



Twenty-fourth session
Nairobi, 15–19 April 2013

**Draft proceedings of the Governing Council of the
United Nations Human Settlements Programme at its
twenty-fourth session**

Addendum

Annex []

**Summaries by the President of the Governing Council of the
dialogue on the special theme of the twenty-fourth session: the role
of cities in creating improved economic opportunities for all, with
special reference to youth and gender**

1. At its 5th and 6th plenary meetings, on Wednesday, 17 April 2013, the Governing Council held a dialogue on the special theme for the session, sustainable urban development: the role of cities in creating improved economic opportunities for all, with special reference to youth and gender. The dialogue consisted of two sessions in the morning and two sessions in the afternoon. Each session featured a moderator and a panel of speakers, presentations by the panellists, comments from the floor and reactions from the panellists. The panel sessions were preceded by opening remarks by the President of the Governing Council, Ms. Amal Pepple (Nigeria).
2. In opening remarks, the President of the Governing Council stressed that although cities were the drivers of economic growth, a significant proportion of young men and women, people with different abilities and the marginalized who lived in cities did not adequately benefit from rapid urban economic growth. They faced huge barriers that denied them equitable opportunities to utilize their full potential. The dialogue was a great opportunity to explore what cities could and should do to create improved economic opportunities for all, particularly for youth and women, within a gender framework. The key to achieving that goal was to implement effective policies that created economic opportunities for all urban residents. Appropriate policies governing urban planning, investments in housing, infrastructures and services, innovative local economic development strategies and the provision of adequate funding for urban development were all factors that determined the ability of cities to generate equitable economic opportunities for all social groups.
3. In his introductory remarks, the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, Dr. Joan Clos, highlighted the role of cities in creating economic opportunities for all and in focusing on youth and gender issues. Cities could only be engines of growth if they were properly planned and organized, which would eventually mark the difference between productive and unproductive cities. The spatial analysis of the urban form was key to understanding what factors contributed to the productivity of cities. For instance, once land was catalogued as urban, its value could increase by more than ten times. That increase in value, however, should be shared by urban stakeholders with the aim of developing more equitable cities. The benefits of good urban planning were not only economic but also social and political.

A. Session 1: The economics of urban form

4. The first session, which took place in the first part of the morning, was moderated by Mr. Michael Cohen, Director of the Graduate Program in International Affairs at the New School, New York, United States of America. The panellists were Mr. Juan Carlos Duque, Professor at the School of Economics and Finance at EAFIT University in Medellin, Colombia; Mr. Abdul Mannan Khan, State Minister for Housing and Public Works, Bangladesh; Mr. Castro Sanfins Namuaca, Mayor of Nampula, Mozambique; and Ms. Ana Falù, Professor and Researcher at the National University of Cordoba, Argentina.

1. Opening remarks

5. The President of the Governing Council opened the session, saying that it would focus on the important role of urban planning in achieving sustainable urban development.

6. Mr. Cohen congratulated UN-Habitat for the selection of the topic - the economy of urban form, saying that it was significant that UN-Habitat recognized the importance of focusing on how cities fit in the process of development and how the use of space, the urban form and land could make a city more productive, equitable and sustainable. He proposed to frame the dialogue within a historical context of the continuing economic crisis in most countries, where unemployment was at the centre of discussion. Since 2008, countries that had fared relatively well in recovering from the economic collapse had been those that had focused on urban employment as a leading recovery factor. Such countries had been able to increase productivity, reduce inequalities and fuel economic growth. That demonstrated how important cities could be for employment.

7. The focus of urban practices for the previous 25 years had been on housing, services and infrastructure, while ignoring the city as a whole in terms of its form, spatial contours and how projects affected the city itself. By shifting the focus to the urban form, cities could improve spatial efficiency and equity, mitigate the negative impacts of climate change and create economic opportunities for all, including women and youth. Those concepts related to citizens' everyday experiences of spending long hours commuting to their workplaces, to the effects of density on how they lived and to how everyone experienced and was affected by urban form and density.

