FINAL REPORT ON UN-HABITAT’S ENGAGEMENT IN THE HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM

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Final Report on UN-Habitat’s Engagement in the High Level Political Forum

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I. Overview

Introduction

The High-level Political Forum (HLPF) is the United Nations central platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals under the auspices of the UN’s Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The Forum provides for the full and effective participation of all Member States of the United Nations and of specialized agencies.

In his closing remarks Mr. Liu Zhenmin, the Under-Secretary-General of ECOSOC stated that the HLPF had lived up to its expectations. He said Forum had proved itself to be a vibrant place of convergence where commonalities and interlinkages are highlighted, policy coherence is underlined and the poorest and most vulnerable are at the top of the agenda.

The Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG) highlighted inter-agency cooperation as a top priority. Therefore, UN-Habitat endeavored to present programmes and projects that profile a nexus of multiple goals in line with the spirit of Agenda 2030.

The theme of the 2018 HLPF was “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies” and focused on the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

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<tr>
<th>Goal 6</th>
<th>Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all</th>
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<tr>
<td>Goal 7</td>
<td>Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all</td>
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<td>Goal 11</td>
<td>Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable</td>
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<td>Goal 12</td>
<td>Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns</td>
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<td>Goal 15</td>
<td>Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and biodiversity loss</td>
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<td>Goal 17</td>
<td>Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development</td>
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UN-Habitat Objective at HLPF

UN-Habitat, as the main entity tasked with working on urbanization and settlements in the United Nations system, demonstrated its leadership and support for a wide range of partners.

The Executive Director shared her vision on the reform of UN-Habitat and the overall direction of the organization with key Member States, UN agencies and other partners.

During the HLPF, UN-Habitat initiated actions that:

- Promoted increased support to the organization from Member States, donors and stakeholders
- Initiated the establishment of the UN and Stakeholders Collaborative Implementation Frameworks and demonstrated a collaborative approach to UN-Habitat’s work
- Promoted specific flagship initiatives of the organization

UN-Habitat’s Engagement at the HLPF

UN-Habitat was associated with over 50 events over the two-week period, working closely with a wide range of UN entities, Governments and other partners. UN-Habitat also contributed to the organization of the Local and Regional Government Forum and Local 2030.

The Executive Director delivered remarks in several events and hosted a High-Level Reception to launch the first SDG 11 Synthesis Report and to share UN-Habitat’s vision to become fit-for-purpose in supporting the Agenda 2030. UN-Habitat also organized a dedicated Forum for its partners to discuss concrete ways to strengthen mutually beneficial partnerships.

An active social media campaign was conducted in which UN-Habitat was mentioned over 75 million times. In addition, an international media press briefing was held at UNHQ, several press releases were submitted and a joint Op-Ed was published in conjunction with UNDP. An exhibition and a ‘tiny’ eco house also helped to position SDG11 in a second place amongst the SDGs under review. UN-Habitat also worked closely with the city of New York to provide on-site discussions during an Urban Walk and a Bike Ride.
Effective Implementation, Monitoring and Financing of Goal 11

Photos © IISD/ENB | Natalia Mroz

Mahmoud Mohieldin, World Bank, said improving data quality helps cities mobilize finance for implementing SDG 11

Sylvia Meier-Kajbic, European Union, said EU is now strengthening partnerships with local authorities in the developing countries

Carlos Zedillo, Infonavit, stressed CPI is a strategic tool to use in gathering data for decision making on urban sustainability

Thomas De Bethune, EC, presenting the “Urban Agenda for the European Union”
II. Details of events

**Main events**

1. HPLF thematic Review: Transforming Towards Sustainable and Resilient Societies - Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Middle Income Countries (MICs)

   **July 11**

   The session evaluated progress made and challenges encountered in achieving transformation to resilient LLDCs, LDCs and MICs. This looked at countries with high exposure to risk and weak structural resilience, and which are particularly vulnerable to shocks.

   It was observed that efforts made so far focused on economic and social benefits. Further, it was reported that most LLDCs, LDCs and MICs are facing the challenge of socio-economic inequalities and lack of data. Underscoring the fact that these shocks pose multidimensional challenges to all Member States at all levels of development, panelists recommended new pathways and policies to build resilient futures for diverse societies. The session called for a focus on economic diversification, qualitative improvements to the economic apparatus, targeted international cooperation, new and innovative sources of financing, and an integrated and systemic approach to address urbanization.

2. HLPF Thematic Review: SDG 11 Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

   **July 11**

   This session reviewed the implementation of SDG11 and featured interesting experiences from Member States, UN Agencies, and stakeholder groups.

   The panel was chaired by Marc Pecsteen, ECOSOC Vice-President and moderated by Rohit Aggarwala, Columbia University. Panelists included UN-Habitat’s ED, Benjamin Rae, UN DESA Leilani Farha, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing, Penny Abeywardena, New York City’s Commissioner for International Affairs and Meera Al Shaikh from Smart Dubai, UAE.

   Ms. Abeywardena stated that New York’s Mayor Bill de Blasio had announced the world’s first annual city-based HLPF Voluntary Local Review, and declared 11 July “Global Goals Day.” Ms. Al Shaikh of Smart Dubai also described steps to make Dubai the “happiest city on Earth.” The UN-Habitat ED closed the session by describing urbanization as a transformative force.


Alicia Bárcena Ibarra, ECLAC, emphasized the need to improve urban data production and processing capacities for the attainment of SDG 11.
Side events

1. Sustainable Cities in Saudi Arabia

Organised by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, July 9

This session looked at how Saudi Arabia is advancing towards SDG11 and shared experiences of how international agencies have implemented and supported various urban projects.

As part of the Future Saudi Cities programme, UN-Habitat has been working with Saudi administration to collect streams of urban data through urban observatories. This enabled Saudi Arabia to adequately report on the progress of the urban related SDGs at the HLPF.

