

PRESS KIT

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON HOUSING AND SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT HABITAT III - QUITO 2016

Habitat III is the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development to take place in Quito, Ecuador, in October 2016. In resolution 66/207 and in line with the bi-decennial cycle (1976, 1996 and 2016), the United Nations General Assembly decided to convene the Habitat III Conference to reinvigorate the global commitment to sustainable urbanization, to focus on the implementation of a “New Urban Agenda”, building on the Habitat Agenda of Istanbul in 1996.

Member States of the General Assembly, in resolution 67/216, decided that the objective of the Conference is to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable urban development, assess accomplishments to date, address poverty and identify and address new and emerging challenges. The conference will result in a concise, focused, forward-looking and action-oriented outcome document. Habitat III is to play an important role in making cities and human settlements equitable, prosperous, sustainable, just, equal and safe.

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The Conference welcomes the participation and contributions of all Member States and relevant stakeholders, including parliamentarians, civil society organizations, regional and local government and municipality representatives, professionals and researchers, academia, foundations, women and youth groups, trade unions, and the private sector, as well as organizations of the United Nations system and intergovernmental organizations.

Habitat III is one of the first major global conferences to be held after the adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and, hopefully, a new climate change agreement. It offers a unique opportunity to discuss the important challenge of how cities, towns and villages are planned and managed, in order to fulfil their role as drivers of sustainable development, and hence shape the implementation of new global development and climate change goals.



Habitat I, Habitat II and the Habitat Agenda

The United Nations General Assembly convened the Habitat I conference in Vancouver in 1976, as governments began to recognize the need for sustainable human settlements and the consequences of rapid urbanization, especially in the developing world. At that time, urbanization and its impacts were barely considered by the international community, but the world was starting to witness the greatest and fastest migration of people into cities and towns in history as well as rising urban population through natural growth resulting from advances in medicine.

The Vancouver commitments were reconfirmed twenty years later, at the Habitat II Conference in Istanbul. World leaders adopted the Habitat Agenda as a global plan of action for adequate shelter for all, with the notion of sustainable human settlements driving development in an urbanizing world.

Forty years later, there is a wide consensus that the towns and cities structure, form and functionality need to change as societies change. The legacy of the city of the twentieth century, in terms of spatial pattern, is growth outside their boundaries to satellite or dormitory towns and suburban neighbourhoods.

Cities have continued to expand outwards beyond their peri-urban areas, often due to weak urban planning, poor urban management, land regulation crises, and real estate speculation factors. In 2010, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) reported that more than 827 million people were living in slum-like conditions.

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It is now well understood that slums and the related informal settlements are a spontaneous form of urbanization, consisting of a series of survival strategies by the urban poor, most borne out of poverty and exclusion.

Habitat III represents an opportunity to make concrete the ideals of Habitat II in designing policies, planning urban spaces for all and affordable urban services and utilities.

WORLD URBAN POPULATION

HABITAT I - 1976	HABITAT II - 1996	HABITAT III - 2016
37.9%	45.1%	54.5%
1.5 billion	2.6 billion	4 billion



New Urban Agenda: Urbanization as a driver of development

Urbanization is an unprecedented challenge. By the middle of the century four of every five people might be living in towns and cities, and the great majority of slum-dwellers in 2030 will be Asian or African. Urbanization and development are inextricably linked and it is necessary to find a way of ensuring the sustainability of growth. Urbanization had become a driving force as well as a source of development with the power to change and improve lives.

Habitat III Conference has the convening power to bring together all actors to achieve these objectives. Solutions for the complex challenge of urbanization can only be found by bringing together Member States, multilateral organizations, local governments, private sector and civil society.

By embracing urbanization at all levels of human settlements, more appropriate policies can embrace urbanization across physical space, bridging urban, peri-urban and rural areas, and assist governments in addressing challenges through national and local development policy frameworks.

Habitat III can help systematise the alignment between cities and towns and national planning objectives in their role as drivers of national economic and social development. Rising inequality, sharing prosperity, urban poverty and spontaneous (i.e. unplanned) urbanization are high on the agenda of Habitat III.

Preparatory Process towards Habitat III

In its resolution 67/216, the General Assembly decided to establish a preparatory committee to carry out the preparations for Habitat III, to meet three times before the Conference.

// The **first session** of the Preparatory Committee was held at United Nations Headquarters in New York, on 17 and 18 September 2014.

// The **second session** is held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 14 to 16 April 2015.

// The **third session** will be in Indonesia, in July 2016.

The Preparatory Committee will follow the established United Nations procedures for an inter-governmental conference.

The Second session of the Preparatory Committee marks the start of a consultative process to feed into the intergovernmental negotiations culminating in the **First Draft** outcome in April 2016. This includes High-level Regional and Thematic Meetings, the elaboration of Issue Papers and the



establishment of Policy Units, Debates and contributions by platforms of stakeholders and networks.

The Conference

The Conference shall be composed of eight plenary meetings, on the basis of two meetings a day, and six high-level round-table sessions to be held concurrently with the plenary meetings.

The Conference will embrace parallel meetings and other events, including multi-stakeholder segments, which will constitute an official part of the Conference.

Special events, including briefings, seminars, workshops and panel discussions on issues related to housing and sustainable urban development, will be organized by Member States, organizations of the United Nations system and accredited institutional and non-institutional stakeholders for the benefit of the participants in the Conference.

The Secretary-General of the Conference

Dr. Joan Clos is the Secretary-General of the Habitat III Conference. He is also the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, at the level of Under Secretary General by the United Nations since October 2010.

Born in Barcelona on 29 June 1949, he is a medical doctor with a distinguished career in public service and diplomacy. He was twice elected Mayor of Barcelona, serving two terms from 1997 until 2006. He was Minister of Industry, Tourism, and Trade of Spain between 2006 and 2008. Prior to joining the United Nations, he served as the Spanish Ambassador to Turkey and Azerbaijan.

He is a medicine graduate from the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona (UAB), and specialized in Public Health and Epidemiology at the University of Edinburgh (Scotland).

In the words of Dr. Joan Clos, “the Conference is a unique opportunity for rethinking the Urban Agenda in which governments can respond by promoting a new model of urban development able to integrate all facets of sustainable development to promote equity, welfare and shared prosperity.”

The city of Quito, Ecuador

Quito, the capital city of Ecuador, is located at 9,200 feet (2,800 meters) above sea level. With a population of 2,6 million people, Quito is the second most populous city in Ecuador, after Guayaquil.



The historic center of Quito has one of the largest, least-altered and best-preserved historic centers in Latin America. Quito, along with Cracow, were the first World Cultural Heritage Sites declared by UNESCO in 1978.

Other Relevant Documents

Other relevant documents might be found on www.Habitat3.org, under the *Documents* section.

- *The Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements: From the report of Habitat – United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, Vancouver, Canada, 31 May to 11 June 1976*
- *The Habitat Agenda: Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements*

Process towards Habitat III:

- *Issue Papers and Policy Units* - <http://unhabitat.org/issue-papers-and-policy-units>

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