2. Panellist presentations

8. Mr. Duque in his presentation demonstrated how the design of a system of cities could foster social welfare and economic growth using the example of Urabà, Colombia, a region of the Department of Antioquia of 11,000 sq. km with 11 municipalities. The region was rich in biodiversity and geographical features but also faced huge social problems, including poverty, a lack of access to drinking water, and food insecurity.

9. Mr. Duque then introduced the programme of the state of Antioquia. The goal was to transform the region of Urabà into a development pole. The choice had been made to use quantitative analytical methods and support in the decision-making for regional planning because they offered several benefits in terms of optimal allocation of resources, helping to depoliticize decision making processes and providing good investment options for local authorities.

10. Key characteristics in classifying the region included tourism, agriculture and port and industrial activities. Those characteristics had helped in the identification of which investment portfolios would foster economic growth and social welfare. The project had helped to identify the area for the creation of a system of cities through economic specialization in urban centres, greater mobility between the cities, through industrial as well as private and public transport, and the connection of the system to the rest of the world by land, sea, river and air.

11. He also highlighted the need to translate investment decisions into local impacts in terms of urban form and growth and to make recommendations on urban density and land use. For individual cities, the growth of population and built up areas were estimated in order to analyse the potential expansion of urban areas in high, medium and low density land use scenarios. From that analysis emerged recommendations for compact cities and expansion areas. Compact cities were preferable because of lower costs of transportation and infrastructure and less land consumption. They also fostered urban market competitiveness through proximity. That scenario was also preferable because it helped in preserving aquifer recharging functions, which constituted a key ecological service in the area and the biodiversity of the region.

12. Expansion areas had been identified and phases of their opening for development defined in order to guide growth and help to prevent land price speculation, avert land conflicts and guarantee land availability for urban growth. The methodology had been instrumental in achieving consensus

among several levels of government and various cities regarding development strategies and the urban development path.

13. Mr. Abdul Mannan Khan's presentation focused on efficiency and inclusion in urban spaces in Bangladesh. The urban population of Bangladesh was 25 per cent of its total population, of which 40 per cent lived under the poverty line. Although poverty reduction was progressing slowly the contribution of the poor to the urban economy needed to be adequately recognized. Low-income settlements of over 5,000 people in the country were threatened by evictions, exploitation, poor housing and inadequate access to sanitation and water. Governments' current housing initiatives mainly served the higher income groups and as a result poor human settlements continued to proliferate near industrial areas. The high population density in existing settlements was affecting the performance of cities and acted as a barrier to the installation of basic services such as water and roads.

14. Since 2000, the Bangladesh Government had been implementing poverty alleviation projects in cities through two main strategies. One was the provision of urban basic services and the other was the development of pro-employment policies. In addition, their efforts had focused on security of tenure for the urban poor with the aim of avoiding forced evictions. He also said that city-wide transformation processes were still detrimental to the poor and that the land planning system was unable to cope with the transformation process owing to several constraints, including a slow land planning system and weak security of tenure provisions for the poor.

15. As a result of the creation of new settlements within municipalities or the elevation of new settlements to the level of municipality, building activities started by the private sector, often in an unplanned manner, created many difficulties for the establishment of networks of essential services. Urban sprawl was increasing, primarily because of the lack of attention to city-wide planning. There was a striking dichotomy between land availability and land use as a result of planning shortcomings and the existence of unused public land, which the Government was trying to mobilize for development and for the poor. He also focused on the lack of a clear link between infrastructure development and economic development, leading to a gap between service provision and occupation of land. That should be addressed through the introduction of more integrated city-wide planning approaches that took into consideration economic and social dimensions and by providing capacity building support.

16. Mr. Khan also mentioned that an urban policy drafted in 2007 was still pending approval by the Bangladeshi Parliament. In addition to calling for decentralized development strategies, the draft was expected to address the need to relocate some informal settlements.