2. Role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the implementation of SDG 11 targets

Organised by UNESCO, the Sustainable Development Network & Permanent Mission of the Argentine Republic to the UN, July 9

New digital technologies offer great potential as tools for promoting and accelerating sustainable development relating to SDGs.

This event looked at connecting ICT developments to the sustainable development of cities and the ways in which they can help address urban challenges faced by local governments. It was observed that there is a need to collect local data on culture, history, public life, efficiency and local economy and to avoid standardized smart city transformation strategies. It is critical to acknowledge that ICT is tools for change and can amplify local voices, inspiring dialogue, debate and conversations.
3. Learning from Indigenous people: Sustainable use of lands and natural resources

Organised by UNDESA & the Permanent Mission of Canada to the UN, July 9

The side event shared experiences and challenges of how indigenous people’s traditional knowledge can promote SDGs. Panelists emphasized the value of traditional knowledge which can play a significant role in monitoring environmental sustainability and management of ecosystems and natural habitat.

The lack of land rights for indigenous people affects their contribution in overall SDGs processes. Lack of tenure security threatens indigenous people and their traditional knowledge and millions have limited access to basic services such as healthcare, water and electricity.

Some of the action points suggested by the panelists included: coherence in local governments’ policies in both environmental and social spheres, leveraging land and resource security to ensure recognition from governments and the international community. Emphasis was placed on the need to have a regional protocol to promote traditional knowledge.

4. SDGs on a Local Level

Organised by the UN Institute for Training and Research UNITAR and the International Training Centre for Local Actors CIFAL, July 9

This session explored how influential local governments are leading the implementation and monitoring of SDGs. Panelists from various cities, industries and regions shared their experiences on localizing SDGs through institutional collaborations, actualizing the mutually reinforcing nature of various SDGs, learning across the border and improving infrastructure.

5. The state of indigenous people’s lands, territories and resources: implications in building resilience

Organised by the Indigenous People’s Major Group for Sustainable Development, July 10

The side event highlighted key findings of regional studies and discussed the way forward on securing the lands, territories and resources of indigenous people to achieve the SDGs.

Participants emphasised the importance of right to land and territories to conserve indigenous culture. The use of participatory mapping and practices to secure food and reduce carbon emissions was also highlighted.

Challenges for protecting indigenous rights to land and territory range from industrial extractions and indigenous youth migration to conserving indigenous culture and way of life. Governments need to support bottom-up approaches that put the community at the center of decision-making processes.

6. Safer and Inclusive roads and transport for cities that leave no one behind

Co-organised by Humanity & Inclusion with Belgium and Luxembourg, July 10

This session reflected on the importance of safe and inclusive mobility to achieve sustainable development, as road safety and accessibility remain major challenges. Without safe mobility, vulnerable road users such as children, the elderly and persons with disabilities are exposed to many risks. Participants called for inclusive policies to ensure sustainable road safety for all.
7. Transforming security sector governance for safe and resilient cities

Organised by the Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces, Colombia, Guatemala, Slovakia, Switzerland & UN Women, July 10

This side event focused on the linkages of SDG 11 to SDG 5 and SDG 16. SDG 11 challenges us to tackle inequality, exclusion, fragility and poverty in urban contexts. Emphasis was placed on security sector reform and localizing best practices and lessons learned in terms of crime control and prevention.

Participants observed that the commitment to safe urban spaces is a pledge to reducing all forms of violence. The session concluded with a call to adopt a local urban lens from the security perspective.

8. SDG 5 and SDG 11 Critical Drivers of the Leave No One Behind aspiration for the 2030 Agenda: Improving accountability for the gender responsive implementation of the NUA

Organised by UN-Habitat, UN Women, Huairou Commission and NGO Committee for Sustainable Development, July 10

This highlighted the links between SDG11 and SDG5 in achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. The ED emphasised the need to include women in the city planning process saying: “The ambitious targets we have set … cannot be achieved if women, who are the majority dwellers in cities are unable to enjoy the benefits of urbanization, nor empowered to contribute to urban development through economic, administrative and political leadership.” Jan
Peterson, the chair of the Huairou Commission, called for recognition of the role of grassroots women in bringing solutions and innovations to the SDG implementation and that grassroots women should have meaningful participation in decision making.

9. How to Achieve New Urban Agenda Principles through Spatial Planning & Efficiency

Organised by Czech Republic, Croatia, the European Union & UN-Habitat, July 10

Presentations in this session focused on the role of spatial planning and energy efficiency in achieving New Urban Agenda principles in Czech Republic and Croatia. The presenters reviewed the implementation of SDG11 across regional, national and local levels and highlighted the mutually reinforcing goals in the New Urban Agenda and Agenda2030.

Key messages include the need for political will, strategic documents and administrative capacity at all levels as well as consultation with stakeholders and a financial mechanism.

10. Achieving SDG Alignment through Partnership for Goal 11 as Guided by the New Urban Agenda

Organised by the Government of Slovakia, Huairou Commission & UN-Habitat, July 10

This side event invited urban stakeholders from government, private sector, civil society, and international institutions to share their activities to promote SDG 11 and the New Urban Agenda.

11. Pathways to Peace in the City - Building on the World Urban Forum

Organised by the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, Centre for International Co-operation & New York University, July 10

Cities can be centres of destabilization and fragility, or they can provide a bulwark of stability and peace during turbulent times. This side event shared the preliminary analysis from the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) research project “Security Sector Governance for Safer Cities: Supporting States to achieve SDG 11,” and stimulated discussion on promoting partnerships in building sustainable urban safety and long-standing peace and harmony. UN-Habitat’s Juma Assiago, spoke on localizing knowledge of diverse urban contexts in order to implement and devise more comprehensive security policies.

12. Partners’ Meeting

(Organised by UN-Habitat, July 11)

Over 60 representatives of academia, civil society, private sector, women, children and youth, professionals and other stakeholders engaged with the ED on her vision – a better quality of life for all in a rapidly urbanizing world. She reiterated her drive to regain trust of Member States and stakeholders alike, and to ensure that stakeholders contribute effectively to the identification of UN-Habitat priorities and strategies. Stakeholder’s welcomed the ED’s message with its emphasis on people, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, assessing impact, transparency and accountability.

