maximum visibility and to facilitate engagement and information sharing. The NUF Secretariat may delegate the organisation of particular NUF activities/events to specific partners. The Secretariat is also responsible for the preparation and publication of a report of each NUF session.

Report and Declaration

The report, following the World Urban Forum format, can be integrated by a Declaration to be issued by a scientific committee formed by representatives from the major category groups of stakeholders, reflecting the main issues emerging during the NUF session.

The declaration should include an action oriented section with recommendations for decision makers and to inform future steps including the subsequent NUF action plan.



ORGANISATION OF PREPARATORY MEETINGS TO SET THE WORK AGENDA

The Ministry in charge of urban development should call the identified partners to participate in preparatory meetings to discuss the objectives/ expected accomplishments, activities and working modalities of the NUF, including proposals for other partners' inclusion. In these meetings, the priority themes/issues to be on the NUF agenda should be identified – informed by national priorities – and agreed upon. Moreover, clear working arrangements have to be agreed.

It is important that these meetings provide a platform for genuine consultation and collaboration, based on the freedom of all partners to share their particular perspectives and expectations of the NUF. This will lay the foundation for meaningful deliberations, the preparation of targeted national policy recommendations, as well as common positions for the country's contributions to international policy dialogue. The open spirit of this preparatory meeting will be decisive in setting up a national forum that encourages all urban actors to pro-actively participate in this initiative and take 'ownership' of this important process.

The outputs of the preparatory meetings are the NUF Action Plan and the formation of a NUF Steering Committee which is supposed to provide for the set-up of a NUF Secretariat.

NUF Action Plan

The purpose of the NUF Action Plan is to:

- // Provide a summary of the main challenges related to housing and urban development;
- // Reflect on experiences and achievements of previous platforms for urban policy dialogue;
- // Present a calendar of NUF activities and events planned for the biennium (or any other agreed timeframe);
- // Outline the agreed NUF working arrangements; and
- // Develop an indicative budget for the biennium (or any other agreed timeframe) with funding sources, including in-kind contributions.

The drafting of the NUF Action Plan shall be initiated by the NUF Secretariat, based on the outcome of the preparatory meetings. The Secretariat will circulate the draft to all partners and incorporate their comments. The NUF Secretary, together with UN-Habitat, will present the draft to the UN Country Team for discussion and to ensure that the planned activities and events are consistent with the UNDAF/One UN process.

NUF Steering Committee

The NUF Steering Committee is ideally composed of one representative of each of the stakeholder categories. To ensure some rotation, representation for each stakeholder group may change after some time.

The Steering Committee members can also consider the establishment of sub-committees and/or working groups in order to address specific thematic issues involving ad-hoc partners and expertise. The Steering Committee can also be an Inter-Ministerial Committee integrated by a number of thematic committees with representatives coming from different constituency groups.

The Steering Committee provides substantive oversight to the work of the NUF Secretariat, including the approval of the Action Plan and the calendar of NUF activities/events. It also provides strategic guidance on resource mobilisation.

WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

In each country, the NUF should choose the working arrangements that are most appropriate to the unique national context. Working arrangements should be kept flexible so that they can be adjusted to changing needs. If it is considered useful, a Memorandum of Understanding may be signed by participating organisations.

If similar forums already exist in the country, the NUF may partner with them and propose to organise additional activities in a complementary way, thus reinforcing existing initiatives and avoiding duplication.

4. HOLDING A SESSION OF THE NATIONAL URBAN FORUM

It is recommended that the NUF holds at least an annual meeting or biennial sessions over two to 5 days. One of the NUF sessions could coincide with the annual celebration of the Urban October, between World Habitat Day (first Monday in October) and World Cities Day (31 October) in order to create synergies and benefit from the higher international visibility provided during that month. NUF events should not be only held in the capital city but also in other secondary urban centres to engage different stakeholders and better bring to the fore different local dynamics.

Following the formats of the World Urban Forum, sessions may have thematic focus and could be organised in plenary, thematic dialogues and working groups, or any other format that the partners find most suitable to any of the specific objectives of the Forum.

If organised in dialogue format, selected panellists introduce and make short substantive presentations on specific issues followed by discussions among all participants. At the end of each dialogue session, the Chair/ Moderator, drawing from the deliberations, should prepare a summary of the main conclusions and recommendations. These dialogue summaries should be as inclusive as possible. Once endorsed by the plenary as an accurate reflection of what transpired in the dialogues, these summaries become the basis for final declarations and eventually policy recommendations.

The outputs of the NUF should be as concrete as possible. Policy notes and action plans, supported by proceedings for those who want to read the details of the discussions and their outcome, can be effective tools for passing key messages to decision-makers and implementers.

A STRUCTURE FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF THE EVENT

The Steering Committee of the Forum should appoint specific subcommittees to coordinate the planning and management of key areas of the event such as:

- 1 Sub-committee on planning and substantive programme
- 2 Sub-committee on communication (including promotion and mobilization)
- 3 Sub-committee on logistics

BASIC TIPS

PLANNING AND PROGRAMME

- > Select the main theme of the Forum
- > Identify programme format, dates and schedule of meetings
- > Identify speakers and moderators according to subjects and session's format
- > Organize session reporting including NUF final report
- > Organize the preparation of a final declaration with clear recommendations
- > Consider a call for application for side events and training
- > Consider the set-up of e-debates platforms to discuss the topics
- > Consider the enrichment of the event with cultural events programme
- > Consider set up of an exhibition space and open a call for applications

COMMUNICATION

- > Prepare a communication strategy and plan for promotion
- > Define the branding of the event
- > Prepare promotional material for dissemination
- > Set-up a webpage
- > Plan and implement social media activities
- > Prepare and send official invitations to key partners and stakeholders
- > Contact media and press to cover the event and keep them engaged
- > Plan for mobilization activities involving established networks of partners.
- > Consider preparing and sending of newsletters/email alerts to contact groups and interested people
- > Consider organizing of photography and video coverage of the event
- > Consider implementing targeted marketing and advertising campaigns

LOGISTICS

- Logistics of participants*
- > Organize On-line registration opened sufficiently in advance
 - > Organize On-site accreditation and badging
- Logistics of spaces*
- > Ensure that effective signage and Information desks are arranged at the venue
 - > Organize meeting rooms set up and equipment
 - > Organize and manage a media centre and a press conference room
 - > Organize office space for the organizers
 - > Organize adequate space for internal meetings including for reporting teams
 - > Consider the set-up of a speakers/ moderators room
 - > Consider the set-up of a VIP Area/room
 - > Consider arrangements to provide for catering, banking and communication facilities

National Urban Forums (NUFs) have already been established, with excellent results, in a number of countries creating the enabling environment to promote dialogue and consensus among stakeholders, including national government, local authorities, grass root organizations, private sector and academia among others.

Countries that organized a National Urban Forum in 2014 and 2015:

// Kenya (2014)

// Nigeria (2014)

// Cameroun (2014)

// Ethiopia (2014)

// Pacific Urban Forum (regional - 2015)

Events planned for 2015 / 2016:

// Afghanistan (2015)

// Caribbean Urban Forum (regional - 2015)

// Chile (2015)

// Egypt (2015)

// Israel (2015)

// Malaysia (2016)

// Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (2016)



