World Urban Campaign: Better City- Better Life

Concept Note

What is the purpose of the Campaign?

The World Urban Campaign is a platform for public, private and civil society actors to elevate policies, share practical tools and raise awareness for sustainable urbanization. The success of the Campaign will be measured by more sustainable urban policies at the national level and increased investment and capital flows in support of those policies. For this reason it focuses on providing governments and partner networks with an advocacy instrument to articulate a shared vision for a better urban future and to advance the urban agenda within their respective constituencies.

This applies as much to organizations of the urban poor as it does to associations of local authorities, business forums, youth associations, media outlets, professional associations, women’s groups, Parliamentarians, ministerial conferences, and inter-governmental bodies. The Campaign in this way seeks to position sustainable urbanization as a priority issue of the international community and as a national policy priority for individual member States.

Why establish a World Urban Campaign?

The second and third decades of the 21st Century are an unprecedented moment in human history. The population of the world during this period will move from 50% to 70% urban. The movement is irreversible. Lacking requisite resources and policy priorities, most city governments will be ill-equipped to meet the needs of the urban future. An estimated two billion people will reside in sub-standard housing and informal settlements. Poorly planned settlement will be the dominant urban form in cities in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Most people living in urban areas will lack adequate shelter and basic services. Few will be recognized as urban citizens and many will end up working in the informal economy. Fewer still will realize their productive potential.

The urban challenge of the 21st Century is not a well known narrative, let alone a coherent set of policy options, tools and practical actions. Major motion pictures such as The City of God (Latin America), The Constant Gardener (Africa) and Slum Dog Millionaire (Asia) offer a glimpse of this phenomenon but they lack a sense of history and relative progress. Tens of thousands of cities and towns are each in their own way grappling with how to manage rapid urban growth, be it in the form of urban sprawl, urban decay or slum formation. Some are achieving success against great odds. Member States, also in relative isolation, are beginning to promote national policies to make municipal and local action possible. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of organizations, are setting precedents, developing tools and offering policy options to meet the urban challenge. Yet these actions are disparate. Their work is not recognized or assessed and the collective impact of their actions is not realized.

What are messages of the Campaign?

The Campaign will promote a positive vision for sustainable urbanization developed through consultation with cities, governments and Habitat partners. Substantively, it will describe the components of such a vision, including access to housing and land,
infrastructure and basic services, and finance. The Campaign will promote inclusive urban development by recognizing the needs of vulnerable and excluded groups, such as the working poor, including in the informal sector. The messages of the Campaign will also include a set of guiding principles that guide efforts to improve cities. These concern stronger citizen participation, local government and private sector investment well as national policies that support these processes for sustainable urbanization.

Emphasis will be placed on what is working and why it is working. Through the dissemination, adoption and replication of best technical, institutional and business practices as well as better sectoral policies, the Campaign’s impact will be assessed in part by its contribution to better public policies at the national level, keeping in mind the need for such policies to be accompanied by follow-up investment at the local levels in order to improve the quality of urban life for all.

**HOW WILL THE CAMPAIGN WORK?**

UN-HABITAT will coordinate the Campaign in the same manner that it supports the World Urban Forum. It will provide a platform for member States, local authorities and Habitat partners to design and apply advocacy instruments, including the Campaign messages, principles, public policy advice, and practical tool kits for a wide range of activities such as organizing local and national platforms, documenting good practice, fund raising, sharing knowledge and information.

A Steering Committee will be formed from these constituencies to design, guide and monitor the performance of the Campaign. It will serve two purposes:

- To decide on policies and strategic priorities for activities that partners have agreed to undertake together or with the support of one another. This requires that partners define their respective organizational priorities for the WUC and identify those partners/networks with which they would like to work together as part of the WUC to enhance mutual impact.
- To advise UN-Habitat in carrying out its activities, especially through the World Urban Forum that is mandated to provide technical advice to the Executive Director of UN-Habitat.

One of the goals of the Campaign is to build a strong sense of ownership of all major stakeholder groups. The period October 2009 to March 2010 will thus be devoted to consolidating the partnership model.

The first Steering Committee meeting, held in and hosted by the regional government of Barcelona, 12 -14 October 2009, established a set of working groups to finalize the partnership model and to prepare for the official launch of the Campaign during the 5th session of the World Urban Campaign in Rio de Janeiro 22-26 March 2010. These working groups will be focusing on the following:

- **Knowledge networking system:** defining and developing the key components of a knowledge network system to take full advantage of the diversity and wealth of knowledge, tools and methods of the network. The system will focus on lessons learned from best practices, good policies and operational tools and methodologies and constitute a one-stop-shop for knowledge, expertise and experience.
• **Goals and strategy committee**: finalizing the over-arching goals, scope and statement of principles of the Campaign so as to enable the other working groups, actionable ideas and proposals to proceed in a coherent and efficient manner.

• **Communications Committee**: focusing on messaging, outreach and communications. The initial scope of this working group will be on preparing and implementing an effective outreach and brand recognition strategy for the 5th session of the World Urban Forum, Rio de Janeiro, 22-26 March 2010.

• **The Sustainable Cities Advisory Commission**: defining the criteria for launching an experimental initiative at WUF5 whereby 100 Cities will make pledges for reform against criteria and engage in an active process of working toward those pledges with annual public hearings and reports to the WUC on progress achieved. Each city will have its own champion to review and synthesize the city submissions in view of proposing policy options to an advisory commission.

All of the above action areas will emphasize the positive role of cities and the contribution of technical, institutional and business practices on economic growth and quality of life of people and their communities. A key message will be the need to strengthen the front-line role of cities in climate change adaptation and mitigation.

**A NETWORK OF NETWORKS**

The Campaign will serve as the umbrella support structure for a network of networks and link up with other worldwide urban campaigns and franchise its messages to this constituency. Close linkages with other campaigns currently include:

• The “1000 Cities: 1000 Lives” campaign of **World Health Organisation** focusing on healthy cities

• The “Addressing the world: an address for everyone” campaign of the **Universal Postal Union** focusing on providing the estimated 1 billion inhabitants of slums and informal settlements worldwide with an address – a critical first step to securing an identify, citizenship and the right to the city;

• The **United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction** campaign for more resilient cities and urban risk reduction;

• The National Habitat Committees, Platforms and Campaigns of various countries.

**HOW WILL UN-HABITAT SERVE THE CAMPAIGN?**

In addition to coordinating and facilitating the Campaign, UN-HABITAT will harmonize the way it projects the Campaign through its various external outreach instruments. These include: World Urban Forum, the Global Report on Human Settlements, Global and Regional State of Cities Reports, the State of the Water in Cities Report, **Urban World Magazine**, and World Habitat Day. Value added information and tools will be conveyed through various Habitat Partners Networks such as the Habitat Business Forum, Habitat Professionals Forum, Global Parliamentarians on Habitat, Habitat Youth Campaign, and SUDNET, among others.