

# International Governance screening of global urban policies and their impacts on sustainable land use

Discussion Paper prepared by GLOBALANDS Project



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## Introduction

### 1.1 Relevance of urbanization for sustainable land use

In 1950, 30% of the world's population was urban. In 2014, 54% of the global population now lives in urban areas with urbanization continuing as a megatrend. In 2050, it is anticipated that two-thirds of the world's population (by then approximately 9 billion people) will be urban, with 95% of that growth taking place in developing countries, particularly in Asia and Africa (UN DESA 2014).

For this paper, the starting question is: why are urban areas – which account for only 3% of the Earth's surface (UNEP 2012) – relevant for global sustainable land use as a whole?

The most direct reason for their relevance is that productive land and soil is lost to instead provide the physical foundation for buildings and infrastructure needed for urban expansion. UN HABITAT anticipates that while the population of the world's cities will nearly double in the next 35 years, the space they occupy will more than triple, which poses detrimental consequences for peri-urban and rural areas (UN HABITAT 2015d). However, simply considering the actual space occupied by urban areas (3% globally, UNEP 2012) is too shortsighted: cities also account for 50% of all waste, generate 60-80% of all greenhouse gas emissions and consume 75% of natural resources (UNEP 2012). Therefore, a significant share of negative land use impacts (through food and energy production, transport, etc.) are attributable to urban areas and should inform future policy making with regards to urban expansion and landscape management.

At the same time, the process of urbanization has historically been associated with economic and social development, including longer life expectancy and poverty reduction. This is because cities concentrate much of the national economic activity (UN DESA 2014). Urban living is also often associated with higher levels of literacy and education, better health, greater access to social services, and enhanced opportunities for cultural and political participation (ibid).

Moreover, cities can achieve higher resource-efficiency per capita. According to UNEP, water savings of 30% and energy savings of up to 50% can be achieved in cities with limited investment and by encouraging behavioral change. With the density of people living in urban areas and housing, transport and IT infrastructures in place, urban areas can function as "innovation laboratories" to experiment and test innovative solutions to cope with the challenges of "the great transformation" (WBGU 2011) ahead.

In light of these opportunities, cities can therefore also be catalysts of sustainable global land use.

However, despite the comparative advantage of cities, urban areas today are still more unequal than rural areas. Hundreds of millions of the world's urban poor live under sub-standard conditions whilst other urban residents enjoy severely contrasting amounts of wealth and living standards. In some cities, unplanned or inadequately managed urban expansion leads to rapid sprawl, pollution, and environmental degradation, which combined with unsustainable production and consumption patterns (UN DESA 2014), leaves sustainable urbanization as one of the key challenges of the 21st Century. As the 2012 Manifesto for Cities has phrased it and as it was reiterated in the 2013 document "The city we need" agreed by the World Urban Campaign Partners: "The battle for a more sustainable future will be won or lost in cities."

## **1.2 Challenges of an integrated rural-urban governance: from local to global level**

In addition to the fact that a clear separation of urban and rural territories is not possible due to urban sprawl, informal slums, and new urban configurations such as urban corridors, there are also strong linkages between predominantly rural and urban areas through flows of people, money, services and (natural) resources. This indicates that a separation of urban and rural areas<sup>1</sup> is rather artificial.

However, the differentiation between urban and rural it is still predominant within policy making, leading to sub-optimal policies and investments (Berdegue et al 2014). Nonetheless, it must be noted that integrated urban-rural governance is particularly difficult to achieve. This is because a) rural and urban development policies and agencies need to be coordinated; b) coordination is challenged by the fact that large territories with numerous and diverse localities, often cutting across administrative boundaries, would be included; and c) sectoral (e.g., infrastructure, labor, SMEs, agriculture) policies and agencies often do not follow a coherent approach (OECD 2013).

