

World Urban Forum 4: Harmonious Urbanization

Marco Keiner / Maike Christiansen

Projections indicate that within the next fifty years, two-thirds of humanity will be living in towns and cities; and most of these will live in towns and cities in Asia, Africa and Latin America. As a response, the World Urban Forum was established to examine the most pressing issue facing the world today: rapid urbanization and its impact on communities, cities, economies and policies. A major challenge is to minimize burgeoning poverty in cities, improve access to basic facilities such as shelter, clean water and sanitation for the urban poor, as well as to achieve environmentally-friendly, sustainable urban growth and development.

The World Urban Forum is a biennial gathering attended by a wide range of partners: from non-governmental and community-based organizations, urban professionals and academics, to local authorities and national and international associations of local governments. It provides such actors a common platform to discuss urban issues by formal and informal means by which to come up with action-oriented proposals in order to create sustainable cities. The last World Urban Forum was held in Vancouver, Canada in June 2006.

The title *Harmonious Urbanization* and *Harmonious Development* refers to the ancient Chinese philosophy of achieving harmony in all things – including between man and nature. As a holistic approach it entails the synchronization and integration of physical, economical, environmental, cultural, political, historical and social aspects.

As such, this highlights that harmonious development should be differentiated from the concept of sustainable development. The latter is based on the three dimensions economic, ecological and social development. Development is understood as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Harmonious development does



not specifically include this anticipatory view; it instead builds on a political and ethical pillar by aiming to achieve political stability and order as well as sincerity and amity.

During the Forum, the overall theme of *Harmonious Urbanization* will be covered by six sub-themes. These sub-themes – including “Harmonizing the Built and Natural Environments” or “Promoting Social Equity and Inclusiveness” – will be discussed in a series of dialogues, the main means of exchange of the Forum. Around these dialogues, a numerous and varying side-events are organized. These networking events give Habitat Agenda Partners the opportunity to meet and discuss a broad range of issues related to the Forum themes. Additionally, roundtables are organized by Habitat Agenda partners themselves, including ministers, mayors, the private sector, youth, women, parliamentarians, and others. These are action-oriented events designed for peers to exchange views on key urban issues. Training events at World Urban Forum will attempt to provide skill-enhancing training sessions. The courses follow a “how to” approach and are designed to increase specific skills needed to implement sustainable urban development objectives. Held in a grand hall of 12,000 square meters, the exhibition will showcase some of the world’s premier cities and many innovations in urban development for more inclusive cities.

UN-HABITAT and the City of Nanjing welcome you to the World Urban Forum.



World Urban Forum 4

第四届世界城市论坛

03-06 November 2008 Nanjing, China

Further information and registration:

www.unhabitat.org/wuf

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Urban Environment

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UNEP

Improving cities through Localizing Agenda 21: Bayamo, Cuba

Bayamo City in eastern Cuba suffered from major urban environmental problems including poor water quality, urban mobility, and waste management. The city's main waterway, the Bayamo River was polluted by uncontrolled dumping, discharges, and improper waste management. Another concern was the exclusion of non-motorised mobility alternatives (bicycles, taxi-bicycles and horse-drawn carriages) from urban decision-making process constraining mobility of residents.



Bayamo started partnering with UN-HABITAT in 2005 as part of the Localising Agenda 21 programme to draft and implement a sustainable local development plan anchored in consultation between the authorities and the local communities involved at every key step of the way.

This led to the adoption of the Bayamo River Development Strategy by the city council in 2006 giving rise to a comprehensive community plan and regulated framework for coordinated actions between households and industries to avoid discharges while improving river water quality. Having approached Bayamo River as a solution rather than a problem, the strategy encompassed recreational, productive and commercial facilities. It also brought in smaller initiatives and helped improve the environment. It also helped resolve transport problems for the town's 67,000 people by helping establish coach partnerships and establishing proper fares for all non-motorised transport.

A UN-HABITAT report, *Improving urban planning through Localizing Agenda 21: Results achieved in Bayamo, Cuba* is soon to be published. UN-HABITAT will also publish a lecture on restoring river systems presented by Rafael Betancourt from the Canadian Urban Institute.

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World Cities Summit in Singapore

Singapore hosted the inaugural *World Cities Summit*, a biennial international conference on public governance and sustainable city development, from 23-25 June 2008. Over 700 high-level government officials and planners participated, including ministers and mayors from 50 countries. Simultaneously, Singapore also held the *Singapore International Water Week*, a global gathering for the water industry that focused on sustainable water solutions for cities, as well as the *East Asia Summit Conference on Liveable Cities*. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong of Singapore addressed the joint opening ceremony which was attended by 2,200 guests.



Aptly themed "Liveable and Vibrant Cities", the discussions at the World Cities Summit covered issues such as urban planning, infrastructure development, environmental sustainability, quality of life and economic competitiveness. During the course of the week Singapore announced the establishment of two expert institutions: the Institute of Water Policy, to address sustainable water solutions, as well as the Centre for Liveable Cities, which will focus on sustainable urban development. At the conclusion of the East Asia Summit Conference on Liveable Cities participants agreed on the need to support greater political will and collaboration on issues such as energy security, climate change and sustainable development.