17. Mr. Namuaca shared his experience as the mayor of Nampula, which was the logistical centre of northern Mozambique. Similar to the rest of the country, Nampula had a poverty rate of 60 per cent. There was a difference in governance between the post-independence era, which had been characterized by an overarching central government, and currently, when there was a more decentralized approach. In the post-independence era, all decisions were taken by the central Government and the involvement of local stakeholders and communities was non-existent. Since the 1990s, however, decentralization had allowed space for local governments. That had led to the involvement of mayors and municipal assemblies. The urbanization strategies employed had therefore resulted in the enhancement of local talent, collaboration by cities and public-private partnerships. There were several agreements between Nampula and cities in Portugal, Mozambique and Brazil.

18. Local urban planning practices had become necessary because of the pressure of local demands. Decentralized financing had contributed to lowering the incidence of poverty. Two hundred-eighty projects that had been implemented had generated more than a thousand local jobs. He expressed appreciation for instruments that were at the disposition of municipalities, the employment of democratic principles and the faster decision-making process. The new interaction between local and central governments should further be promoted. There was a need for proactive planning with the aim of optimizing urbanization. There was also a need to restructure the urban outskirts, where it was possible to create a better complementarity between traditional and modern activities and build on the complementary nature of such activities.

19. Focusing on Latin America, Ms. Ana Falù said that there was a need for the issue of gender inequality to be made prominent during the sessions of the Governing Council. Women should be able to use and enjoy public spaces in cities, and cities thus need to be more inclusive. The under-evaluation of women led to a transformation of the urban form, and the role of urban planning was to transform that process. Economies in Latin American countries were growing but unemployment among women had risen. Women's lives in cities correlated to their spatial experiences, depending on their locations or on their jobs. Most of them worked in the service industries, and they constituted

70 per cent of workers in the care sector. Many, because of the precarious nature of their jobs, did not have social protections.

20. Women were also the poorest as far as time was concerned because they tended to spend more time at work than men. Gender-biased perceptions of the roles of men and women were thus creating a sexual divide in urban spaces. In terms of urban planning, it was fundamental to look at the data on gender and to adjust or transform planning practices accordingly. Cities were not inhabited in the same way by women and men insofar as women – combining work and family – lived in a fragmented time frame while men's time was more linear, a fact that should be at the centre of urban planning in developing countries in general and in Latin America in particular.

21. Emphasizing the importance of location, she also highlighted the notion of access to services such as transportation by citing violence against women in public transportation in some cities in Mexico. Autonomy for women, who did not have the same symbolic resources as men with which to navigate the city space, was one of the main elements of her presentation. The importance of emphasizing inclusiveness in urban planning was stressed.

3. Discussion

22. There was a general consensus about the role of public policy in steering urban form and urban planning and in fostering economic role of cities. Through active engagement, the state could influence the form and the shape of urban areas, which could promote production and equitable development. Such engagement should be framed within national urban policies.

23. Key actors who could promote better urban form include mayors, professionals and communities. Mayors and local governments could foster adequate spatial form and engage citizens through the right tools and evidence-based analysis.

24. One participant stressed the importance of coordinating different skills in order to achieve both the retrofitting and greening of cities as well as more efficient land use through mixed use and the creation of more public spaces. She encouraged professionals to contribute to the new urban model and follow its eight principles.

25. Another participant stressed the importance of the participation and empowerment of communities, which offered economic advantages by fostering the creation of skills. The issue of aging populations and the new challenges that they posed for urban planning and development was also mentioned. Different perspectives of residents were essential in shaping the city to be truly inclusive and functional for all, including the informal sector. The focus should be on the people who lived in cities, not just on well-designed cities.

26. One participant emphasized the potential role of the private sector in providing a different perspective to youth and women and all other stakeholders, as well as in contributing to more sensible town planning.

27. One notion that generated much support was that urban planning and urban economy should include women. Panellists agreed that there was a need not only to make provision for women in the urban space, which lacked a sufficient assessment of women's needs and their roles in urban space, but also to empower women to make decisions. The role of women in decision-making process was particularly stressed.