UN-Habitat’s decision to establish an international advisory group and internal steering committee on partnerships to facilitate coordination, alignment and enhanced stakeholder engagement in policy and programmes was welcomed. Other key issues included the role of science and technology, cities in crises, migration, emerging partnership structures, access to
justice and the right to the city, and the revived role of the World Urban Campaign. Key highlights included the role of data and evidence in monitoring implementation of SDG 11 and the New Urban Agenda, gender equality, youth, sustainable and friendly partnerships.

13. Quantifying the Commons: Achieving Indicator 11.7

*Organised by ISOCARP & UN-Habitat, July 11*

This event evaluated the status and next steps required for measuring the quantity, quality, accessibility and distribution of public space in relation to advancing the SDGs. UN-Habitat and partners discussed methodologies for producing comparable data on public spaces in sample cities. The session called for a universal definition of ‘urban’, engagement of local and national governments on aggregation and disaggregation and increased financing to implement and monitor SDG 11.7.1.

14. Implementing SDG 11.4: Local Voices and Global Agendas for Cultural and Natural Heritage


This side event focused on the role cities play in preserving culture and heritage and the implementation of SDG 11.4 to “protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage.” The event also illustrated the connections between integrated heritage protection and sustainable development.

Speakers showcased examples of how SDG11 can be implemented from the perspective of 11.4. UN-Habitat emphasised the critical role of cities in cultural, heritage and diversity production and protection, and also highlighted the Agency’s unique contribution to the culture and heritage discourse, which is essentially leveraging on culture for development not only as an economic asset but also as a model of urban planning.
15. Migration Governance at the Local Level

Organised by IOM, July 11

The workshop focused on gathering inputs from expert participants on an assessment framework for migration governance at the local level that can be applied across cities with different economic development levels and migration profiles. Jesus Salcedo of UN-Habitat emphasised the need to address questions like: “Are cities aware of the duty national governments bear with reference to human rights?” He observed that looking into the indicators of SDG 11.1 and 11.3 could be essential to the Migration Governance Index framework.


Organised by the Sendai Stakeholders’ Group, July 12

There is an urgent need to apply a 360 degree approach when dealing with disaster risk reduction. This interactive side event underscored the need to synchronise the Sendai Framework with the SDGs. It also highlighted the opportunities and challenges in engaging stakeholders in building resilience and tried to increase understanding of the importance of risk-informed development in achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Sendai Framework. It is critical to develop engagement strategies and frameworks to guide engagement with the civil society and youth among other stakeholders.

17. Effective Implementation and Monitoring of Goal 11

Organised by UN-Habitat, July 12

This event discussed the interrelations across SDGs, focusing on the financing, implementation, and monitoring of SDG 11 at all levels. Speakers presented practical examples of how institutions have been implementing SDG 11 and UN-Habitat’s work on the City Prosperity Index and the New Urban Agenda. The ED opened the session by discussing cities as integrative spaces to leave no one behind on Agenda 2030 and underlined the importance of collective action at the local level. Panelists shared their work on UN-Habitat’s initiatives in Europe and Latin America and addressed good practices on urban data analysis, financing mechanisms, and policy coherence to work collectively to construct sustainable and resilient cities. http://enb.iisd.org/hlpf/2018/side-events/12jul.html

18. The Role of Water Utilities in the Implementation of SDG6 and the New Urban Agenda

Organised by Spain and Tajikistan and UBSB/GWOPA, July 12

This event looked at why and how water could be leveraged to promote safe, inclusive, resilient and sustainable urbanization. Member States were briefed on the role of water utilities in the implementation of SDG6 and the New Urban Agenda and on urban water management. The session also highlighted the fact that urban water utilities are facing challenges from the technical level and socio-economic standpoint.

The ED acknowledged Tajikistan and Spain for being strong water advocates at the global level. She emphasized the importance of inclusion for water for all activities. UN-Habitat showcased the successful model of the Global Water Operators’ Partnerships Alliance (GWOPA). The partnership between NGOs and government bodies has facilitated improved global sanitation services and strategies on water utilities. There is a strong focus on the accessibility and affordability to water utilities for vulnerable populations.
19. Cities and Regions for the 2030 Agenda: A Place-based and Multi-level Approach to the SDGs

Organised by OECD and UN Global Compact, July 13

The launch reflected on OECD’s new programme focused on a territorial approach to SDGs, and emphasised the role for cities and regions to leave no one behind. The event also discussed how to support cities and regions to develop, implement and monitor strategies to achieve the SDGs and reflected on the critical role of cities and regions.

20. Cities and the global agenda: on the road to the U20 in Buenos Aires

The New School, Mistra Urban Futures, the University of Buenos Aires, and the Global Platform for the Right to the City, July 13

This event provided an overview of the implementation of SDG 11 and the New Urban Agenda with a focus on the academic perspective. Panelists discussed examples of practices around these international agendas and the challenges faced three years after their adoption.

The ED called for a review of decision makers’ actions regarding urban planning and governance. Emphasis was placed on inclusion and integration and linking urban issues to inequalities. The ED further emphasized that the efforts toward a sustainable urban future need to be focused on investing in places, resilient societies, integration of culture and how to move inclusivity into action.

UN-Habitat highlighted the crucial role that data collection and analysis play on evidence-based decision-making processes. The session reaffirmed the interdependency of targets and called for institutions agencies and departments to work together towards building sustainable cities and communities instead of working in silos. Capacity building is urgently needed to enable cities and local authorities to localize SDGs and implement the NUA.

22. Every Journey, Every Child

Organised by UN-Habitat, FIA Foundation & Child Health Initiative, July 13

Road safety is clearly addressed in both SDG3 and SDG11. The New Urban Agenda also provides a blueprint for actions to protect and promote pedestrian safety and cycling mobility and UN-Habitat coordinates global reporting on the same.

