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**Special Conference on Cities and  
Sustainable Urban Development for  
Communities – Promoting the  
creation of more inclusive cities**

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**EMUN 2018** | Special Conference on Cities and Sustainable Urban Development for Communities - Promoting the creation of more inclusive cities |

**Forum:** | Special Conference on Cities and Sustainable Urban Development for Communities |

**Issue:** | Promoting the creation of more inclusive cities |

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## **Introduction**

We must face that much of the world is becoming a global city which in turn brings a rising number of problematics including poverty, lack of basic resources, overcrowding, deep eco-footprints, etc. As of 2016, 54% of the global population lives in urban areas. This percentage is expected to increase to 66% by 2050, which would account for almost double the number of people living in cities nowadays.

Urban growth is also coupled with the rapid development of mega-cities, almost tripling from only ten in 1990, to 28 in 2014. However, by only looking at the top five megacities in the world: Tokyo, Delhi, Shanghai, Mexico, and Mumbai, already three of these are in developing countries and suffer from a lack of infrastructure to maintain a standard quality of life for all its residents. Nonetheless, this trend is expected to continue with up to 90% of global urban growth coming from low- and middle-income countries, especially in Africa and Asia.

Small cities with fewer than 500,000 inhabitants are also an important contributor for urban growth with nearly half of the world living in them. They are also the most rapidly expanding cities and in need of not only dealing with current infrastructure problems but also in planning their development and urban sprawl.

This problem is further aggravated by the worldwide rural-urban exodus caused by the meccanization of jobs and lack of basic services in rural areas. The rural population, now at 3.4billion people, is expected to peak by 2020. While Asia and Africa have urbanized rapidly

they still hold 90% of the world rural populations meaning this situation has more repercussions in the countries of the Global South

This global and rising problematic has led to the need of creating inclusive and equitable cities. A successful urban agenda is one that takes into consideration cities of all sizes with their specific issues such as increased levels of migration, lack of access to drinkable water or rapid development of slums among others. ]

## Definition of key-terms

### Sustainable Development

Sustainable development was defined under the 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development as the “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. It is guided by three main pillars: economic development, social development and environmental protection.

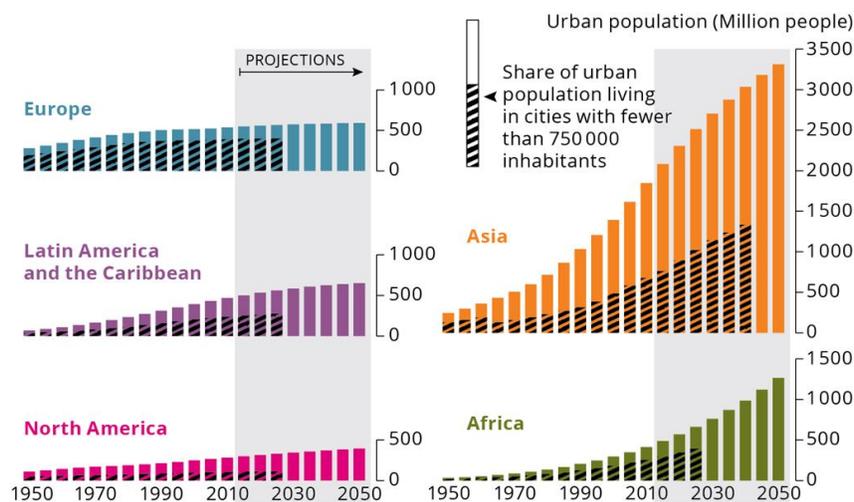
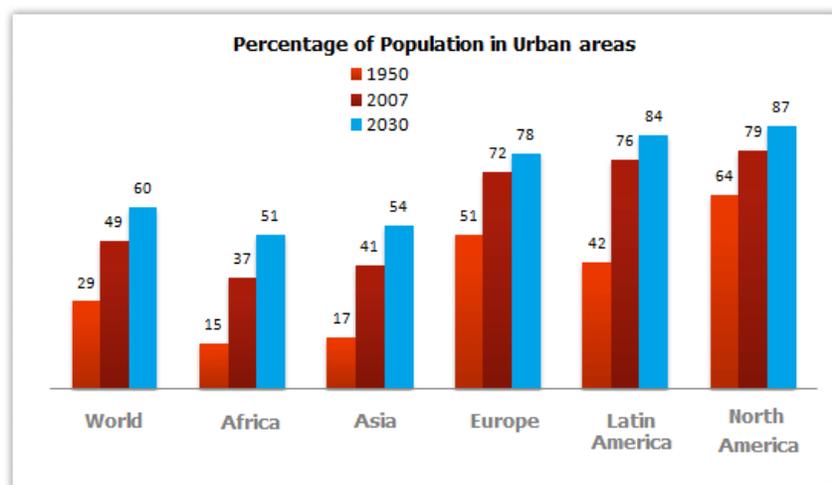
### Sustainable Development Goals:

The SDG's are a series of 17 goals set up to guide the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 170 countries and territories. They came into effect in January 2017 expanding on the Millennium Development Goals and have the objective to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that people enjoy prosperity. They are clearly very broad, however each of the goals have specific targets and indicators that allow for countries, with help of the UNDP, to integrate the SDG's into their national development plans and policies. To ensure that the targets set out by the goals are reached by 2030, a partnership of government, private sector and citizens are needed to strengthen global cooperation.



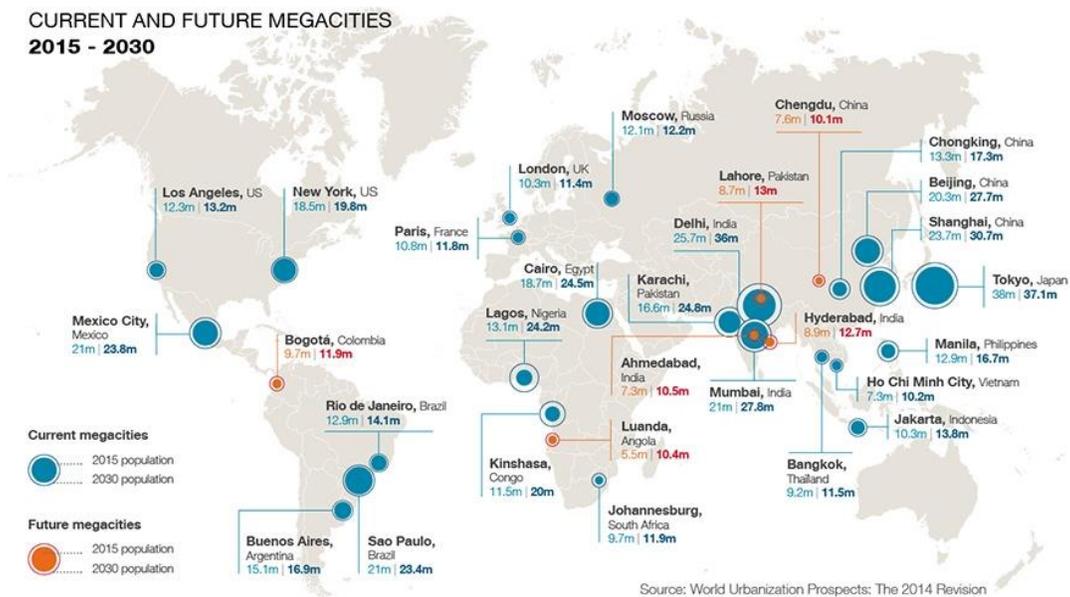
## Urbanization:

Urbanization refers to the increasing number of people that live in urban areas. Globally the share of people living in urban areas has increased from 30 percent in 1950 to 55 percent in 2015 and is projected to reach 60 percent (6 billion people) in 2030. Making cities inclusive and equitable is the core of the SDG 11, which recognizes both the benefits and hazards of urbanization. While on the one hand, cities increase economic growth (account for 80% of the world's GDP), offer more employment opportunities and better quality of life, they can also be hubs for informal housing and job growth, rising inequalities and environmental risks. The most urbanized regions nowadays are North America, Latin America and Europe. Africa and Asia remain relatively rural percentagewise; however, their urban population numbers are the highest worldwide, and their urban population growth rate is expected to increase.



## Megacities

A megacity is defined by the United Nations as a metropolitan area with a total population of more than 10 million people. They have nearly tripled to 28 today from 10 in 1990 and have 453 million inhabitants, accounting for 12 percent of the world's urban population. Tokyo is the world's largest megacity with 38million inhabitants, followed by Delhi with 25million and Shanghai with 23million. They are distributed across the globe but with an increased concentration in Asia.



## Inclusive Cities:

Although it may result unclear where the limit lies between when a city can be classified as inclusive for its citizens or not, an inclusive city is one where its development program includes and ample participation from its citizens and a variety of activities with no sort of marginalization. Its activities are planned with local communities in a transparent way and recognizes diversity while promoting equality. Urban factors such as affordable housing with access to necessary infrastructure and services are to be considered. They must also guarantee an equal participation of all its citizens, specially of marginalized urban groups in rapidly expanding slum areas. Overall economic growth should engulf all of these factors, attempting to provide employment opportunities and aiming to eradicate poverty.