4. Closing remarks

28. In closing remarks, Mr Cohen reasserted that space mattered in urban development and had to find more prominence in economic analysis and policies. The form of the city affected the way in which employment was generated and whether equity was possible, as demonstrated by evidence across cities in the world. There was therefore a great need for institutions at all levels that understood space. In addition, planning must be understood as a key tool for providing a framework in which the private sector, youth, women and others could work. It was important to stress, however, that neither planning nor space nor form was an end in itself but rather a means of achieving collective economic objectives. There was a need for the emergence of new urban professions that were more attuned to the economic needs of all groups and could adopt spatial frames of analysis and action at different scales – with less focus on housing and urban services in isolation. It was necessary to think spatially and act spatially.

B. Session 2: Land-based financing for urban development

1. Opening remarks

29. The President of the Council opened the second session of the morning on land-based financing for urban development. Panellists were Mr. Yu-Hung Hong, Executive Director, Land Governance Laboratory, and Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Urban Studies and Planning, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, United States of America; Mr. Mulenga Sata, Deputy Mayor of Lusaka, Zambia; and Ms. Rachelle Alterman, Professor of Urban Planning and Law, Israel Institute of Technology, Haifa, Israel. The session was moderated by Mr. Cohen, who set the stage for the dialogue by relating it to the first session, on the economics of urban form. He indicated the importance of space and form and highlighting that one of the most valuable assets in any city was land.

2. Panellist presentations

30. In his presentation, Mr. Hong described various instruments for land-based financing such as public land leasing and sales, describing experiences and requirements that best supported such financing and thereby helped to move cities towards self sustainability. Many cities were in a financial crisis and found themselves under-resourced to handle the demand for urban services. There was, however, no lack of creativity with regard to designing instruments, and he mentioned UN-Habitat's work with the Participatory and Inclusive Land Readjustment Tool as an example of a self financing approach that could be used to finance urban development.

31. He said that participating in public land leasing and sales was a favourable way to generate public funds. The Municipality of Cairo had sold a large amount of land in 2007 and generated \$3.12 billion, 117 times the total amount of funds raised from property taxes. Beijing, Hong Kong, Mumbai and Sao Paulo were some of the other cities benefiting from land-based financing.

32. Achieving fiscal outcomes, he said, required support from the institutional and legislative fronts, and he encouraged reflection on the definition of state land ownership, the state of land inventories, property pricing, land use and transparency in land administration processes. Further, in order to support public land leasing and sales these elements had to be well designed. The use of land-based financing as a stand-alone approach was not advisable, and it needed to be coordinated with other fiscal instruments.

33. Ms. Alterman in her presentation encouraged moving from tilling land to using land resources to finance cities. Greater interest in land-based revenue instruments might be found in developed countries. While many countries were short of funds, the serious difficulties of those in developing countries made them more interested in the idea of land-based revenue instruments. Cities were shrinking in many developed countries but those in the developing countries were expanding.

34. There were three main sets of land-based resource instruments: public land policy, direct value capture and indirect value capture – the last of which was utilized more commonly in advanced economies. The pertinence the Participatory and Inclusive Land Readjustment Tool being developed by UN-Habitat and its partners was singled out.

35. Mr. Sata said that some cities like Lusaka faced tremendous challenges and he encouraged actors to go back to the drawing board regarding land policies. Land in Zambia was either owned by the State or in the hands of traditional authorities. State-owned land could be leased to citizens through a number of instruments. Cities acted as land agents for the government through the ministry of land. The city of Lusaka was currently home to 2.1 million people but provided services to up to 3 million. With 35 per cent of the Zambian population living in urban areas, there was great pressure on available housing and infrastructure, health care and other services and hence there was a need for integrated approaches and a cohesive policy for land throughout the country. The city needed to improve its balance sheet or credit rating to allow it to raise funds. Lusaka was currently exploring the options of raising money through municipal bonds and private public partnerships to rebuild its housing stock. He called for an overhaul of the legislative and institutional framework governing local governments and land administration in Zambia to meet the needs of a rapidly growing urban population and to raise finances for enhanced service delivery.