Moreover, there is also a need for a coherent approach between different levels of policy making. While the majority of challenges to steer urbanization and integrated urban-rural development in a sustainable direction will be faced and solved at city level, cities can only act within the framework provided at national and even international level. In this sense, it is relevant to consider what is already being done and what can/should be done at the global level – which is the focus of this discussion paper - to provide a supportive framework for further integration of urban-rural governance, e.g., through the creation of partnerships, capacity building, etc.

## **1.3 Objectives and scope of this paper**

This discussion paper aims to explore the opportunities that can be seized through global urban policies to improve sustainable land use. It will provide both an overview of the most important policies that explicitly aim to address urban development at UN level and discuss how priorities and paradigms have changed over time. The analysis will show, in particular, how far these policies tackle the urban-rural linkage and to what extent they aim to improve sustainable land use beyond the formal boundaries of urban settlements.

This discussion paper of the GLOBALANDS project is also a follow up and complementary output of the “Governance screening of global land use” (Wunder et al. 2013) that was conducted in an earlier phase of the GLOBALANDS project<sup>2</sup>. The 2013 governance screening analyzed more than

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<sup>1</sup> For a closer analysis of “Urban-Rural Linkages affecting Global Land Use”, see separate GLOBALANDS discussion paper produced by Eppler, Laaks and Fritsche (2015).

<sup>2</sup> The aim of the “Global Land Use and Sustainability” ( GLOBALANDS) project is to identify promising existing land use policies and to develop possible governance models towards a more resource-efficient and sustainable global land use. The project is funded by the Federal Environment Agency (UBA) and the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU). It runs from November 2011 until April 2015.

120 international policies with potentially high sustainability impacts on global land use. The scope of the screening went beyond the main land-use sectors, such as agriculture, forestry, and built-up land/settlements, and included policies from diverse sectors and subjects (trade, investment, energy, climate, food waste, etc.) that have an important impact on large areas of land, even if the impacts are indirect and not intended by the specific policies. Urban policies were partly included but were not the focus of the 2013 governance screening.

Given the increased policy dynamics on both the international level (including the likelihood of a stand-alone urban SDG and the HABITAT III conference in 2016) as well as the national level (the German 2015 Science Year is focused on the City of the Future and Germany prepares for its role within HABITAT III), this discussion paper aims to deepen and update the governance screening with regard to global urban policies and their impacts on sustainable land use.

### **1.3.1 Caveats**

This governance screening particularly focuses on policies at UN level given the overall (international) focus of the GLOBALANDS project. However, there are some caveats regarding the scope of this governance screening.

First, the potential impact of international policies depends on their local implementation in urban areas. Second, there are many more multilateral (e.g., EU), regional, national and local policies that have an impact on sustainable land use in and outside urban areas which are not covered in this analysis.

Third, policies with an indirect impact on global urban policies (e.g., development policies) are not covered by this paper, but to a large extent they were the subject of the above mentioned extensive governance screening undertaken earlier within this project (Wunder et al. 2013).

The same applies to the manifold global initiatives that are organized by cities, local governments, civil society research, etc., such as UCLG (The Global Network of Cities, Local and Regional Governments), ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability), Cities Alliance, Communitas Coalition for Sustainable Cities and Regions, NRG4SD (Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development), C40 (network of the world's megacities taking action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions). These groups, coalitions and initiatives are of the highest relevance both in shaping global policies as well as implementing sustainable urbanization on the ground, but they are not the focus of this screening.

## **1.4 Acknowledgements**

As part of the research for this discussion paper, a number of interviews were conducted<sup>3</sup>. The authors would like to express their sincere thanks to the valuable insights provided by Rafael Tuts (UN Habitat), Prof. Kristine Kern (Universität Potsdam und Leibniz Institut für Regionalentwicklung und Strukturplanung (IRS)), Prof. Clemens Deilmann and Dr. Georg Schiller (Leibniz Institut für

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<sup>3</sup> All interviews were conducted by Stephanie Wunder, Ecologic Institute, between March and April 2015.

ökologische Raumentwicklung (IÖR)), Dr. Benjamin Stephan (WBGU), Alexandra Linden (GIZ/Sector Programme Sustainable Development of Metropolitan Regions) and Kaj Fischer (adelphi).