## General Overview

### Urban and population growth

For the past two hundred years nations have gone through the “Demographic Transition” process as described by Warren Thompson. In premodern times both death rates and birth rates were high due to lack of knowledge on disease prevention and food shortages meaning overall population growth rates were below 0.05%. However, population started to boom by the 19<sup>th</sup> century in several regions due to the process of industrialization which led to lower death rates and then lower birth rates (but higher than global death rates). This process of population growth has become more of a growing concern in the last century. In 1960 the world population was at 3billion. Nowadays population has more than doubled to 7.5billion.

Overall, the demographic transition ties economic growth with demographic growth, however there are exceptions to this trend. The East Asian Miracle in five regions: Japan, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan, underwent a rapid industrialization process from the 1960’s onwards transitioning from middle to high income countries. However, such a drastic economic growth in a short period of time meant that cities were needed to adapt to the industrial processes developed in urban environments. In this case, the solution was the development of efficient infrastructures technologies, specially of high-speed communications and broadband technology.

Nonetheless, every nation has their specific circumstances that shape their economic and urban growth. What is undeniable though, is the presence of a global urbanization process that all nations are undertaking. In 2008, the global urban population was, for the first time, higher than the rural population. By 2050 it is expected that two-thirds of the global population will live in urban areas. However, Africa and Asia, which will account for 90% of the global urban growth, still hold a high number of their population in rural areas. Global south-south, south-north, and rural-urban migration, have caused for an increased mobility of residents into already populated urban areas. Worldwide, this has meant that urban areas account for nearly 70% of the global GDP. Given the importance of urban areas and their rapid projected development there is a growing concern on how cities can be developed on a sustainable, inclusive way.

## Consequences of rapid urban growth

The urbanization process poses many challenges including growing inequalities, absence of security, informal jobs and housing, lack of quality services and environmental risks. For example, in the last sixty years, Latin America has passed to have four fifths of its population in urban areas with two thirds of their GNP coming from cities. This has led to increase violence and inequality levels. About 100million people in Latin America live in shanty towns. Rio de Janeiro is an example of this urban inequality, where dwellings in favelas heavily contrast with developed residential districts. There has been an expansion of the informal economy, and increased levels of people living under the poverty line. Houses are built of precarious materials such as plywood, corrugated metal or cardboard resulting unprotected from extreme weather conditions. These homes are then generally exposed to increased violence rates as gangs and organized crime levels persist in the absence of state intervention. Urban areas also face the problem of urban sprawl as cities grow horizontally but not vertically. Consequently, surrounding environmental areas are urbanized leading to increased levels of agricultural land and biodiversity loss. Infrastructure in cities is not prepared to deal with such increased population levels, causing major public services such as transportation, health and sanitation, and education to collapse. Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, is expected to have a deficit of 4.3million health officers by 2035 because of rapid population growth with poor education levels. All this social and economic consequences have a further impact on marginalized groups such as women and ethnic minorities which worldwide tend to lack a guarantee of basic services.

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## Major parties involved and their views

### UNDP

The United Nations Development Programme was created in 1965 to achieve the eradication of poverty, inequalities, and social exclusion. Working with 170 countries the UNDP looks to foster international cooperation and increased information dissemination to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Therefore, the creation of more inclusive cities forms part of the UNDP mission, meaning it will work with developing nations and developed nations alike to achieve this target.

### UN-Habitat

The United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat) is the major UN party focused in dealing with human settlements and sustainable urban development. It was formed in 1974 and is dedicated in applying its technical expertise for all UN nations to achieve the new Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goal 11- to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

### Japan

Japans urban population has doubled since 1960 from 58,526 to 119,283 thousand people nowadays. This rapid urban development was tightly linked to Japans rapid process of industrialization in heavy manufacturing industries. This means Japan has become one of the worlds most dedicated countries towards urban development but also one of the countries to suffer most from the rapid urban development. However, policies they have implemented of transportation and technology communication have proved exemplary for creating inclusive cities.

### China

China's economic growth was accompanied with urban growth. In 1950 only 13% of people in China lived in urban areas, however it is projected that by 2030 this percentage will increase to 60%. This means Chinese cities are fighting for achieving sustainable economic growth. Traffic and air pollution, between other environmental and social hazards, have been recognized by the Chinese government as issues of major Chinese cities such as

Shanghai or Hong Kong. As a result, the government has established a new “Cities Sustainable Development Programme” to deal with the issue.