3. Discussion

36. The Minister for Urban Development and Construction of Ethiopia, Mr. Mekuria Haile, said that Ethiopian land was owned by the Government and the people of Ethiopia and that governance of land was institutionalised by affirmations in the constitution, the land policy, legislation and other operational instruments passed at all levels of Government. The objective of Ethiopia's land policy was to provide a foundation for effective social and economic transformation of the country by

ensuring access to land and services for all citizens as a strategic and basic resource of the nation. The country had sought to achieve that objective by ensuring transparency, equity, registration of property rights and security of tenure as well as by supplying serviced land for urban development. Ethiopia, by using land as a strategic public resource to leverage economic development, had registered an annual economic growth of 11 per cent over the preceding nine years and had been implementing plans to move the country from an agrarian economy to an industrial economy. Addis Ababa generated about 50 per cent of the country's GDP, demonstrating a healthy relationship between urbanization and economic development. Ethiopia had prepared urban land for the implementation of integrated housing development programmes since 2006. Through those programmes, 245,000 housing units had been constructed, benefitting 1.2 million people. They had also created a major opportunity for women to own property, making the programme inclusive and gender responsive.

37. In response to a question the Ethiopian Minister affirmed that Ethiopia's land and housing policies were based on an affirmative action for women and that those above the age of 18 were qualified to participate in a lottery.

38. A panellist expressed appreciation for the role played by the Government in Ethiopia, which was in contrast to many countries in the South, where institutions were not well developed and markets were disorderly, resulting in massive speculation on urban land. He then asked how to deal with land-based financing in Africa, where land markets were underdeveloped, land registries were inadequate and institutions were weak.

39. Another panellist responded by saying that issues of poor land registration system, insufficient capacity of administrators, politics and corruption were all facts of life and that there was no ideal instrument or set of instruments that could remedy that. Her recommendation was to have a toolkit of measures without idealizing any of the tools and to be flexible, understanding that most countries employed a mix of approaches.

40. Another panellist stressed that it was not necessary that cities answer all questions on institutional requirements before utilizing land-based financing tools. The Ethiopian case, he said, was an example of good institution building. He acknowledged, however, that it needed time and effort. He cautioned participants to be mindful of the potential pitfalls if they decided to use land as a source of revenue to finance public goods. Institutions were not perfect, and there was no ideal institution when it came to support for land-based instruments.

41. Another panellist added that in the area of land-based financing instruments advantages are better felt in the customary and informal land rights systems, where was home and people had informal knowledge about whose land it was, how extensive it was and often, what it was worth.

42. One representative said that in his country land was not very expensive. The ratio of surface area to population was high, and he wondered how the value of land could be increased under such circumstances. A panellist suggested in response that a necessary first step in raising land value was to improve public infrastructure. Another was to improve neighbourhoods by enhancing facilities and amenities, both social and physical, which then created demand for houses and increased the value of land and improvements. In addition, people should be empowered to design their own urban futures, including land use.

4. Closing remarks

43. The moderator concluded the dialogue session by noting the importance of urban space and form. He also stressed the need to consider a range of financial instruments and the capacities of public institutions to use them. He noted that the Ethiopian experience was impressive in linking space to urban policy and planning. He suggested that Habitat III should feature discussion of urban form as a more realistic approach to moving ahead. There was a need for a new operating system for cities' central elements, which included planning, space and form as ways of organizing their economy and responsibilities.

C. Session 3: Jobs creation for urban youth

1. Opening remarks

44. The first session in the afternoon was moderated by Mr. Joao Scarpelini, a social entrepreneur and activist on youth empowerment in Brazil. Panellists were Mr. Ivan Turok, Deputy Executive Director, Economic Performance and Development Unit, Human Sciences Research Council, Cape Town, South Africa; Mr. Moan Lal Grero, Monitoring Member of Parliament, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Skills Development, Sri Lanka; and Ms. Stella Adhiambo Agara, Member of UN-Habitat Youth Advisory Board, Nairobi.