## **2 Relevant global urban policies for sustainable land use**

### **2.1 ECOSOC: A call for sustainable urbanization**

The UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), established in 1946, is one of the main committees of the United Nations. It is the principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on economic, social and environmental issues, as well as for implementation of the internationally agreed development goals. It serves as a central platform for reflection and debate on sustainable development.

In 2012, ECOSOC invited governments to further promote sustainable cities and the role of local authorities in their national development policies and programs. Furthermore, it called for consideration of the environmentally sustainable, socially inclusive and economically productive roles of cities in the post-2015 United Nations development agenda (Resolution 2012/27), also acknowledging and further encouraging UN-Habitat's work.

This recent call has been preceded by a host of international policy-making which we will now present, starting with the Rio Conference 1992.

### **2.2 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio/Agenda 21**

One of the defining milestones for sustainable development was the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) that was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992. In Rio, world leaders adopted a number of international instruments that continue to provide the framework for sustainable development. This included Agenda 21, which offered a practical approach and plan of action to applying sustainable development policies at the local (including city) level and national level. It was the first UN document to identify roles and responsibilities for different stakeholder groups, including local authorities, NGOs, indigenous people, science, business, etc.

**Local Agenda 21** has been one of the most extensive follow-up programs to the UNCED and is widely cited as a success in linking global goals to local action (UNDESA and Stakeholder Forum for the Future 2012). In 2002, over 6,000 local authorities around the world were found to have adopted some kind of policy or undertaken activities for sustainable development (ibid). No extensive survey has been conducted since then (ibid), but even given that level of uptake, Agenda 21 can be seen as an early success in illustrating how an agreement at UN level can provide a successful framework for action towards sustainability on the local level.

### **2.3 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)**

After the 1992 Earth Summit and the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) in Rio de Janeiro – also known as Rio+20 – was the third international conference on sustainable development.

It was intended to be a high-level conference, including heads of state and government, aimed at creating a focused political document to shape global environmental policy whilst simultaneously reconciling the economic and environmental goals of the global community. According to Eduardo Lopez Moreno, UN-Habitat's research director and lead urban policy analyst, Rio+20 and the adopted final document "**The future we want**" gave a "big boost to urbanization and cities", acknowledging that urbanization, development and sustainability are connected and that "cities are the place where the fight for sustainable development will take place" (Moreno, 2014).

Most significantly, the output document highlights the potential (rather than the negative impacts<sup>4</sup>) of cities: "We recognize that, if well planned and developed, including through integrated planning and management approaches, cities could promote economically, socially and environmentally sustainable societies."

More specifically, Chapter V ("Framework for action and follow-up") contains four exclusive paragraphs (paras 134-137) on "Sustainable cities and human settlements". The paragraphs underline the need for holistic urban planning. World leaders acknowledge that different issues such as enhanced participation of urban residents, promotion of a safe and healthy living environment, sustainable transport, and the protection and restoration of safe and green urban spaces need to be integrated in order to shape sustainable urban development. Paragraph 136 explicitly recognizes "the efforts of cities to balance development with rural regions". The text also stresses "the need to strengthen existing cooperation mechanisms or platforms, partnership arrangements and other implementation tools to advance the coordinated implementation of the UN Habitat Agenda". Paragraph 110 specifies the strengthening of urban-rural linkages as "key areas for investment and support".

## 2.4 SDGs and Sustainable Urbanization

The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set in 2000 have been a milestone in global and national development efforts. As the MDGs expire in 2015, the outcome of the Rio+20 Conference initiated an inclusive intergovernmental process to prepare a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs) which are intended to serve as the global development agenda for the post-2015 period with sustainable development at the center.

In July 2014, the UN General Assembly's Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG 2014) forwarded a proposal for the SDGs to the Assembly. The proposal contained **17 goals with 169 targets** covering a broad range of sustainable development issues.