Participants at the event shared their experiences and called for action to protect children and the vulnerable groups. Many nation-wide approaches to road safety are linked to technological innovations, education and programming. Community integration is a vital enabler for authorities to promote safety as a public good.

23. Moving beyond crises: making cities work for IDPs

Organised by the Global Alliance for Urban Crisis, July 13

This event was contextualized by the release of Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2018 Global Report on Internal Displacement. Cities are increasingly becoming destinations for internally displaced people (IDPs). Along with improved employment prospects and access to labour markets, cities provide a degree of freedom and safety that may not exist in rural or camp settings. Once in the city, IDPs often join the ranks of the broader urban poor, living in similarly marginalized and precarious conditions, and often face additional challenges in accessing services and employment.

Good quality, city specific, disaggregated data is needed to integrate and support local authorities in the policy design and program management in addressing the challenges IDPs face such as access to basic services, employment, health care and education). Existing tools should also be used and innovative solutions harnessed.
24. Strengthening rural-urban linkages for inclusive and resilient societies and healthy ecosystems

Colombia, European Union, FAQ, IFAD, UN-Habitat, Cities Alliance, ICLEI, July 13

A range of sustainability issues related to water, energy, urbanization, land use and land tenure depend on urban-rural interdependencies which pose both challenges and opportunities to sustainable development. To achieve SDG11, cities must reduce disparities between urban and rural areas and strengthen the connection between rural and urban communities. A territorial framework can strengthen urban-rural linkages and food security. An inter-governmental framework can also be adopted to support collaboration rather than competition between local and national governments.

25. Making Arab Cities Sustainable, Safe and Inclusive

Organised by the Arab NGO Network for Development, Habitat International Coalition, Transparency International, Center of Arab Woman for Training and Research and United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia, July 13

This event highlighted the urbanization challenges in Arab cities including refugees and inequality under the broad context of climate change. Presenters from civil society organizations stated local and national governments have obligations and commitments to a human-rights based approach to achieve sustainable development. Budget inclusiveness and transparency as well as participation in the decision-making processes were also highlighted as requirements for strengthening the relations between citizens and local authorities. The presenters also called for clear planning frameworks in managing the urban spaces in the Arab region.

Housing and urbanization are key issues in the Arab region where cities face multiple challenges including rapid urbanization, disaster-induced migration, socio-economic disparities as well as unsuitable patterns of consumption and production. Arab states and cities are working towards implementing the 2030 agenda while monitoring progress.

26. Accelerating effective Implementation of SDGs through interlinkages and gender-responsive, people-centred land governance and just land reform

Organised by Rural Development Institute, July 13

Land rights and security of tenure have been recognized in the SDGs as critical to inclusive development across all dimensions (social, economic and environmental). This political commitment to address the land tenure insecurity through integrating specific SDG land targets and indicators gave countries a chance to strengthen policies, programmes and services that promote secure land rights reforms and sustainable use of land. These efforts will strengthen rural communities and small holder farmers, and to tackle a variety of development challenges including eradicating poverty and hunger, reducing extreme inequality, overcoming climate change, and creating peaceful, just, transparent and accountable societies. Action on secure and equitable land rights is a clear pathway to achieve systemic change.

Secure and equitable land rights and access to productive resources are fundamental for small-scale food producers and indigenous communities, who protect terrestrial ecosystems and combating land degradation and biodiversity loss. Gender perspectives must also be fully integrated in land and natural resource rights and reforms as well as policies and actions developed within the context of advancing land-related SDGs.
27. Local and Regional Governments Forum

Organised by the Global Taskforce of Local & Regional Governments, UNDESA & UN-Habitat, July 16

The first regional and local governments forum brought together representatives of local and regional governments, Member States, and other stakeholders to support the participation of local governments in SDG follow-up and review processes. The first half of the forum discussed key challenges and best practices of local implementation of the 2030 Agenda spearheaded by local and regional governments.

In the face of accelerated global urban issues including inequality, climate-induced socio-economic conflicts, and exclusivity, local and regional governments have been working to eliminate the challenges at the city level. To leave no one behind in the delivery of affordable housing the session called for the creation of new tools for multi-level government leadership to maximum collaboration and optimized resources. While local governments should provide better and more sustainable life qualities for all people, it is vital to mobilize support from the national governments financially as well as global collaborations to implement the SDGs.

The second half of the forum reviewed financial mechanisms from regional and local governments from Latin America, Asia, and Europe that have worked to promote SDGs implementation. Speakers emphasized the importance of public-private partnerships and having the opportunity to access to subsidies and grants from international agencies. They also highlighted that financing mechanisms available are mostly for metropolitan areas, therefore, the challenge is to give mid-size cities accessibility as well.

Speakers reviewed local and sub-national monitoring tools and systems for reporting on SDGs. They agreed on the importance of municipal and regional data collection and the development of indicators to report on SDGs, underlying that a strong legal framework and stakeholders’ participation are crucial.

28. Meeting Sustainable Development Commitments in Cities: The Science We Need for the Cities We Want

Organised by the Permanent Mission of Canada to the UN & IPCC, July 16

This event showcased how cities are showing leadership in addressing climate change in the context of the SDGs. It followed the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Conference earlier in the year which brought together academics, urban practitioners, and policy makers to further develop the evidence base for cities, climate change and sustainable development. A cities-specific research agenda has been set, focused also on accelerating towards scalable solutions to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and how national governments can provide the frameworks to enhance the science-policy-practice interface for action in cities.

The meeting called for structured increased engagement between city stakeholders, urban practitioners and the scientific community and for improvements in the quantity and quality of data.

29. Ministerial Breakfast: More Sustainable Cities, Less Waste, One Planet - Implementing SDG 11 and 12

Organised by UN-Habitat, UN Environment & One Planet Network, July 17

The event showcased how environmentally sustainable design and material choices can contribute to the achievement of SDG11.1 and SDG12 through increased resource and energy efficiency and the promotion of sustainable consumption of materials and resources within sustainable cities and the housing sector. The session also touched on how environmental sustainability can enhance housing affordability and the overlaps for achieving SDG 11 and 12.

