

Comments of the Government of Japan on the Policy Paper Frameworks

The Government of Japan congratulates all people involved that the preparation process for the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (HABITAT III) is progressing steadily. Please accept our sincere appreciation for the efforts made by experts of Policy Units, co-lead international organizations, the Secretariat of Habitat III and all relevant people and organizations in preparing Policy Paper Frameworks submitted by ten Policy Units, which will be great contribution to the New Urban Agenda, the outcome document of the HABITAT III.

We are concerned about the increasing serious living environment issues caused by rapid urbanization resulting in lack of social infrastructure, expansion of slums, deterioration of natural environment, increased vulnerability to natural hazards and others. The activities implemented by the UN-HABITAT contribute to solving these important challenges regarding human settlements. Accordingly, Japan, as the host country of the UN-HABITAT Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific located in Fukuoka Japan, will continue to actively support HABITAT activities through collaborative efforts with the Regional Office in Fukuoka.

We appreciate the Policy Paper Frameworks, which include various key policies and actions at urban, regional and national level for attaining sustainable urban development that contribute to improving living conditions.

Further to this paper, we would like to share with all stakeholders the following policies that will further contribute to the discussions leading up to the HABITAT III.

We hope that these policies are fully discussed in the course of preparation of the New Urban Agenda and will appropriately be reflected in the Policy Paper Frameworks as well as the New Urban Agenda.

1. Create territorial/regional spatial strategy to deal with rapid urbanization

(Mainly for Unit 3 and Unit6)

In many countries, recent economic disparity between cities and rural areas is one of the aspects that are prompting the influx of people from rural areas to cities and thus further promote rapid urbanization. Hence, the rapid urbanization needs to be understood as a problem nationwide as well as a problem to cities.

As indicated in the conclusion of Policy Unit 6, it needs to be responded by long-term, comprehensive territorial / regional spatial strategy for achieving balanced territorial development in addition to the efforts of improving city environment itself. National Urban Policy discussed in the Policy Unit 3 needs to cover not only improving the urban environment but preparing and implementing planning at national and regional level.

In order to support governments and sub-national governments to prepare and implement such strategies, creating a platform for collecting and exchanging knowledge and experiences of spatial strategies with disseminating the “International Guidelines for Urban and Territorial Planning” prepared by UN-HABITAT will be one of key actions.

2. Promoting quality infrastructure investment for making society inclusive, safe, resilient, sustainable and convenient

(For all relevant Policy Units, especially relating with the Unit 7 and 8)

Quality infrastructure investment is essential for sustainable urban development, furthermore positively related to the achievement of social, economic and political goals, and especially contributes to Goal 9 and Goal 11 of the “Sustainable Development Goals.” Given that most developing countries have the immense demand for infrastructure development and developed countries face a challenge for aging infrastructure, Japan has been promoting quality infrastructure investment which ensures the quality of infrastructure (economic efficiency, inclusiveness, safety, resilience, sustainability and convenience and amenity), and contributes to the local society and economy. Because of the importance of quality infrastructure investment for sustainable urban development, it is strongly recommended that quality infrastructure investment is included in the Urban Agenda for the Habitat III.

3. Promoting strategic infrastructure development based on spatial strategy

(Mainly for Policy Unit 3,6,and 7)

Territorial / regional spatial strategy also contribute to strategic development of infrastructure. While, territorial strategy need to be attained by appropriate infrastructure development to achieve its goal, large scale infrastructure development should be conducted strategically based on spatial strategy because of its broad impact on various fields. As these development require a long time to be accomplished, policies need to anticipate potential issues from long-term view.

As such, it is vital that infrastructure development is carried out strategically based on comprehensive, long-term territorial /regional spatial strategy. Action required for this purpose is establishing close coordination between spatial strategies and infrastructure development plans involving all relevant stakeholders.

4. Creating strategy for shrinking city

(Mainly for Policy Unit 3 and 6)

The New Urban Agenda is required to meet the needs of different circumstances around cities, namely developing cities, developed cities and shrinking cities. While many cities are growing rapidly in the world, more cities are anticipated to be shrinking. Strategy is also required for shrinking cities as well as growing cities.

In shrinking cities, one of the most significant challenges will be how to maintain urban functions needed for business activities as well as people's daily life. A concept of fundamental strategy for maintaining such functions is a "Compact and Networked approach" in which regions as well as cities are made compact and linked through networks to maintain accessibility. Japan, as a country facing rapid depopulation and aging, is ready to provide our knowledge and experiences on how to deal with shrinking cities.

5. Making cities more resilient

(Mainly for Policy Unit 8)

Many of the world's rapidly developing cities are becoming increasingly vulnerable to natural hazards, including those caused by climate change. In order to make regions and cities more resilient and sustainable, the 3rd United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held last March, presented the fundamental policies that the world needs to tackle over the next 15 years as the "Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030". These policies include the importance of investing in

disaster risk reduction aimed at sustainable development, contribution by a diverse range of stakeholders, and the notion of “Build Back Better.” In addition, on the basis of the designating November 5 as the “World Tsunami Awareness Day” at the United Nations General Assembly in last December, it is important to deepen understanding and raise awareness regarding the threat and importance of precautionary measures of natural hazards.

Having experienced a devastating earthquake in 2011, Government of Japan has formulated the Fundamental Plan for National Resilience in June 2014 to work systematically for establishing more resilient country, regions, and economic society.

These fundamental policies and recent actions regarding disaster risk reduction should be highlighted in the Policy Paper Frameworks and appropriately consolidated in the New Urban Agenda.