

The **WORLD URBAN FORUM**

The world's premier conference on managing growing towns and cities

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME



Shacks all the way down into the water in Jakarta, Indonesia. Photo © Ministry of Public Works, Indonesia



Photo © Nasa/visible earth

UN-HABITAT's Executive Director, Mrs. Anna Tibajuka (left) meets the press in Vancouver.

Photo © Globe Foundation



Cover photo: Skyline view of downtown Sao Paulo, Brazil. Thousands of buildings in the city remain abandoned. In haste, diverse popular movements have been occupying them, over the last five years, to provide housing for those who cannot afford it. Photo © Carlos Cazalis (www.cazalis.org)

The World Urban Forum was established by the United Nations to examine one of the most pressing problems facing the world today: rapid urbanization and its impact on communities, cities, economies, world climate and policies.

With half of humanity already living in towns and cities, it is projected that in the next 50 years, two-thirds of us will be living in towns and cities. A major challenge is to minimize burgeoning poverty in cities, improve the access of the urban poor to basic facilities such as shelter, clean water and sanitation and to achieve environmentally friendly, sustainable urban growth and development.

The Forum meets in a different Host City every two years drawing a wide range of experts from every walk of life. They include our partners in non-governmental

organizations, community-based organizations, professional associations, academics, government leaders, mayors, diplomats, and members of many national, regional and international associations of local governments. The Forum provides them a common platform to discuss urban issues and to come up with action-oriented proposals to create sustainable cities.

Today, the Forum has become the world's premier nexus for the exchange of knowledge, expertise and solutions on managing growing towns and cities. For the Host City, it is an occasion to showcase its best. For those coming from abroad, the traditional World Urban Forum exhibition has become the world's most coveted global showcase of the wonders and the woes of the modern urban world.

Mrs. Tibaijuka (left) with the Canadian Prime Minister, Mr. Stephen Harper, the U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Mr. Alphonso Jackson, and other officials at the grand opening of the Third session of the World Urban Forum in Vancouver, in June 2006.

Photo © Globe Foundation.

The Forum enables leaders, experts from every walk of life, and ordinary folk to sit down and discuss how our planet's urban way of life can be maintained – safely, inclusively, and ecologically.

Never before in history has the world witnessed such a rapid rate of urbanization. How we manage this situation is arguably the biggest problem confronting humanity in the 21st century. As more and more governments recognise this, the United Nations and its partners need to galvanize action as never before in the quest for sustainable urbanization.

With 1 billion people living in slums, and thousands joining them every day, we are indeed sitting on a social time bomb that is ticking away in many overcrowded, poverty-stricken corners of a geopolitical chessboard already fraught with problems.



At the UN-HABITAT exhibit in Vancouver.

Photo © Globe Foundation

Naples, Italy.

Photo © UN-HABITAT: F. Vasquez



Our research clearly shows that the locus of global poverty is moving to the cities – a process now recognised as the *urbanization of poverty*.

As the world becomes increasingly urban, it is essential that policy-makers understand the power of the city as a catalyst for national and local development. UN-HABITAT's newly integrated programmes are designed to help policy-makers and local communities

get to grips with the urbanization crisis and find workable, lasting solutions.

The United Nations Millennium Declaration recognizes the dire circumstances of the world's urban poor. It articulates the commitment of Member States to improve the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by the year 2020 – a commitment directly relevant to UN-HABITAT's mandate (Target 11, Millennium Development Goal No.7). As

large as 100 million may seem, however, it is only 10 per cent of the present worldwide slum population, which, if left unchecked, will multiply threefold to 3 billion by the year 2050. Target 10 calls for the reduction by half of the number of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water.

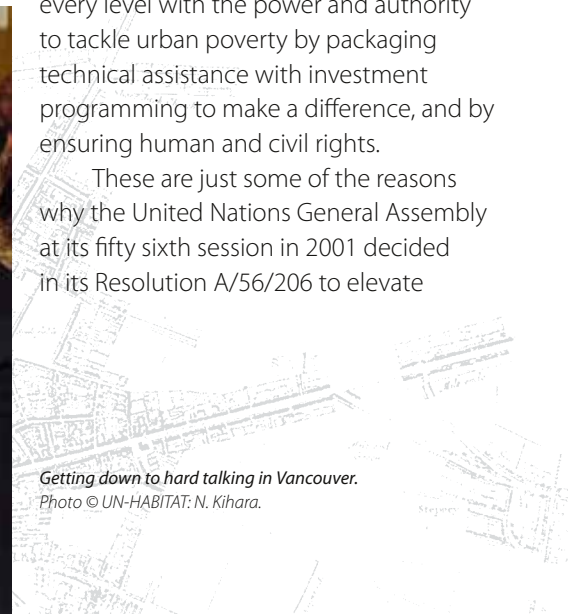
Although UN-HABITAT seeks to uplift the living conditions of the urban poor, its key audience remains the policy-maker at every level with the power and authority to tackle urban poverty by packaging technical assistance with investment programming to make a difference, and by ensuring human and civil rights.