UN-Habitat’s Rafael Tuts, stressed the importance of environmental sustainability which presents opportunities to have decreased utility costs for city
administrations and households and strengthened resilience against climate change. The One Planet Network was recognised as a platform to bridge the transformative power of sustainable urbanization with cost-efficient and effective ways to achieve economic development and reduce impacts on the environment.

30. Adequate and Affordable Housing as a Pillar for Sustainable Development

Organised by UN-Habitat, UNDP & the Government of Bahrain, July 17

SDG 11 calls for the provision of “adequate and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.” Ministerial-level heads of delegation from Angola, Bahrain, Bulgaria, Malaysia and Paraguay shared progress and discussed innovative solutions to SDG 11.1.

The session discussed female leadership, public-private partnerships, data solutions, and crisis management. It acknowledged the diversity of housing programmes and policy initiatives in delivering adequate and affordable housing and its role in social justice. Greater consideration of housing in urban planning in consonance with land and infrastructure delivery can greatly contribute to inclusive and sustainable cities. With a focus on lower income groups and women and girls, efforts contributing to improve adequate housing delivery include reformed political standards, frameworks and energy-efficient house design.

31. Local 2030 – Hub for Sustainability Solutions: Local Actions for Global Commitments

Organised by the Multistakeholder Coalition for Local 2030 & the Global Taskforce for Local and Regional Governments, July 17

Local 2030, in collaboration with the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, brought together a multi-stakeholder coalition of private, public and civil society sectors to work with local government representatives and local leaders to discuss and develop new solutions in the localization of SDGs.

32. UN SDG Event - Working together for Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements

Organised by UN Sustainable Development Group, July 17

This event focused on how the cities of the world are accelerating progress towards the SDGs, as well as how SDG implementation in cities can contribute to transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies.

The event was chaired by the UN Deputy Secretary-General and UNSDG chair Amina Mohammed and addressed by the UNDP Administrator Achim Stein and the ED among others. Speakers reflected on their experience with implementation and actions to address the interlinkages between SDG 11 and the other SDGs. There was consensus that it is in cities where transformations that Agenda 2030 brings are going to be most visible. The New Urban Agenda marks the starting point to recognize the impact of rapid urbanization. The ED called on the international community to rethink traditional governance and planning mechanisms at all levels, from international to local actors, as well as promote cross-cutting collaboration and partnerships. A joint press release with UNDP was issued https://unhabitat.org/cities-are-engines-for-achieving-the-sustainable-development-goals/ as well as an Op-Ed on IPS website http://www.ipsnews.net/2018/07/new-york-8-5-million-people-among-cities-heading-sustainable-future/
33. Achieving Sustainable and Resilient Cities in Africa: Implementing SDG 11 (Nigeria)

Organised by the Federal Government of Nigeria and UN-Habitat, July 17

This event focused on harnessing the potential of African cities as drivers of inclusive and sustainable transformation. Speakers underlined the need for providing better urban services, promoting industrialization and investing in plans to build a better critical infrastructure. They also recognized the crucial and active role that the private sector has played in building sustainable and resilient cities, as well as the added value of UN-Habitat on issues of housing, urban planning, and design.

There was a call for Africa to work more strategically on fostering inclusion, accelerating industrialization, leveraging on demographic dynamics and mitigating and adapting to climate change and environmental challenges. Participants were encouraged to learn from international best practices to implement the New Urban Agenda and achieve Africa’s Vision 2063. UN-Habitat stressed the need for promoting innovation, and sharing knowledge and experiences within the continent and abroad in order to make Africa lead on promoting sustainability.

34. Towards Sustainable Cities in Asia-Pacific

Organised by the Government of Japan, UNESCAP, UNU & Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, July 17

The event discussed how Asia-Pacific is achieving SDGs in city and local levels and included the need to adopt a common language to facilitate cross-sector and transdisciplinary collaborations and to share learning action from different cities. An emphasis was placed on the link between improving informal settlement areas and the quality of life of the urban poor on one hand, and achieving Sustainable Development Goals on the other. At the centre of these efforts is adequate financing of infrastructure development, policy coherence between local and national governments and effective data collection.

35. Safer Cities for Adolescent girls

Organised by UN-Habitat, Plan International & City of Madrid, July 17

The event discussed the rise of safety risks for girls in cities and towns and recommended that the joint ‘Safer Cities for Adolescent Girls’ programme should look more closely at the reasons why girls are not systematically reporting gender based violence (and notably sexual harassment) Emphasis was placed on the need to link this work more explicitly to municipal urban strategies and interventions.

There is little information available about girls in urban environments although generally sexual harassment, exploitation, and insecurity remain prevalent. Academics and development institutions have largely ignored the intersection between sex, age, safety and urbanisation, and girls tend to be overlooked in programming either aimed at ‘youth’ or ‘women.’ The event also underscored the need for referral pathways and systems for victims of abuse.

36. Addressing resilience through the nexus of water-food-energy – cities as SDG laboratories

Organised by the Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future and the International Science Council and the UNC Water Institute, July 17

Participants noted that without reflective and iterative knowledge and learning capacities, the value of progress reports that address urban sustainability issues will be limited. The most important ones are embedded in processes that allow actors to reflect on their messages, discuss advances and shortcomings, learn from them, and consequently adjust policies and programmes where necessary.
37. Implementing the New Urban Agenda in Cities affected by Disasters or Conflict

Organised by UN-Habitat & the Global Alliance for Urban Crisis, July 18

This side event explored ways of strengthening resilience and the humanitarian-development nexus. In addition, panelists discussed how the New Urban Agenda can contribute to the mutually reinforcing goals of achieving the SDGs and addressing unique vulnerabilities inherent in cities in crisis.

