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**ECOSOC – Promoting sustainable
urbanization**

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 EMUN 2018 | ECOSOC - Promoting sustainable urbanization |

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Introduction |

According to UNESCO's researches, cities are prominent of global socio-economic change. Urban areas are now occupied by more than one half of the world population, while the other half really depends upon cities for economic, social, cultural and political progress. Almost every country of the world is becoming increasingly urbanized. Globally, this phenomenon has different expressions across regions and development levels: countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, and the richer ones, by now have an abundant quantity of population living in urban areas, whereas countries of Asia and Africa are still mostly rural but will urbanize really fast over the coming decades. This tendency is changing landscapes and sceneries, interfering significantly with living conditions, the environment and development in different regions of the world.

Nowadays, urban regions are occupying the dominant stage in global development. They are no longer functioning as areas for settlement, production and services, instead, they now profoundly shape and influence social and political relations at every level; determining advances and setbacks in modes of production; and providing new content to norms and culture. Currently, cities are a major locus of power, influencing vision achievement and dictating policy outcomes. Moreover, they also are a considerable factor in environmental trends and sustainability processes. Urbanization is thus, providing the setting, base, and momentum for global change.

What is more, an increment in urbanization may also lead to health and environmental hazards, as there might be larger volumes of uncollected wastes and pollution. Besides, animal populations are inhibited by toxic substances, vehicles, and the loss of habitat and food sources.

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The ECOSOC will be focusing on how to promote sustainable urbanization, how to take advantage of the privileges it brings to countries and how to prevent or avoid the disadvantages it produces to a whole area/region. |



Definition of key-terms

Urbanization

The word “urbanization” refers both to a condition at a point in time and to a process occurring over time. The condition of urbanization, referred to as the level of urbanization, is indicated by the percentage of a population that is living in urban areas. The process of urbanization has been used in several ways. These include migration from rural areas to urban areas, absolute growth in the urban population (urban growth) and urban growth that is faster than rural growth. In this report, urbanization as a process refers to the last of these: an increase in the level of urbanization, that is, an increase in the percentage urban. The rate of urbanization, then, refers to the growth rate in the level of urbanization.

Rural areas

Rural areas are regions outside the limits of a city or town, or a designated commercial, industrial, or residential center. Rural areas are characterized by farms, vegetation, and open spaces

Urban areas

Urban areas are regions surrounding cities. Most inhabitants of urban areas have nonagricultural jobs. Urban areas are very developed, meaning there is a density of human structures such as houses, commercial buildings, roads, bridges, and railways.

Sustainable development

Maintaining a delicate balance between the human need to improve lifestyles and feeling of well-being on one hand, and preserving natural resources and ecosystems, on which we future generations depend.

Trend

A general tendency or course of events.

Shift

To (cause something or someone to) move or change from one position or direction to another, especially in small amounts.



General Overview

The world's population is projected to be 66 per cent urban by 2050, bringing big changes to the size and special distribution of the global population, which is predicted to grow by 2.5 billion urban inhabitants, with nearly 90 per cent of the increase concentrated in Asia and Africa.

These trends of living in urban areas are completely related to sustainable development, as with great governance and a good previous planning, the increasing accumulation of people in urban settlements can probably facilitate economic, social and personal development.

Future Development Goals should focus on creating inclusive cities with adequate infrastructure and services for all residents, said John Wilmoth, director of the UN's population division, "Managing urban areas has become one of the most important development challenges of the 21st century", he said.

The shift towards a dominantly urban world is not simply a demographic phenomenon mainly characterized by an anticipated population movement and change from one region and profile to another. In fact, it is a transformative process as well as an inspiring momentum permeating many aspects of global development. The inclusion of the urbanization factor in determining the next global development agenda is therefore fundamental if evolving positive processes and the powerful momentum prevailing at this advent of the new millennium are to be harnessed. In addressing the urbanization phenomenon, a post-2015 UN development agenda should address the main challenges and opportunities that are shaping twenty-first century cities and towns, including how these affect and help with sustainable development.

The UN strongly supports that an accelerated and unplanned urban growth, may threaten sustainable development. And that sometimes, required infrastructure is not developed and the environment is not protected as it should be.]



Major parties involved and their views

The World Bank

The World Bank consists of 189 member countries, staff from more than 170 countries, and offices in over 130 locations. It is a unique global partnership: five institutions working for sustainable solutions that reduce poverty and promote sustainable development.

The growth of cities and increment of urban regions are driven by the economic prosperity that they aid create. However, today cities are growing at really high and challenging speeds. The World Bank's Urbanization Reviews offer a framework for city leaders to make difficult decisions on development in their cities by providing diagnostic tools to identify policy distortions and analyze investment priorities.

UNESCO

UNESCO promotes "Education for Sustainable Urban Development" as one of their main themes in all sectors, aiming to make the urban environment more sustainable for everyone's future.

USAID

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), takes a systems-based, holistic approach to sustainable urban development that consists of education, food security, health, economic growth, climate change, and resilience programming in a context of urbanization.

