



# THE NEW URBAN AGENDA EXPLAINER

## **INTRODUCTION**

This century will see a substantial majority of the world's population living in urban centres. It is now estimated that 54.5% of people live in urban areas. The Habitat III conference was the first Habitat conference to take place at a point in history where majority of the world's population is urban. This made Habitat III even more pressing, from the scale of global governance to that of the individual.

The Habitat III Conference therefore had, as its mission, the adoption of a New Urban Agenda—an action-oriented document which will set global standards of achievement in sustainable urban development, rethinking the way we build, manage, and live in cities through drawing together cooperation with committed partners, relevant stakeholders, and urban actors at all levels of government as well as the private sector.

The New Urban Agenda was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, known as Habitat III, which will be held in Quito, Ecuador from 17-20 October 2016. The first Habitat conference was in Vancouver in 1976, and Habitat II followed 20 years later in 1996, in Istanbul. The bi-decennial format allows for the long-range implementation and impact of the conferences to unfold, and be assessed, in a realistic timeframe.

## **BREAKOUT OF SECTIONS**

### **Quito Declaration on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements for All**

The New Urban Agenda begins with the Quito Declaration on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements for All. 10 points outline the upcoming challenges and opportunities given that the world urban population is expected to nearly double by 2050. The increasing concentration of population in cities poses challenges to sustainable development, including inequalities, social and economic exclusion and environmental degradation. Yet urbanization also offers opportunities for economic growth, social and cultural development, and environmental protection. Both the challenges and opportunities can be addressed through planning, design, finance, development, governance and management, guided by the New Urban Agenda.





## **Shared Vision; Principles and Commitments**

Five points and numerous sub-points enumerate the shared vision and the principles and commitments of the New Urban Agenda. Cities and human settlements must be for everyone, ensuring cities for all, referred as the “right to the city” in some contexts. This entails equal rights, the right to adequate housing and fundamental freedoms, along with functional social and civic systems, with participatory access. Gender equality, accessible urban mobility for all, disaster management and resilience, and sustainable consumption are envisaged. Long-term, integrated urban planning and design, and sustainable financing frameworks and the cooperation of all levels of government, with the participation of civil society and stakeholders, are some of the components of the commitment to an urban paradigm shift.

### **Call for Action**

A 7-point call for action includes the affirmation and acknowledgement that the New Urban Agenda is universal in scope. The collective vision and political commitment to sustainable urban development takes into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development, and respects unique and emerging challenges specific to each context. Special attention is merited in many instances, including but not limited to: developing and least developed countries, slum and informal settlement dwellers, migrants and refugees. The New Urban Agenda is a historic opportunity to leverage the key role of cities and human settlements – and their inhabitants – as drivers of sustainable development in an increasingly urbanized world.

### **Quito Implementation Plan for the New Urban Agenda**

The United Nations resolves to implement the New Urban Agenda as a key instrument for national, sub-national and local governments and all relevant stakeholders to achieve sustainable urban development.

### **The Transformative Commitments for Sustainable Urban Development**

The transformative commitments for sustainable urban development are grounded in social, economic and environmental dimensions, which are seen as integrated and indivisible.

#### *a. Sustainable Urban Development for Social Inclusion and Ending Poverty*

Roughly 18 points outline the commitments made toward promoting social inclusion and contributing to end poverty.





Land tenure, the value of public space, and the sustainable leverage of natural and cultural heritage are among the issues that this section elaborates.

*b. Sustainable and Inclusive Urban Prosperity and Opportunities for All*

Roughly 20 points outline the commitments to sustainable and inclusive urban prosperity and opportunities for all. The profound impact of housing on economic transformation, access to knowledge, skills, and education, and the promotion of investments, innovations and entrepreneurship are part of the scope of concern.

*c. Environmentally Sustainable and Resilient Urban Development*

Roughly 18 points outline the commitments to environmentally sustainable and resilient urban development. Climate change, unsustainable consumption, slum upgrading, energy efficiency and the social and ecological function of land are some of the topics of concern.

## **Effective Implementation**

An enabling policy framework is required at the national, sub-national and local levels. Integrated and complimentary processes and actors, such as participatory planning, regional development banks, coordination of urban and rural development strategies, and international cooperation will assist the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, along with system-wide coordination of the UN.