These are just some of the reasons why the United Nations General Assembly at its fifty sixth session in 2001 decided in its Resolution A/56/206 to elevate



Getting down to hard talking in Vancouver.

Photo © UN-HABITAT: N. Kihara.





Naples, Italy.
Photo © UN-HABITAT: F. Vasquez

UN-HABITAT to a fully fledged programme of the United Nations guided by a Governing Council (GC) of Member States. The same resolution further affirms the World Urban Forum as a non-legislative technical forum to “hold in the years when the GC does not meet”.

Each year, the Forum draws more and more people. They constitute a wide range of partners, from non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, urban professionals, academics, governments, local authorities and various national and international associations of local governments. It provides them a common platform to discuss urban issues and come up with new ideas for sustainable cities of the future. The Forum, divided up into many meetings, lasts one working week.

Participation in Barcelona and Vancouver

Participants	Attendance at Vancouver		Attendance at Barcelona	
	Number	%	Number	%
Governments	1,540	14.7	446	10.2
Parliamentarians	63	0.6	27	0.6
Local Authorities & Associations	1,611	15.4	414	9.4
Civil Society	2,450	23.4	535	12.2
Private Sector	1,356	13.0	203	4.6
Academia (Professional and Research Institutions)	1,553	14.8	201	4.6
Foundations	102	1.0	33	0.8
Media	388	3.7	51	1.2
UN (including Secretariat) and Inter-governmental Org.	542	5.1	196	4.4
Other Participants	793	7.6	416	9.5
Canada Secretariat	73	0.7	---	---
Affiliation not indicated	---	---	1,867	42.5
Total	10,471*	100.0	4,389	100.0

* This figure excludes support staff (interpreters, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, special details, suppliers, and UN security and volunteers) who numbered over one thousand.



A Chinese farewell in Vancouver.
Photo © Globe Foundation



Women making their voices heard.

Photo © Globe Foundation

Because it is not bound by the formal rules of procedure and legalities that usually govern UN meetings, it is perhaps the most open and inclusive gathering of its kind on the international agenda.

This enables UN-HABITAT to remain open to new ideas – the only way to keep our fingers on the global urban pulse.

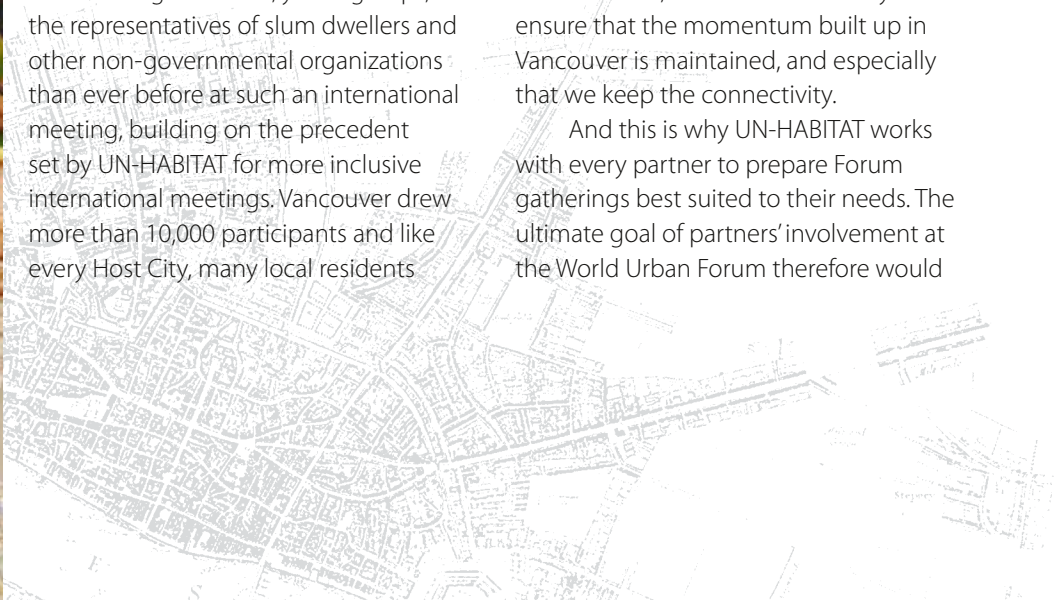
It was this openness that enabled Vancouver 2006 to bring governments and municipalities closer to grassroots women's organizations, youth groups, the representatives of slum dwellers and other non-governmental organizations than ever before at such an international meeting, building on the precedent set by UN-HABITAT for more inclusive international meetings. Vancouver drew more than 10,000 participants and like every Host City, many local residents

lined up to see the array of displays at the world's greatest urban showroom.