The General Assembly has adopted the report of the Open Working Group as the main basis for intergovernmental negotiations. The proposed SDGs are still under negotiation, but the proposed package is likely to remain as most Member States do not want to reopen the negotiated package of goals and targets.

With **Goal 11 "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable"**, the OWG recommended that sustainable cities and human settlements be addressed as a **standalone**

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<sup>4</sup> See paradigm shift of cities potential impact within this reports chapter "The Habitat conferences".

**goal. Goal 11 is complemented with 10 targets** (see Box 4 below) covering issues related to housing and basic services, sustainable transport, urban planning, cultural heritage, disaster resilience, environmental impact, safe public spaces, urban-rural linkages, climate change policies, and building finance (with targets 11.3, 11.7 and 11.a of particular importance for sustainable land use).

**Box 4: Goal 11 and targets: Cities and Human Settlements in the OWG SDG proposal**

11.1 By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums

11.2 By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons

11.3 By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, **integrated and sustainable human settlement planning** and management in all countries

11.4 Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage

11.5 By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and decrease by [x] per cent the economic losses relative to gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations

11.6 By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management

11.7 By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, **green and public spaces**, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

11.a Support positive economic, social and environmental **links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas** by strengthening national and regional development **planning**

11.b By 2020, increase by [x] per cent the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, develop and implement, in line with the forthcoming Hyogo Framework, holistic disaster risk management at all levels

11.c Support least developed countries, including through financial and technical assistance, in building sustainable and resilient buildings utilizing local materials

While the impacts of the SDGs remain unclear at this stage, a **standalone goal for sustainable cities might serve as a call for action, research and funding** and may **underline the significance of the SDGs and SDG implementation for city authorities**<sup>5</sup>.

With regard to sustainable urbanization, the proposed SDGs also go beyond the MDGs that had a more limited focus on slums and water sanitation for urban areas.

There are also other targets that are linked to urbanization and sustainable land use, particularly:

- Goal 1 on poverty eradication addresses land tenure security and resilience in targets 11.4 and 11.5
- Goal 2 on food security, nutrition and agriculture also partially addresses land tenure security and rural-urban linkages in targets 2.3 and 2.a
- Goal 13 on climate change addresses resilience and adaptive capacity in 13.1

As for the other SDGs as well, it remains crucial whether the proposed SDGs are renegotiated, but also what **indicators** will be chosen in order to monitor the improvements towards the goals and targets.

According to Stefan Schweinfest, Director at the UN Statistical Commission (UNSC), the likely output emerging from the process of identifying indicators will be a set of global core indicators (100+) and a catalog of many more indicators to be chosen by the Member States or others to monitor according to their respective interests (Birch 2015).

Currently, the UNSD is assessing the feasibility, suitability, and relevance of a broad set of indicators. In its session from 23-27 March 2015 in New York, John Pullinger, UNSC Chair, presented a UNSC report on the preparation of the indicators framework for the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda. The report was circulated to UN Member States on 18 March 2015 and includes a list of provisional indicators and initial ratings by national statistical offices (NSOs). Pullinger said the indicators and ratings do not prejudice the work of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG), which will hold its first meeting in May 2015.

In parallel, several institutions have worked on proposals for indicators on sustainable urbanization, for example, as reflected in the Bangalore Outcome Document (IIHS 2015)<sup>6</sup>. The UNSC has agreed on endorsing the **indicator framework** at UNSC 47 in **March 2016** (IISD 2015).

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<sup>5</sup> There are already processes underway to localize the post-2015 Agenda, e.g. the High-Level Global Dialogue on Localizing the Post-2015 Development Agenda, hosted in Turin on the 14th and 15th October 2014. The event was co-organized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat), on behalf of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), and the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments. In its Communiqué on Localizing the Post 2015 Agenda, it reaffirmed that “any new development agenda will only have an impact on people’s lives if it is successfully implemented at the local level” (The World We Want 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Examples of proposed indicators for sustainable land use include: Ratio of land consumption rate to population growth rate at comparable scale (indicator for target 11.3) and Area of public space as a proportion of total city space (indicator for target 11.4) (IIHD 2015)

## **2.5 UN Habitat**

UN Habitat is a relatively small multilateral organization, but it plays a unique role in that it is the only multilateral organization with a focus on human settlements. It is therefore important to understand the objectives, work and role of UN Habitat, as it is the main program to deal with sustainable urbanization and policies regarding the rural-urban linkage at UN level.