The event was organised by Singapore's Ministry of National Development, the Singapore Civil Service College and the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore, in partnership with international organizations, including UN-HABITAT and UNEP.

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UNEP works with Nairobi to improve solid waste management

Africa



The City Council of Nairobi has identified solid waste management as one of the two primary challenges facing the city today – the other being traffic congestion. Rapid urbanization has expanded population and approximately three million (25 percent of Kenya's urban population) reside in Nairobi which lacks appropriate systems to tackle the increasing waste problem.

Nairobi is estimated to generate 2,000 tons of waste each day, with 40 percent collected by the City Council of Nairobi, 20 percent by the private sector and the remaining either uncollected or disposed through other means. The bulk of the collected waste ends up at a stinking, open dumping ground posing an environment and health hazard to nearby communities.

In the past, there were various stakeholder initiatives to address Nairobi's solid waste problem. Such initiatives were however not carried out under a comprehensive integrated solid waste management system and therefore failed to adequately manage the issue. UNEP, in collaboration with UN-HABITAT, has supported Nairobi City Council to develop an integrated solid waste management plan. The plan, based on a concept called the '3Rs' (reduce, reuse and recycle), will include all aspects of waste management – minimization, segregation, collection, transportation, reuse/recycle, resource recovery, treatment and disposal. The plan will build on existing practices and strengthen the system via scientific assessment of waste characterization.

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Future projections will be quantified and the current waste management system assessed to determine any gaps so as to set achievable targets. Appropriate environmentally-sound technologies and a policy framework for each component of the integrated solid waste management will be proposed. Stakeholder consultations will take place at each stage of the plan's preparation, expected to commence in September 2008.

ACCA 21

Langfang: a Chinese harmonious city



A good example of a harmonious city is Langfang, in Hebei Province, some 60 kilometers south of Beijing. In past decades great efforts were made to formulate a city master plan with the goal of building an "ecological and modern" city with "green competitive power". Layout was improved, incorporating different functional areas for residential, industrial and green zones. To protect the urban environment, polluting industries were minimized, cleaner production strategies and energy efficient technologies

utilized and a green belt allocated every 500 meters. In addition, social issues were addressed via the construction of rest houses financed by local government for the elderly, disabled and orphans.

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The Chinese concept of sustainable development includes building a conservation-minded and environmentally friendly society that harmonizes growth enabling the economy and society to develop in a sustainable way.

Partner

Mayors discuss biodiversity in Bonn

The conference was organized by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), the City of Bonn, InWent, and supported by other partners, including UNEP. This conference was held on 26-28 May 2008, as a parallel event to the Conference of the Parties for the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, held simultaneously in Bonn, Germany.



One year following a convention on cities and biological diversity in Curitiba, Brazil this conference offered a unique opportunity for local leaders to showcase their best practices and express collective commitments to encourage local actions to protect urban biodiversity.

Further information:
www.iclei.org/biodiv-bonn2008

The mayors were behind the adoption of a decision at the biological diversity conference entitled, *Cities, local authorities and biodiversity*. Mayors and local leaders also adopted the Bonn Call for Action providing a clear framework for the steps to follow, together with a wide range of partners coming from the UN, national governments, science and research institutions, civil society and various other stakeholders concerned with urban biodiversity.

Local action for biodiversity: A series of local cases



Occupying a mere two percent of the planet's land surface, cities consume 75 percent of its natural resources. This fact, combined with increasing levels of urbanization and subsequent heavy reliance on ecosystem services has resulted in a multitude of threats to biodiversity, including: habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation, over-exploitation of natural resources, alien species invasion and pollution, which have exacerbated climate change influences.

This publication highlights selected global case studies and describes how cities are cooperating with national governments and other key partners to utilize and conserve their surroundings in an innovative way.

Promoting biodiversity in the Lake Victoria Region



An estimated 40 percent of the global economy is based on biological products and processes, on which many impoverished communities, in areas of low agricultural productivity, depend heavily. Cities surrounding Lake Victoria share a single ecosystem which sustains their economic activity as well as challenges including poor

land-use planning, lack of waste management, unregulated pollution, deforestation and limited wetlands protection.

This publication highlights several examples of natural-resource management from the region and explains how cities cooperate with partners to utilize and conserve their surroundings. It also assesses the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity at the local level.

Further information:
Urban.environment@unep.org, http://www.unep.org/urban_environment/Publications/index.asp

Upcoming events:

World Habitat Day 2008
 6 October 2008
 Luanda, Angola

UNEP-SBCI Biannual Workshops on Sustainable Building
 "Cities & Sustainable Building – Policy & Action for Addressing Climate Change"
 4 December 2008
 Madrid, Spain

Launch of SUD-net
 22 October 2008
 Oslo, Norway

Fourth Session of the World Urban Forum
 3-6 November 2008
 Nanjing, China

United Nations Climate Change Conference and Conference of the Parties
 1-12 December 2008
 Poznan, Poland

Further information:
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