It was concluded that building partnerships (public-private, academia-policy making, urban planners-policy makers, etc.), building capacity at the local level and building resilience for everyone in the city (IDPs and refugees) can help address the complexities of crises in urban settings.

Side activities

1. Exhibition inside UNHQ

Organized by UN-Habitat

The UN-Habitat’s exhibition booth provided a space and opportunities as an urban hub that connects people to knowledge, information, and people to people. It offered a sharing space, enabling people stay engaged with relevant urban knowledge, solutions and innovations on sustainable urban development and the implementation of the New Urban Agenda through the latest tools, publications, books, database, among others to build network and partners. The exhibition booth also provided Urban Space, a little corner dedicated for social media interviews and photo ops. Displayed with branded pull-ups, all 17 SDGs panels were made available for public use. In line with the “What’s your favorite city?” social media campaign, people took photos with the SDG11 panel, and possibly another SDG of their choice, while sharing personal experiences in cities and towns worldwide. The Urban Space allowed people walking pass the booth, as well as high-profile guests, partners and speakers from the Forum, to engage in brief, but meaningful dialogues on what makes an ideal city, as related to personal human experience, and how they can be creatively related to the Global Goals.

2. Urban Walk

Organised by UN-Habitat, UN Environment & New York City Department of Transport, July 10

The ED joined UN-Habitat staff, academics, NGO staff members and others for an informative walk from the UNHQ to 34th Street with two experts from NYC who discussed the road transport design, bike lanes, buses and other efforts to improve traffic flow.

3. Interagency Coordination Meeting on Public Space (Closed Workshop)

Organised by UN-Habitat, July 10

UN-Habitat brought together its partner agencies to build synergies, share knowledge, policies and innovations on creating safe, inclusive and accessible public spaces. Ultimately, the goal was to develop a draft joint work programme/plan on public space to support local and national governments in designing, implementing, upgrading, managing and enjoying quality public spaces in a more efficient and sustainable way. Laura Petrella of UN-Habitat noted the need to strengthen the UN system’s work on public space which requires joint advocacy, sharing of knowledge, tools and expertise as well as influencing policy on national and local levels. This can be scaled-up through joint programmes in pilot cities/countries adopting an integrated, multi-disciplinary approach and expanded collaboration between UN-Habitat and its sister agencies.
4. Press conference by UN-Habitat ED

Organised by UN-Habitat, July 11

The ED shared her key messages about SDG 11 with around 20 journalists just after the noon briefing at UNHQ and highlighted that many SDGs targets have a direct connection to urbanisation. She spoke about the potential and challenges of cities. Journalists asked questions including whether SDG 11 could be met by 2030 and her vision. http://webtv.un.org/meetings-events/treaty-bodies/watch/hlpf-2018-side-event-maimunah-mohd-sharif-un-habitat-on-the-implementation-of-the-sustainable-development-goal-11-press-conference-11-may-2018/5808078710001/?term=&sort=date


The ED also appeared on SDG Live from UNTV https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_cWg_pCpifk&feature=youtu.be

Ms Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Habitat adresses a press conference during the High Level Political Forum in New York, USA © UN-Habitat
5. East Harlem - Public Housing Hearing

East Harlem, New York “Setting Public Housing Authority Residents’ Agenda for Change”

Organised by Huairou Commission & Manhattan North District Council, July 14

Affordable housing is one of the key challenges of cities in implementing SDG 11. In New York City, there are about 375 public housing developments, serving over 3 million low-income residents.

The open forum was led by the New York Public Housing Residents’ Association, with responses from community & state leaders. The event was covered live on social media by UN-Habitat.

UN-Habitat ED shared her personal experiences as former Mayor of Penang City in Malaysia, and the shared challenges of public housing worldwide. She emphasized the issue not just of availability and affordability of housing in cities, but also accessibility for all types of groups. She also reminded the residents that every individual has a leadership capacity, to quote: “Change starts from ourselves, then our families, then our local communities, then only we can only change policies at the national level.”

Lorena Zarate, President of Habitat International Coalition in Mexico called for a global coalition of affordable housing advocates: “Housing is not a human need - it is a human right. It is not a privilege. It should be claimed here in New York and worldwide.”


Organised by UN-Habitat, July 16

UN-Habitat held an event to formally launch the Synthesis Report on SDG 11, which assesses performance towards achieving the SDGs’ targets on cities and human settlements. The report complements the 2018 Secretary-General’s Progress Report on SDGs and was developed as a joint effort with the participation and support from several UN agencies, UN Regional Commissions, civil society organizations, academia, the European Commission, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and various other stakeholders and partners. The ED also took the opportunity to presented an informal introduction of her vision and mission for the agency during the event.

Dignitaries in attendance included Ms. Amina Mohammed, United Nations Deputy Secretary General and H.E. Mr Hardeep Singh Puri Union Minister of State with Independent Charge in the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs of India and President of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat.

7. Visit by ED to the ‘Tiny’ Eco-House

Organized by UN-Habitat and UNEP, July 16

The ED along with the UN Environment Executive Director Erik Solheim and and Deborah Berke, Dean of Yale School of Architecture visited the 22 square metre ‘tiny house’ – a new eco-housing module produced by UN Environment, Yale University and UN-Habitat which is powered by renewable energy, uses few natural resources and is sustainable and cheaply replicable. The house was situated in the grounds of the UNHQ and included a display by UN-Habitat. UN-Habitat also put out a joint Press Release with UN Environment on 9 July. https://unhabitat.org/media-centre/press-releases/

8. Partnership to Achieve SDG Target 11.1 - Leaving No One Behind (Cocktail)

Organised by UN-Habitat, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development of Ghana & the Department of Human Settlements of the Republic of South Africa, July 17

This event brought together UN-Habitat’s global partners including South Africa and Ghana and other actors with an interest in informal settlements and slums to share experiences and best practices on a unified approach to achieving SDG 11.1. It provided
a unique opportunity, particularly for UN-Habitat as the custodian agency of SDG 11, to revitalise its commitment to implementing the NUA, leverage international support and initiate dialogue empowering Member States to deliver the SDGs in informal settlements and slums through the Slums and Informal Settlements Network (SISNet).