To accommodate large numbers of people, the Forum meetings are divided into plenary sessions carrying the key messages, dialogues discussing the main themes, networking events, caucus meetings, special sessions, roundtables, training seminars and an array of side events.

With the next session in Nanjing, China in 2008, efforts are underway to ensure that the momentum built up in Vancouver is maintained, and especially that we keep the connectivity.

And this is why UN-HABITAT works with every partner to prepare Forum gatherings best suited to their needs. The ultimate goal of partners' involvement at the World Urban Forum therefore would





*Young African entertainers
in Vancouver.
Photo © Globe Foundation*



go beyond token to strategic and targeted involvement in support of the World Urban Forum process and, by extension, in support of the work of UN-HABITAT globally.

Dignitaries, flag bearers and UN-HABITAT ambassadors

The success of the World Urban Forum depends largely on mobilization of a broad range of Partners and high profile personalities and decision makers in the urban world. Such personalities may include national leaders and government ministers, coordinators of global programmes on thematic issues, high-level policy-makers, researchers, nobel laureates and captains of industry. Persons who would be flag bearers, champions and ambassadors of the cause are contacted at

least 1 year ahead of the Forum.

Timetables, schedules and themes

Each Forum sets the theme for the next session two years later. And to ensure continuity and momentum are maintained, preparations start in earnest at the meeting of the 58 governments represented on the Governing Council that oversees UN-HABITAT's work plan and budget.

Host Country agreement

UN-HABITAT works closely with the Host Government to ensure that a liaison office is established early on in the process. The idea is that it has the resources and authority to negotiate on behalf of the Government with UN-HABITAT and other partners. The Host Country may also contract the entire process to an agency

that is then authorized to work with UN-HABITAT. Host Countries decide what suits them best and inform UN-HABITAT.

Intense programming and preparations for each session of the World Urban Forum starts with the negotiations and signing of a special Host Country Agreement that spells out clearly the terms of responsibility of the Host and UN-HABITAT. It spells out the provisions for budget, preparation of substantive documents, meeting accommodation, participants' accommodation, transport and travel, exhibition formats, facilities and services, security and access to premises, protection, privileges, immunities, equipment, logistics, etc. These elements are negotiated with every Host Country and for each Forum under the guidance of the Office of Legal Affairs. The agreement is



*The slum of Kibera in the Kenyan
capital, Nairobi.
Photo © UN-HABITAT: A. Okafor*



Entrance to the UN-HABITAT exhibition in Vancouver.
Photo © UN-HABITAT: F. Vasquez



The city of Vancouver.
Photo © Government of Canada

negotiated and signed at least 12 months prior to the Forum.

It is important for the Host Country and UN-HABITAT to focus on all important aspects of the Forum. Negotiations on each specific element in the agreement should proceed without encumbrance from a broader negotiation process.

Security

UN-HABITAT and the national police force of the Host Country ensure a legally binding Memorandum of Understanding to outline the security plan and delineate roles and responsibilities of each party. An early on-site meeting with all parties involved in security, followed by subsequent meetings, is essential for a successful security arrangement for the Forum. The parties are required to establish

a management group to oversee the successful implementation of an agreed security plan throughout the Forum.

Security is normally provided for and implemented by the Host Country. However, UN-HABITAT provides an early budget estimate for staff requirements and anticipated expenses, based on the physical nature of the venue for the Forum, availability of local security staff and United Nations security regulations and procedures.

Protocol

The sensitive nature of security at any international conference requires compliance with United Nations and Host Country protocol rules. Close coordination with security teams and a similar protocol/management team is of critical

importance.

Protocol arrangements require close and continuous monitoring, especially in the immediate weeks before and during the event itself. Many details, e.g. flight arrivals and departures, VIP registration and badges, local transportation and hotel arrangements are anticipated and provided for. It is usually very helpful to secure the services of a professional conference services provider to work closely with UN-HABITAT's and the Host Country's protocol teams.