45. Mr. Scarpelini opened the session by stating that although urbanization was the engine that propelled the world towards prosperity in the twenty-first century, the role of youth as drivers of that engine was much less known. The demographic importance of youth, as well as their involvement in the development agenda at all levels, had long been understated. Nevertheless, there was hope that youth, if transitioned into an environment that supported equal opportunities, representation in governance, education and secure employment opportunities, could become the engine for the creation of economic and social capital that could jump-start development in many regions of the world. He underlined that the demographic “youth bulge” could be a “demographic gift”, as young people leveraged the “urban advantage” of cities, providing abundance of goods and services.

2. Panellist presentations

46. Mr. Turok discussed rapid urbanization in less-developed countries and the need for Governments to be more attentive to employment and economic development. More importantly, youth employment posed a significant challenge in fast-growing cities because of the age structure of young people. Youth who were not integrated into the work force after leaving school risked long-term detachment and constituted a wasted resource, a social hazard and a burden on the State.

47. There were different perspectives on job creation, including the role of, and a balance between, the public and private sectors. Youth unemployment was merely a symptom of a more general problem of high unemployment and under-employment reflecting structural problems in the labour market and a lack of demand for labour because of weak economic growth in many low and middle-income countries. Spatial mismatches between jobs and populations were also structurally hindering youth employment. Youth unemployment was also distinctive in that employers did not always give young candidates the opportunity to prove themselves because they were reluctant to face the risks associated with inexperienced or under-qualified candidates.

48. Policy responses to youth unemployment should include a combination of measures to stimulate labour demand and to strengthen labour supply. While national Governments had a vital role in setting the right policy frameworks, other forms of job creation opportunities should also be looked into. The green economy could be motivating to young people because it provided many opportunities to transfer and develop skills and work experience and was a popular means of attracting international funding. Young people could influence consumption and production patterns, and there was a need to decouple growth from resource consumption. The green economy was an alternative for young people to find and develop sustainable jobs and offered enormous potential for tackling the issues faced by cities.

49. Mr. Grero began his presentation by congratulating the Secretary-General for the appointment of the Youth Envoy and acknowledged the promising developments in the Youth 21 process. He spoke of measures taken by the Sri Lankan Government on youth and women. Education should be geared to employment in order to avoid young people’s requirements not being adapted to the job market’s needs. Citing examples from Sri Lanka, he said that there was a misperception that vocational training related solely to manual work, and his Government was therefore promoting vocational training in schools and colleges, up to the degree level. Vocational training was about providing institutional qualifications to raise the competencies and abilities of young people in various technological areas. He also highlighted the importance of youth participation in institutional structures such as youth parliaments and youth councils.

50. In view of the World Youth Conference to be held in Sri Lanka in 2014 as a platform to discuss the youth agenda for post-2015, he invited all interested parties and all United Nations Member States to work together in the organization of the Conference.

51. Ms. Agara presented her definition of job creation, which she adopted from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and Youth Employment Network framework, later adapted by the Global Youth Employment Summit, namely the 6Es: Employability, Employment creation, Equity, Entrepreneurship, Environmental Sustainability, Empowerment and Education. A main barrier to youth employment was a skills mismatch because education systems were not responding to the needs of the market. At times, Governments were not providing adequate structures for job creation in relation to the natural resources available in their countries (e.g., wind farms in windy countries, graphite mining in graphite rich countries, etc).

52. Regarding youth entrepreneurship, young people were often blamed for looking for jobs instead of creating jobs for themselves. Job creation had been shown to be unsustainable and to have contributed to environmental degradation. Although youth empowerment initiatives did exist and flourish around the world they were often poorly coordinated. To reduce such barriers to youth

employment, enabling legislation and affirmative action were needed. One of the surest ways to increase effective youth participation was to believe in young people.

3. Discussion

53. One participant from the private sector suggested steps to address the global youth unemployment problem. They included, at the global level, promoting access to information and communication technology by youth and promoting youth campaigns for employment and entrepreneurship; and at national and operational levels, implementing comprehensive youth employment programmes and incorporating the latest information and communication technology developments. He also suggested that youth employment initiatives should be based on a public-private youth partnership model.

54. In response to questions on the mismatch of skills in developing countries and strategies for addressing the incoherence between a developing country's needs for less-labour intensive jobs for it to develop and its needs for more labour intensive jobs to address the challenge of unemployment and underemployment, a panellist said that countries needed to train young people with specific skills to match national employment needs.