USAID is trying to achieve this by:

- 1) Building partnerships that support locally-led development at the municipal and national government levels,
- 2) Encouraging and supporting legal, policy, and institutional reforms and stakeholder capacity building,
- 3) Reducing costs and improving efficiencies through partnerships and innovation,
- 4) Creating knowledge by going through scientific research and geospatial analysis to identify and disseminate emerging trends, evidence, and best practice,



- 5) Providing technical assistance to address complex challenges that threaten stability or security and pose barriers to equitable economic growth.

China

China is going through an intense urbanization challenge. Rapid economic growth and the inefficient use of natural resources are leading to excessive pollution and rapid depletion of China's natural resources. In addition, water scarcity, especially in the north-eastern part of the country, has already become a big problem.

The Chinese government has been formulating policies and legislation to protect the environment and to produce a more sustainable growth. However, implementation is lagging. What is more, rapid modernization of Chinese society also led to first experiments with the organization of public hearings on environmental issues, highlighting the potential environmental gains through public participation in sustainable urbanization strategy policy in China.

CPI

UN-Habitat's City Prosperity Initiative is both a metric and a policy dialogue, which offers cities from developed and developing countries a possibility to create indicators and baseline information. Besides, it was elaborated as an effective tool to monitor progress in achieving sustainable urban development. Added to that, it can also define targets and goals that can support the formulation of evidence-based policies, including the definition of city-visions and long-term plans that are both ambitious and measurable.

The City Prosperity Initiative not only provides indices and measurements relevant to cities, it also enables city authorities, as well as local and national stakeholders, to identify opportunities and potential areas of intervention for their cities to become more prosperous. We are all living in a world that needs choosing the best and most sustainable options. The CPI can play a vital role in the process of informed decision-making.

To conclude, the CPI supports the development and implementation of integrated national urban policies. There are decision makers provided with the sufficient knowledge to make opportune decisions about their cities small, medium or large – as part of a national system of cities. This contributes to amalgamate the dispersed energy and potential of urban centers, establishing a synergetic connection between urbanization and national development. This is an example of the case with Mexican, Colombian and Saudi Arabia program

Timeline of important events/Documents

YEAR	Global Urban Population (percentage)
1950	29,6
1960	33,7
1990	42,5%
2009	50%
2015	57,143%
2030	60% (its estimated)

- According to the United Nations, the year 2007 witnessed the turning point when more than 50% of the world population was living in urban areas, for the first time in human history.
- In 2012 the UN-Habitat began to issue volumes aiming to guide Urbanization processes.
- In October of 2016 the United Nations General Assembly brought together the United Nations Conferences on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development
- The 20th October of 2016 the NUA (New Urban Agenda), a document agreed upon at the Habitat III cities conference in Quito Ecuador was formulated. |



UN involvement

The United Nations is an international organization founded in 1945. Currently, it is made up of 193 Member States. From its beginning its aim was to “achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, culture, or humanitarian character and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion”. Improving people’s well-being continues to be one of the main focuses of the United Nations. The global understanding of development has changed over the years, and countries agreed that sustainable development (development encouraging prosperity and economic opportunities, a better social well-being, and environmental protection), offers the best path forward to improve everyone’s life.

The UN Habitat is really emphasizing in the urban agenda and cities. Members and governments across countries are working on policies for sustainable urban space.

Besides, the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations has issued since 1988, projections on the urban and rural populations of every country in the world.

Recognizing the new challenges facing urban regions and the need to reinvigorate the global commitment to sustainable urbanization, the UN General Assembly brought together the United Nations Conferences on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in Quito, Ecuador, on 17-20 October 2016. The assembly resulted in the adoption of the New Urban Agenda, a plan that provides a new global strategy for sustainable urban development and housing over the next two decades.

Joan Clos, Undersecretary- General and Executive Director of the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), declared that the New Urban Agenda was set of strategies that provide concrete actions to achieve sustainable urban development, setting out clear funding mechanisms and effective means of implementation and monitoring. To conclude he affirmed, “It is a concrete agenda that aims at paving the way towards making cities and human settlements more inclusive and ensuring that everyone can benefit from urbanization”.



Possible Solutions

In order to close the urbanization issue, whose rapid growth violates every single premise of sustainability that an urban region could be judged by including impacting on the environment as well as causing other negative social, cultural, political and economic consequences such as lessening of economies agglomeration or increasing spatial inequalities, it is essential to come up with concrete solutions that can reduce this issue and finally put an end to it, that's why we:

- 1) Encourage local authorities to keep on supporting small and medium enterprises, especially in developing countries,
- 2) Promote inclusive and equitable urban and rural development,
- 3) Provide health care in urban and rural areas,
- 4) Develop learning in all its diverse forms, in every possible region,
- 5) Create a quality learning and educational environment that promotes sustainability,
- 6) Teach tolerance and mutual understanding in urban societies,
- 7) Enable children and youth to learn to live and participate in urban life
- 8) Enhance learning to create inclusive societies in inclusive cities,
- 9) Take action to address climate change by reducing their greenhouse gas emissions
- 10) Promote safe, accessible and green public spaces
- 11) Create inclusive cities with adequate infrastructure and services for all residents
- 12) Ensure equitable social, economic and urban gains for all.
- 13) Strengthen the role of national statistical agencies and their ability to collect and use data, and issuing regular reports on sustainable development indicators at regional and international levels.

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