



ABSTRACT

The world has changed remarkably since the Habitat II Conference took place in Istanbul in 1996. The way cities are shaped, their form and functionality have also been transformed over these years. The growth of the world's cities, from the north to the south, and from the east to the west, is ingrained in a culture of short-term economic benefit and often unbridled consumption and production practices that compromise the sustainability of the environment. Urbanization is at the same time a positive force underpinning profound social, political and economic transformation. Urbanization and growth go hand in hand, and no one can deny that urbanization is essential for socio-economic transformation, wealth generation, prosperity and development.

The analysis of urban development of the past twenty years presented in this maiden edition of the World Cities Report shows, with compelling evidence, that there are new forms of collaboration and cooperation, planning, governance, finance and learning that can sustain positive change. The Report unequivocally demonstrates that the current urbanization model is unsustainable in many respects. It conveys a clear message that the pattern of urbanization needs to change in order to better respond to the challenges of our time, to address issues such as inequality, climate change, informality, insecurity, and the unsustainable forms of urban expansion.

The Report advocates that the New Urban Agenda— which is expected to be adopted at the Habitat III Conference— should embrace a city-wide approach to development with concrete actions, setting out clear funding mechanisms and effective means of implementation and monitoring. Habitat III and the New Urban Agenda should establish critical connections to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other international agreements. The Report is very explicit on the need to ensure a strong convergence among these agendas as a way of complementing and improving the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those with an urban component.