55. One participant emphasized the need to foster partnerships between Governments, the private sector and civil society in order to successfully empower youth. She highlighted the importance of social dialogue between governments and organizations in delivering on commitments on youth employment. Strengthening skills must be a core priority and education and training were essential.

56. Another participant commented on the importance of engaging youth politically. He cited the structure that the Government of Nigeria had put in place to empower youth in its National Youth Parliament. He also cited the Nigerian ICT programme, which had allowed over 200 new ICT-based youth businesses to be developed.

4. Closing remarks

57. Mr. Scarpelini concluded the session by saying that contemporary youth constituted a new generation with new ideas and new perspectives. The creative industries encapsulated some of the areas of interest to young people: music, arts, design, and software, which was a fast-growing industry. These areas constituted huge and expanding economic markets, and there were many activities connecting closely with the aspirations of young people. Governments must support and nurture these areas, through advice, networks and business incubators and by building on the skills of young people. They must also allow youth to express themselves and give more space and freedom to youth expression. Interference by Governments could sometimes complicate and stymie young people's creativity and activity, and they should not over-regulate or create barriers to enterprise formation.

D. Session 4: Economic empowerment of women

58. The last session of the dialogue was moderated by Ms. Winnie Mitullah, Professor and Executive Director, International Institute for Development, University of Nairobi. Panellists were Ms. Teresa Boccia, Professor of Urban Planning, Faculty of Architecture and LUPT Interdepartmental Research Centre, Federico II University of Naples, Italy; Ms. Anne Beathe Tvinnereim, State Secretary, Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, Norway; Mr. Muchadeyi Masunda, Mayor of Harare, Zimbabwe; and Ms. Christine Musisi, Regional Director, United Nations Women in the Eastern and Southern African region, Nairobi.

1. Panelist presentations

59. In her opening remarks, Ms. Tvinnereim said that the value of all the oil in Norway did not compare to the value of women in economic life. She stressed the evolution of 40 years of construction of the welfare state in Norway, which ensured a high level of participation of women and men in the workforce through an emphasis on legislation, social security schemes and gender equality. An overriding goal had been to make the balance between family life and working life possible, which enabled women's economic independence. Thanks to quotas and affirmative action, gender balance had been achieved in cabinet and local councils and new legislation had been enacted to increase women's participation in the boards of private and public companies. Investment in infrastructure as well as women in political decision-making positions improved women's economic empowerment. The main challenge was the lack of political will to see women's needs and prioritize them, and the best cure was the presence of more women in politics.

60. Mr. Masunda focused on the low number of women in political positions and high level technical staff within the municipality of Harare. The majority of women worked within the social sector as health, education and housing cooperatives. He stressed the importance of linking up with

major players within the private sector to support women's economic empowerment. As mayor, it was important to leverage and seize all opportunities to ensure that women were empowered.

61. In her statement, Ms. Boccia said that urbanization and prosperity did not guarantee gender equality. While urbanization was increasing inequalities, poverty affected women more. To achieve efficient policies, it was important to understand the daily conditions of women and men that lived in cities. Women were involved in unpaid care work, the monetary value of which was estimated at 39 per cent of GDP. Policies were neutral and often ineffective when they did not take into consideration the gender perspective.

62. Historically, women had been relegated to private spaces such as the home and had not been active in the public space. Women's mobility required complex small-scale solutions as they often made shorter trips to a multitude of places in comparison to men. Urgent and major challenges to be overcome were that planning should be neutral and abstract, but rather should be based on the daily life of each person in the city; and that a new alphabet for planning that combined quantity and quality and was not defined in terms of density and functionality was needed to promote soft viability, a balance between the private and public sectors, appropriate public spaces, proximity and cultural diversity.

