



URBAN GOVERNANCE

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Tech Speak

TECHNICAL UPDATE SERIES

HABITAT III – UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON HOUSING AND SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT – OCTOBER 17-20, 2016 QUITO, ECUADOR

The United Nations General Assembly has decided to convene Habitat III Conference¹ to reinvigorate the global commitment to sustainable urbanization and to focus on implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

The conference will see participation by 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 will be the first global UN summit after the adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The first Habitat Conference was held in 1976 in Vancouver, Canada where it was recognized that shelter and urbanization were global issues to be addressed collectively. The world urban population was 37.9% back then. This conference led to the creation of United Nations Center for Human Settlements (UNCHS-Habitat).

Twenty years later, in 1996 the Vancouver commitments were reconfirmed at the Habitat II Conference in Istanbul, Turkey. 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. The world urban population had grown to 45.1% by then and cities emerged as engines of global growth. Urbanization was recognized as an opportunity and calls were made for a stronger role of local authorities and recognition of the power of participation.

Today, 40 years later, it is becoming more and more clear that achievements on

sustainable development will depend on how we will manage and guide global urbanization. The world urban population stands at 54.5% today and Habitat III calls for recognition of urbanization as an endogenous source of development.

In 2010, UN Habitat reported that more than 827 million people were living in slum-like conditions, pointing to the need for treating urbanization as a tool for social integration and equity. New urban models were also needed to effectively address emerging challenges such as climate change.



RETHINKING THE URBAN AGENDA

The objective of the conference is to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable urban development. It aims to assess achievements to date, address poverty and identify and address new and emerging challenges. It will result in a concise, focused, forward-looking and action-oriented outcome document – the New Urban Agenda.

Rethinking the Urban Agenda is embracing urbanization at all levels of human settlements. More appropriate policies can ensure urbanization across physical space, bridging urban, peri-urban and rural areas, and assist governments in addressing challenges through national and local development policy frameworks. They can integrate equity as an issue of social justice, ensuring access to the public sphere, extending opportunities and increasing the commons.

KEY ELEMENTS FOR A NEW URBAN AGENDA

The conference identifies the following key elements to create a pattern of sustainable urban development fostering a new model of city:

- **Urban Rules and Regulations:** The outcome in terms of quality of an urban settlement is dependent on the set of regulations and its implementability. Proper urbanization requires the rule of law.
- **Urban Planning and Design:** Establishing the adequate provision of common goods, including streets and open spaces, together with an efficient pattern of buildable plots.
- **Municipal Finance:** Municipal finance systems should redistribute parts of the urban value generated to facilitate good management and maintenance of the city.

THE CONFERENCE OPPORTUNITY

Habitat III offers a unique opportunity to discuss the important challenge of how cities, towns and villages are planned and managed, in order to fulfill their role as drivers of sustainable and equitable development, and hence shape implementation of new global development and climate change goals.

It brings together the needed actors to achieve global goals to find solutions for the complex challenge of urbanization. It will guarantee that outcomes take place within a global development agenda (SDGs Framework) and stands to be the first implementing conference of the Post-2015 Agenda.



¹ UNCHS, Habitat III Conference Brochure and Zero Draft Outcome Document

² Dr Joan Clos, Secretary-General, Habitat III Conference and Executive Director UN-Habitat
Illustrations and Infographics: Habitat III Conference