Communications and marketing

An electronic newsletter is a key marketing tool used to promote the event to potential participants throughout the world. A series of curtain-raisers start months prior to the Forum, and these



*Canadian Prime Minister, Stephen Harper addressing the opening plenary of the Third session of the World Urban Forum.
Photo © Globe Foundation*

have been successful in attracting the attention of the media, as well as experts in the field. An electronic newsletter is also useful in the Post-Forum weeks as a means of disseminating reports and encouraging ongoing involvement in issues of urban sustainability and other interest in future Forums. A newsletter database is maintained and expanded between sessions of the Forum to ensure that the directory of potential participants and partners is up to date.

To provide as much information as possible about each session of the Forum,

both UN-HABITAT and the Host Country work on separate aspects. UN-HABITAT focuses on global urban issues and elements of the programme while the Host Country focuses more in consultation with UN-HABITAT specifically to help target audiences plan their participation in the Forum. The two aspects are integrated to complement each other on a single website. Information on speakers and events is provided early to increase effective marketing. Timely information about the programme, as well as up-to-date data on media registration, is highlighted so that a host broadcaster who can provide unlimited services is secured in time.

Financing

Financial contributions from the Host Country are critical to the success of the World Urban Forum. The Host Country provides funding domestically, secures the venue, manages logistics and costs and invites its own public. The Host Country also provides the resources to facilitate the participation of UN-HABITAT and its Agenda Partners, as well as that of participants from least developed countries.

The World Urban Forum remains a United Nations conference and UN-HABITAT has been given the mandate by the UN General Assembly to drive the process. UN-HABITAT has however not been provided with any additional resources, so the Host Country provides almost 95% of the resources required. The



Manshiet Nasser sits on the rocks where Egypt's Eastern Desert Plateau meets the Nile Valley, Cairo, Egypt, 10 May 2007. Residents urgently need more water, sewage and refuse facilities. Photo © Jeff Black/IRIN



*Nanjing, Host of the
4th session in 2008.
Photo © Government of China*

Forum thus remains entirely dependent on the Host Country and other Member States' contributions. Indeed, beyond the Host Country's contributions, a number of Member States often make financial contributions, primarily to support the participation of persons from least developed countries. These contributions, however, have not amounted to more than 5 percent of the total cost of the Forum.

All pledged financial sums are received in the bank, or at least a firm written commitment from a pledging donor country or organization is given, before participation and travel of supported participants from least developed countries and other Habitat Agenda partners can be confirmed.

The sustainability of the Forum needs an enhanced professional and strategic

approach to fund-raising which would involve Governments, International Organizations, the Private Sector and other sponsors. The development of a professional information package to attract sponsors for the Forum would be important to engage the funds needed to ensure the event's future success. Such sponsorship packages would have to be timely to resonate with the budget cycles of countries, the private sector and other organizations, to allow preparations to start well in advance of each Forum.

Interpretation

While the UN works in six official languages, the preparation for the Forum is only mandated to work in English. Host countries, with possible support of donor countries, are required to mark up the cost

of securing interpretation and translation into their own languages and others as they deem appropriate.

Application to host networking and other events

Information on the application and selection process for any events to be hosted at the World Urban Forum is posted on the website at least eight months prior to the Forum. Selection of networking and other events is based on criteria which are posted on the website, but may include regional balance, facilitation of the participation of developing countries and direct relation to the theme and sub-themes including relationship with UN-HABITAT's work programme.



Registration

Free on-line registration starts approximately five months prior to the Forum. Visa applications are handled only by the Host Country in compliance with their guidelines and rules. The registration list is shared with the Host Country.

The world's most exciting urban platform

In four short years, the World Urban Forum has established itself as the world's premier urban development platform. Participation jumped from 1,200 at the inaugural event in Nairobi in 2002, to over 4,000 in Barcelona 2004, and over 10,000 delegates for the Third session in Vancouver in 2006. This increased participation indicates that the Forum is an unequalled space for debate and discussion on the most pressing issues affecting the urban world.

Forums

- Nairobi 2002
Sustainable Urbanization
- Barcelona 2004
Cities: Crossroads of cultures, inclusiveness and integration?
- Vancouver 2006
Sustainable Cities: Turning Ideas into Action
- Nanjing 2008
Harmonious Urbanization: Challenge of Balanced Territorial Development.

*A Chinese dancer at the closing ceremony in Vancouver.
Photo © Globe Foundation*



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Photo © Nasa/visible earth