63. Plans and programmes needed to involve those that had never been involved in decision-making such as women, youth and grassroots. Following the Europe 2020 project, growth needed to be smart, sustainable and inclusive, and women had to be considered as a resource and vital source of competitiveness. There was therefore a need to invest in education, health care and access to financing for women and tax deductions for women's jobs as a means of job creation. Women's absence in decision-making positions was a major challenge for the sustainable development of the city. In conclusion, she stated that the big challenge was eliminating suffering, respecting the environment and human dignity and redistributing wealth among people and territories.

64. In her presentation, Ms. Musisi started by saying that urbanization had a lot to offer women: services, employment and increased independence as well as a shift of the distribution of labour within the household. Women were relegated to the informal sector, which was unregulated and therefore characterized by the lowest wages, poor working conditions and long working hours. The burden of poverty took a heavy toll on women. Economic schemes usually focused on a survival approach but it was necessary to move from a survival approach to women's true economic empowerment.

65. Urban planning and policies were mostly gender blind, while women, children and youth were more vulnerable to crime and violence, which limited their freedom to engage in city life. The fact that women remained in the lower echelons in official government offices meant that they were not able to influence decisions in their lives or the planning, management and governance of cities. Women could prosper economically through a deliberate investment in empowering them, good governance and gender responsiveness and changing women's empowerment policies from vulnerability to potentiality. Because urban land was in very high demand, there was need for affirmative action that gave women easier access to markets and urban services.

2. Discussion

66. In the ensuing discussion, one representative underscored the feminization of poverty, saying that there was a need to change the mind-set to see informal workers not as marginalized actors in the society but as assets. To empower women economically required a recognition that the informal economy would not disappear. Local governments needed to adopt appropriate urban planning policies developed in partnership with urban informal workers.

67. A representative from South Africa referred to the fact that while his country was working to achieve gender parity in parliament and local government, it was difficult because some political parties did not agree with that goal. It was also challenging to get women to take positions as chief executive officers of companies.

68. One representative said that it was not the number of women in decision making positions that counted and that it was necessary to recognize the contribution of women to the economy. A bank in his country, for example, had changed the situation of women by providing loans that empowered them. Women were contributing to the economy, but their status in day-to-day life was still difficult. It was important to share good practices to change policy makers' decisions.

69. One representative said that poverty and inequality were the two main challenges and proposed that development needs should be managed by women. Political will was not enough unless it was translated into legislation. Although political will existed, women needed to take charge and be more proactive.

70. Another representative spoke of progress achieved in her country, where a quota of 30 per cent has recently been established for municipal councils and parliament. Although more and more women were working in various sectors, they did not have the same access to credit as men. Women needed to re-appropriate the city.

71. Responding to the comments from the floor, one panellist said that urbanization did not equal prosperity for everyone. Cities needed to ensure social infrastructure, health care and urban infrastructure, all of which made it easier for women to combine their caregiving activities and work outside the home. That meant, however, that men had to assume part of the caregiving role in the household.

72. Another panellist voiced support for an inclusive, liveable city that took into consideration the divergent needs of the people living there. One panellist stressed that policy makers and decision makers needed real evidence and that it was therefore necessary to invest in it.

73. A representative of the global policy advocacy group Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Urbanizing requested the Governing Council to recognize informal work as a key element of women's economic empowerment and called for a specific UN-Habitat work programme on the informal economy.

3. Closing remarks

74. The President of the Governing Council closed the dialogue, saying that it had drawn attention to the urgency of exploiting the true potential of cities. Participants had reiterated that robust economic development in cities provided a strong foundation for sustainable urban development, especially if and when prosperity were balanced and equitable. Urbanization and cities drove economic growth, but for growth to be sustainable it had to be well planned and well managed. Participants discussed the challenge of how to translate that priority into policies on urban planning and the allocation of adequate funds for urban development, particularly through land-based financing tools. They also discussed the issues of urban youth unemployment and economic empowerment of women. Panellists shared some very interesting experiences, ranging from analysis of the root causes of youth unemployment to the need for labour intensive jobs and a wider set of economic targets, specific youth projects such as youth parliaments in Sri Lanka and Nigeria, the feminization of urban poverty, the importance of the informal economy, women's leadership and the need for political will in addressing gender inequalities in cities.