## India

Urban growth rates in India have started to increase reaching 33 percent of the population in 2016. However, it is important to note that of this population, the percentage of urban dwellers residing in slums has decreased from 55 percent in 1990 to 24 percent in 2014. India has some of the largest cities in the world, including Delhi with 19million dwellers. This has increased pressure over public services in India, especially those of health and sanitation. Consequently, India has launched its “Smart Cities Mission” to renew and develop 100 cities across the country to make them more citizen inclusive and sustainable.

## The United States of America

The US holds the world’s largest economy with world leading institutions. However, it is falling behind on a range of indicators relating to quality of life, economic opportunity, and environmental protection. This problem is more apparent in US cities, which hold 62 percent of the country’s population. The country has developed a U.S Cities SDG Index with the aim of presenting where the US lies with the SDG – specially with SDG looking for more inclusive cities- and consolidating a database of indicators to show progress towards completion of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. |

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## Timeline of important events/Documents

**September 2015-** A/RES/70/1, decides on New Global Sustainable Goals for the next 15 years.

**July 2015-** Resolution 69/313: Establishment of Addis Ababa Action Agenda for financing sustainable development.

**2012-** Rio+20 Conference held in Rio de Janeiro resulting in the nonbinding document “The Future We Want”.

**2008-** 50 percent of the world’s population now resides in urban areas.

**2002-** First “World Urban Forum” held to examine the most pressing issues at a global level regarding human settlements.

**2000-** The United Nations Millennium Declaration commits all 193 UN member states to achieve the Eight Millennium Development Goals in the next 15 years.

**1996-** Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements (Habitat II) to endorse the universal goals of ensuring adequate shelter for all is established.

**1992-** The “Agenda 21” results from the debates held at the Earth Summit.

**1978-** United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) is established as an outcome of the First UN Conference on Human Settlements and Sustainable Urban Development.

**1930-** New York becomes world’s first megacity.

## UN involvement

### United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals are the result of the “TRANSFORMING OUR WORLD: THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT” (A/RES/70/1) that took place in September 2015. There are 17 goals each with their specific targets and indicators to measure each countries progress towards the completion of the goals in the year 2030. Goal 11-Sustainable Cities and Communities- is the most relevant goal for this issue. It looks to provide safe and affordable housing and transport systems, access to green spaces and support to the development of cities in LEDC's between many targets.

### Addis Ababa Action Agenda

This agenda is linked to the sustainable development goals as it addresses how they should be funded in each nation. One of the challenges that the creation of inclusive cities pose is that developing nations lack necessary funding to shift their economies and societies into being more sustainable. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda is an attempt at a realistic framework so that all nations, not only developed nations, have a chance at meeting the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

### The New Urban Agenda

This is the outcome document of the Habitat III conference held in Ecuador in 2016. The document is focused on the sustainable development of urban areas and it will serve as a guideline for all nations of the UN in the development of their cities. The three main aspects dealt with in the New Urban Agenda are urban planning for a smart city approach, right of citizens to decide over this planning and financing from both private and public sector. The UN-Habitat oversees progress of the new Urban Agenda as well as linking it to the 11<sup>th</sup> Sustainable Development Goal in all UN member states. |

## Possible Solutions

A universal approach towards creating inclusive cities in all nations is impossible for their specific economic, social, and environmental factors such as differences in migrations or accessibility to natural resources. This means that all possible solutions proposed must also be addressed at a national scale. Specific organisms dealing with the development of smart and inclusive cities in each nation is a good solution to make resolution more approachable by each individual state.

Solutions must also take into consideration the development status of each nation. Often, the development of sustainable components in cities can have an initial economic cost over nations. Developing nations tend to lack the necessary funding for achieving this. Consequently, to achieve the 2030 agenda and have all nations develop more inclusive cities a global framework for cooperation and information dissemination between countries on how to better achieve this must be created.

Inclusive cities should include a dialogue platform for all its citizens. Solutions must then look to reduce inequalities with marginalized groups in many nations such as ethnic minorities or women. This means the creation of a dialogue platform that includes - for example - state representatives, university representatives, private business representatives with a fair representation of all social groups could result an effective way of increasing the chances of an undertaken programme being beneficial for all.

Nations should also project their urban development into the future, especially in a century as this one where percentage urban dwellers are expected to increase dramatically. An example of this is the necessity to stop unplanned urban sprawl into near city complex natural environments or necessary agricultural lands. A clear solution is state advocacy towards vertical building over horizontal building as long as population density levels are kept within safety norms.

The creation of more inclusive cities should not only address on how to achieve this but also why it is being done. Nations should consider their own situations. If, for example, the creation of inclusive cities is complicated by a massive rural-urban exodus, nations should evaluate the improvement of public services or job opportunities in rural areas with the development of new and more sustainable economic activities in rural areas to prevent overcrowding in urban centers. ]

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