9. Bike Train over Williamsburg bridge

Organised by UN-Habitat & New York City Department of Transport, 18 July

The ED took part in the weekly Williamsburg Bridge ‘Bike Train’ hosted by the New York City Department of Transportation and Transportation Alternatives. She noted that the so-called ‘Bike Train’ serves as a creative global model for community organization to increase cycling and called for HLPF participants to look at New York’s experience and consider adopting relevant examples. She praised New York City for translating its commitment to city-level SDGs into practical actions that create more livable, safe, and equitable communities. The New York Transport Commissioner Polly Trottenberg said the city was pleased to cooperate with UN Habitat to help cities worldwide better understand how they can save lives, improve access to affordable mobility, and protect the environment through initiatives that adapt from best practices. A joint Press Release was also issued for the event. https://unhabitat.org/media-centre/press-releases/

Training

1. Capacity Development Workshop

Organised by UN-Habitat and the New School, July 6 - 8

The training, hosted by the New School provided a unique opportunity for civil society organisations, government representatives and UN officials to have a tripartite dialogue with the aim of increasing and strengthening existing capacity on the collection, analysis and reporting on human settlements indicators, focusing on urban SDGs indicators as well as corresponding levels of data disaggregation.

The workshop highlighted the need to contextualize ‘invisible problems’ such as taxation when building capacity on interpretation of data. It further highlighted the critical role of interpretation and disaggregation of data in identifying indicators that could in turn reach those left behind.

On the SDG 11 synthesis report, there was a call for city definitions (i.e. ‘urban extension’, ‘urbanization’, and ‘urban population’) to be harmonised and “inadequate housing” defined before it is adopted as a replacement for “slums” or “informal settlements”.

2. Practical tools to localize and implement SDG 11 and the NUA in Cities and the Developing World

Organised by UN-Habitat, UNDESA and UNITAR, July 9

This event was designed to meet the needs of policymakers, urban practitioners and decision-makers who are concerned with resilience and sustainability of cities and human settlements and the localization of the SDG11 and the New Urban Agenda (NUA). The training session provided the participants with the opportunity to develop in-depth knowledge about a series of implementation strategies and approaches and get acquainted with the practical tools, methods, and indicators to monitor and localize the SDGs and report on their progress and achievements.
The training reviewed the linkages between SDG 11 and the NUA and UN-Habitat’s ongoing projects such as the City Prosperity Index and the National Sample of Cities. It emphasised the importance of working on indicators, spatial data collection, monitoring and reporting outcomes. Participants made comments and provided reflections on the applicability of UN-Habitat’s tools at the local level, the Agency’s role on SDG reporting/monitoring and applicability of its tools on cities under crises. Data sources for indicator calculation, informal versus formal data, and data disaggregation were also discussed.

3. Global Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (Training)

Organised by HESI, UNDESA, UNESCO, UN Environment, UNU, UN-Habitat & UNCTAD, July 11

This event invited Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI) partners to explore how higher education institutions are integrating SDGs into sustainability strategies in the form of research, teaching, pedagogy, and campus practices. The strategic positioning of Higher Education Institutions as key drivers for achieving the SDGs was also discussed.

C

UN-Habitat Executive Director’s bilateral meetings

1. Meeting with Mr. Burhan Gafoor, Singapore PR in New York

The Executive Director of UN-Habitat and Mr. Burhan Gafoor, Singapore Permanent Representative to the United Nations discussed the jointly developed capacity building programme for African leaders that will include engagement from ministers, mayors and other senior officials. The ED made a verbal request for financial support from Singapore and the PR committed to mobilize support for UN-Habitat’s work in the region.

Regarding UN-Habitat’s efforts in establishing partnership with inter-governmental organizations in the Asia Pacific region, the PR commended the establishment of the ASEAN Smart Cities Network.

UN-Habitat is also planning to organize financing dialogues in Asia, the Middle East and Africa. The Agency seeks to strengthen its activities geared towards showcasing Asia’s best practices in the area of sustainable urbanization and intends to highlight Singapore’s urbanization model as an example.

2. Meeting with the Delegation from the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI)

Gino Van Begin – ICLEI Secretary General
Ashok Alexander Sridharan – ICLEI President & Mayor of Bonn
Mauricio E. R. Espinel – Mayor of Quito
Yunus Arikan – ICLEI Head of Global Policy and Advocacy

The discussions focused on ICLEI and UN-Habitat collaboration. ICLEI is interested in building a coalition for launching a ‘UN Decade for Sustainable Cities’ starting in 2019 (linked to HLPF and the Secretary-General’s Climate Summit).

The ED shared the ongoing strategic planning process and requested suggestions from the ICLEI delegation. ICLEI invited UN-Habitat to consider having an office in Bonn which is a United Nations host city.

3. Meeting with Ms. Mami Mizutori – UNISDR ASG, SRSG for Disaster Risk Reduction

The ED and Ms. Mizutori discussed the long-term collaboration between UN-Habitat and UNISDR and
the impact the partnership has had on cities. They agreed that UN and non-UN partners should work in collaboration towards jointly determined visions and strategies. Possible areas for future collaboration, particularly the “Making Cities Resilient” campaign post 2020, were also discussed.

4. Meeting with Mr. Andrey Chibis - Deputy Minister for Construction and Utilities, Russian Federation

The ED discussed the transformation of the UN-Habitat office in Moscow and UN-Habitat’s ongoing collaboration with Russian Federation, such as initiatives in urban / housing renewal, public space improvement across the Federation and the importance of public participation. The Deputy Minister emphasized the lessons learned and the interest of the Russian Federation to disseminate them. The on-going work on participatory budget with UN-Habitat was also discussed.