*a. Building the Urban Governance Structure: Establishing a Supportive Framework*

Roughly 8 points outline the establishment of a supportive framework for good urban governance at all levels. Inclusive, implementable and participatory policies will ensure effective implementation of the New Urban Framework. Local and municipal governments are a particular focus, with support for capacity, reliable financing mechanisms and management structures. The cooperation of all levels of government will be fostered.

*b. Planning and Managing Urban Spatial Development*

Roughly 33 points outline planning and managing urban spatial development. Integrated planning will aim to balance short-term needs with long-term desired outcomes. Among the issues addressed are food security, the interrelationships of cities and territories, mixed social and economic uses, and quality public spaces. Road safety, affordable, accessible and sustainable urban mobility, water management and climate risk are also specific focus points. Culture will be included as a priority component of urban plans and strategies.

*c. Means of Implementation*

Roughly 35 points elaborate the means of implementation for the New Urban Agenda. The complexity of the agenda requires many actors and a variety of means, along with an enabling environment. Capacity development, cooperation, mobilization of financial resources, alongside political and legal frameworks, are all part of the core means. The New Urban Agenda advocates building on the legacy of Habitat III and the lessons learnt from its





preparatory process.

### **Follow-up and Review**

Roughly 15 points outline the necessary follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda and its implementation. This will be done to track progress, assess impact, ensure effective and timely implementation, accountability and transparency. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) is recognized as a focal point for sustainable urbanization. Quantitative and qualitative analysis, regular assessments, along with meetings and conferences, will support follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda. The New Urban Agenda's and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development's follow-up and review must have effective linkages to ensure coherence in their implementation.

## **EXAMPLE PRINCIPLES EXPLAINED**

### **Focus on Urban Design and Planning**

Principle 100: *“We will support the provision of well-designed networks of safe, inclusive for all inhabitants, accessible, green, and quality public spaces and streets, free from crime and violence, including sexual harassment and gender-based violence, considering the human-scale and measures that allow for the best possible commercial use of street-level floors, fostering local markets and commerce, both formal and informal, as well as not-for-profit community initiatives, bringing people into the public spaces, promoting walkability and cycling towards improving health and well-being.”*

Principle 100 is a clear statement of support for state-of-the-art thinking about public space and its importance in establishing sustainable urban development that results in good quality of life. The scope of this consideration goes beyond urban open spaces or parks, beyond the boundary of architecture to arrive at an idea of a continuous public urban surface. Health and safety, mobility and urban economy, are all part of the purview of principle 100's prioritization of public space as part of the New Urban Agenda.

### **Sub-National and Local Governments**

In the New Urban Agenda sub-national and local governments are acknowledged as key players in addition to national governments. By rooting sustainable urban development in local and regional contexts, and giving responsibility to all levels of government, sustainable urban development can be enabled – and enacted – robustly. Special attention is also given to the governance and urban planning of cross-border, territorial and polycentric modes of





urbanization, including urban corridors and mega-regions. Decentralization can help to address these rising trends in the spatial configurations of urbanization.

### **The Role of Participatory and “Bottom-Up” Practices**

Participation by the public in all matters related to urbanization has become an increasingly important issue. Special attention is required to encourage, sustain and manage participatory practices. This includes shared input by communities, and a comprehensive range of stakeholders. The realization of the New Urban Agenda will depend upon the participation of the usual players in urban development – but also on the inclusion of formerly-atypical agents, including community organizations, marginalized groups, and independent actors such as private sector companies and academics. The so-called “bottom-up” approaches, practices and projects of urban development are also rising in profile as legitimate alternatives or complimentary catalysts for positive change. The success of bottom up methods relies upon participatory and inclusive urban development.

### **Innovation, Data and Technology**

Habitat III is occurring in an era marked by innovation, wrought by technological change to rival industrial revolution through mechanization. Improvements to every facet of human existence are imaginable through new technologies. From the internet to proposed new modes of mobility and energy sources and distribution, sustainable urban development can be supported. Many of these opportunities are embodied in the so-called “smart city”. The decentralization of finance, the possibility of technology-enabled shared mobility, quantitative and qualitative data analytics and renewable energy, all promise to help in achieving the goals of the New Urban Agenda.

