

MISSION BRIEF

2nd meeting of the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), 14-16 April 2015, Nairobi, Kenya

Talking points:

(Intro)

- Thank Dr. Clos / co-chairs of the Preparatory Committee.
- The OECD strongly supports the two important initiatives of the United Nations: Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals on cities and the Habitat III's New Urban Agenda.
- It is crucial that every country is going to commit and act towards sustainable urban development in this century of cities, or "Metropolitan Century".

(Paradigm shift towards the "quality" of urbanisation)

- Last time when we gathered at Habitat II (20-years ago), we discussed that urbanisation is the engine of growth. We can now confirm that this forward-looking goal is still very valid after 20 years.
- Now, considering our next goals for the next 20 years, we should think how to make the most use of the opportunity of urbanisation. This means that we need to address the "quality of urbanisation".

(Aligning policies across government)

- "Quality of urbanisation" is very much dependent on the institutions and mechanism to address urbanisation. In other words, governance matters when we want to achieve "quality of urbanisation".
- Of course, we need a good city government to lead to improve the performance of cities. But at the same time we should not underestimate the role of national government, who can provide integrated policy frameworks for aligning national and local policies that affect cities.
- For example, countries like Japan shows that a few metropolitan areas produce most of national GDP, affecting the entire national economy. It is therefore crucial that the national and local governments are in alignment to achieve national prosperity as well as local wellbeing.

(Integrated approach / multiple objectives)

- Second, the quality will be driven by multiple objectives of urban policies, especially by well-being, by inclusiveness, by aging, by climate changes. The integration of these multiple objectives can only be addressed by good governance.

(Conclusion / evidence-based policy making / facilitating dialogues)

- Let us work together, collecting evidence at the right spatial unit (i.e. functional urban areas), and facilitating dialogues among national and local policymakers, sharing the experience of those who have good governance of cities for better policy design and implementation of the New Urban Agenda.
- The OECD will be willing and ready to continue our support to this common objective.

Background on Disaster Risk Reduction:

- The OECD Recommendation on the Governance of Critical Risks, approved by our ministers in May 2014 under the chairmanship of Japan, emphasises the importance of complementing structural and non-structural measures, promoting building safer and more sustainable communities, coordinated urban planning and territorial management policies, as well as robust surveillance and monitoring mechanisms. It calls for the incorporation of safety and security standards in national and local regulations for land use, and building codes.
- Studies on how to build resilience to disasters with a focus on good governance practices that foster multi-stakeholder policy design and create incentives for effective implementation.
- Disaster Risk Reduction is an important topic not only for OECD countries, where the economic losses are highest, but also for emerging economies where a disaster can significantly reduce the gains of growth.
- OECD HLRF key messages:
 - Risk management is a key source of value in the investments that drive sustainable economic development: OECD promotes good practices related to risk assessment, mitigation, emergency preparedness and recovery.
 - Governments cannot go it alone. Take a whole of government and whole of society approach involving central and local government, and incentives for the private sector and households to invest in sustainable urban environments.
- In recognition of the importance of urban development in disaster risk management, the UN draft SDG's include a specific goal on urban DRR: Target 11.b "By 2020, increase by [x] per cent the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, develop and implement, in line with the forthcoming Hyogo Framework, holistic disaster risk management at all levels".

- Many countries suffer major social and economic losses from disasters, and the economic losses are increasing in major cities. Rapid urbanization in transition economies has contributed to an increase in vulnerability, especially of the urban poor as they that are often located in hazard-prone areas. The continued increase in concentration of economic assets and people in urban areas is expected to be one of the key challenges for disaster risk management efforts in the future.
- Many countries have made strides in strengthening their institutions and regulations to reduce disaster risks. The Hyogo Framework for Action was key in setting out a broad range of measures that governments might take for this purpose. The main challenge now is overcoming obstacles to action. The question is not what to do, but how to make sure it gets done. The Sendai Framework agreed upon in March set up an action plan to achieve these objectives.
- Limiting exposure to risks in urban areas is a challenge. The effective implementation and enforcement of land-use and building code regulation has been a challenge, even in OECD countries. For example, in Italy, the 500 000 citizens that have settled in the high risk area around the volcano of Vesuvius is a result of failure in land use planning and enforcing existing building codes. In Mexico, 60 % of new buildings constructed since 2011 are built illegally, with most of them likely in non-compliance with existing building codes. In the United Kingdom, 11 % percent of new homes have been constructed since 2000 in flood prone areas. As the Pitt report has concluded, “in the absence of a formal requirement, little existing guidance in flood resilient construction for developers has been implemented”.

Handouts, publications or documents

- Recommendation on Governance of Critical Risks
- Boosting resilience through innovative risk governance
- Seine Basin, Ill-de-France: resilience to Major Floods