The ED gave a brief of the reform process and asked Russia to support UN-Habitat in the 2nd Committee deliberations. Mr. Chibis said his Government would like to expand its collaboration with UN-Habitat especially in advocacy activities.

5. Meeting with Princess Adejoke Orelope-Adefulire – Senior Special Adviser to the President of Nigeria on SDGs

The discussions covered collaboration between UN-Habitat and Nigeria including integrating them in UN-Habitat’s work plan. Ms. Orelope-Adefukire requested for technical assistance in implementing the SDGs in Nigeria with emphasis on SDG11 and for capacity development training on selected areas of focus. The ED on behalf of UN-Habitat requested the possibility of exploring Private Sector financing and collaboration in implementing the SDGs in Nigeria.

6. Meeting with Delegation from Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Faisal F. Alibrahim – Vice Minister of Economy and Planning
Haifa Abdulazziz Al Mogrin – Asst. Deputy Minister for Sustainable Development

The Saudi Delegation expressed confidence that the ED’s appointment would signal a new era of prosperity for UN-Habitat. The Vice Minister expressed satisfaction with the progress of the Future Saudi Cities Programme (FSCP) while the Assistant Deputy Minister commended the team based in Riyadh for the excellent work on urban data, planning, regulations, finance, youth and gender.

The ED briefed the delegation on the SDG11 synthesis report and highlighted UN-Habitat’s on-going collaborative activities with the KSA.

Both the Vice Minister and Assistant Deputy Minister indicated that there are many other opportunities to collaborate with UN-Habitat including the implementation and monitoring of SDGs in Saudi Arabia in-line with the country’s reform agenda. KSA wants to explore other areas of programmatic collaboration such as the City Resilience Profiling Programme, Greener Cities Partnership and the Sustainable Mobility Programme. It is committed to appeal for core support from the Ministry of Finance for UN-Habitat’s core funding.

7. Meeting with Ms. Klara Dostalova – Minister of Regional Development, Czech Republic

The ED briefed Ms. Dostalova on UN-Habitat’s engagement at HLPF and the key messages from the Synthesis Report on SDG11. Ms. Dostalova highlighted how the collaboration between the Ministries of Regional Development, Housing, Transport and Environment in addressing urban sustainability in the Czech Republic had a far reaching positive impact.

The ED highlighted the importance of holistic urban policies to ensure integrated development and reduce
the burden on large cities and introduced the concept of ‘carrying capacity of a city’.

Ms. Dostalova said her Government would continue paying its annual contribution Czech and hoped to increase it.

8. Meeting with Bahrain delegation

Mohammed bin Ibrahim Al Mutawa – Cabinet Affairs Minister
Basin Bin Yacob Al Hamer – Housing Minister

The Minister highlighted Bahrain’s longstanding partnership with UN-Habitat and his concern regarding recent gaps in communication. However he praised the improved quality of partnership that has been reestablished with UN-Habitat over the past month which led to the successful joint HPLF side event.

The ED referred to areas of ongoing collaboration such as housing policy and the State of Arab Cities Report. She also addressed the outstanding issues regarding the Palestine project and committed to address and resolve them.

The Minister also conveyed the satisfaction of his Ministry regarding UN-Habitat’s recent contribution to the national housing framework and committed to support ED’s efforts to strengthen UN-Habitat. The delegation confirmed its willingness to financially support the expansion of the current scope of activity on housing with UN-Habitat and to mobilize broader support from the Arab region.

9. Meeting with Lesotho delegation

Habofanoe Lehana – Minister of Local Government and Chieftainship Affairs
Ms. Kabelo Lethunya – Director of Housing

The Minister expressed appreciation for the support from UN-Habitat since the publication of the National Housing Profile in 2015. The Minister stressed the importance of this work for scaling up joint activity in Lesotho in housing and urban development and the national housing strategy. UN-Habitat’s support contributed to the recent drafting of the national housing policy and strategy for Lesotho which has been presented to the Cabinet.

The ED mentioned the importance of a people-centred urban development approach for the delivery of the right to adequate housing for all, the expansion of informal settlements and the development of strong communities. She praised the progress of work in the field of Housing and referred to the next possible steps of the Participatory Slum-Upgrading Programme.
III. Key messages and Opportunities

A UN-Habitat Executive Director’s bilateral meetings

1. A stronger focus is needed on the relationship between the SDGs/Agenda 2030 and other global Agendas, including the Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda.

2. Progress towards SDG 11 is mixed, with key challenges related to adequate, affordable and accessible housing; public spaces and city sprawl.

3. Reporting on SDG 11 is hampered by the new indicators requiring methodologies for data collection to be finalized and governments supported to collect reliable data and report on them.

4. The role of local governments and efforts to localize the SDGs need to be scaled up making it fully part of local/urban development plans.

5. The achievement of the SDGs and implementation of the NUA should be followed even in countries in crisis.

6. A more strategic focus is needed on urban as a cross-cutting issue in many SDGs.

7. Inadequate financing is hampering efforts to implement the 2030 agenda on a local and national scale.

8. A holistic approach to safety in cities is needed emphasising prevention, crime control, restorative justice and resocialization.

9. Housing is a vector for socio-economic development. Whenever it performs well, it becomes a development multiplier benefiting complementary industries, contributing to economic development, generation of employment and poverty reduction.

10. People and human rights need to be at the centre of housing policies.

B Opportunities

1. UN-Habitat needs to articulate how working towards sustainable urbanization can help to accelerate progress towards the SDGs and help to deliver on other global agendas and UN-Habitat’s role and added value in doing so.

2. More efforts are needed to integrate contributions from local and regional governments, Regional Economic Commissions, the UN system, and other stakeholders, including communities. in the reports coordinated by UN-Habitat.

3. There is scope to further scale the outreach/social media campaigns during these high level events (HLPF, WUF) to spread the key messages coming out of the reports.

4. Leveraging opportunities in upcoming major global events to meet up and follow up on the inter-agency coordination on public space.

5. Acceptance of CPI methodology as the key monitoring tool for SDG 11 will help to report on progress.