### **2.5.1 History, mandate and role in the UN system**

In 1975, at a time when two-thirds of the world's population was still rural and urbanization was less prominent on the UN agenda, the UN General Assembly established the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation (UNHHSF), the first official UN body dedicated to urbanization, to address urban growth. Then under the umbrella of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), its task was to assist national programs related to human settlements through the provision of capital and technical assistance, particularly in developing countries.

The first international UN conference to fully recognize the challenge of urbanization – Habitat I – was held in 1976 in Vancouver, Canada (see separate chapter on the role and focus of the Habitat conferences). This conference resulted in the creation of the precursors to the UN-Habitat programme: the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements – an intergovernmental body – and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (commonly referred to as “Habitat”), which served as the executive secretariat of the Commission.

However, from 1978 to 1996, due to low financial and political support, Habitat struggled to provide meaningful contributions addressing the negative impacts of massive urban growth, particularly in developing countries (UN Habitat 2015a).

In 1996, the United Nations held a second conference on cities – Habitat II – in Istanbul, Turkey, to set fresh goals for the new millennium. Adopted by 171 countries, the political document – called the “Habitat Agenda” – that came out of this “city summit” contained over 100 commitments and 600 recommendations.

From 1997 to 2002, Habitat – guided by the Habitat Agenda and later the United Nations Millennium Declaration from 2000 – underwent a major revitalization. In 2002, through a Resolution by the UN General Assembly, Habitat's status was elevated to a fully-fledged programme in the UN system, giving birth to UN-Habitat, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme. It also strengthened and clarified the mandate of UN-Habitat to become the focal point for all urbanization and human settlement matters within the UN system and to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities.

Since the appointment of Executive Director Dr. Joan Clos in October 2010, UN-Habitat also deals with a range of structural organizational and strategic reforms.

The perception of the impact and influence of UN-Habitat has improved over the years. However, while UN-Habitat is perceived to provide valuable contributions to policy and norms development around urban issues, practical support to local governments and to be able to build strong partnerships, it is also perceived to play only a niche role at both the global and national level (see e.g., the UK and Australian assessments of UN Habitat: DFID (2011) and Australian Government (2012)). Its niche role is primarily due to the fact that it is a relatively small multilateral

organization with comparatively little financial and personal resources, has a narrow mandate and overlaps with the work of many other multilateral organizations (ibid).

### 2.5.2 Objectives and general activities

UN-Habitat is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to raise awareness on the state of the world's cities and to coordinate activities in the field of human settlements development. It is committed to contribute to the achievement of the goals set in the 1996 Habitat II conference's Habitat Agenda and the 2001 UN General Assembly's Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium<sup>7</sup>.

UN-Habitat describes itself as a "knowledgeable institution on urban development processes, that is in the best position to **provide answers and achievable solutions** to the current challenges faced by cities", hence "assuming a natural leadership and **catalytic role in urban matters**". It aims to "work with partners in order to formulate the urban vision of tomorrow" and to "change mindsets, policies, and approaches towards urbanization in order for the growth of cities and urban areas to be turned into opportunities that will leave nobody behind" (UN Habitat 2015b).

UN-Habitat maintains a normative function consisting of research and advocacy and plays an important role in working with policy makers to better **inform local and national urban planning**. As part of this work, UN-Habitat contributes to the **monitoring** of the Habitat Agenda through the GIS-based **Global Urban Observatory** (GUO) and produces three flagship publications: The State of the World's Cities Reports, the Global Report on Human Settlements and "Urban World" (see box below).

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<sup>7</sup> Five years after Habitat II, the UN General Assembly held a special session for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. This event in 2001 brought together all the States Members of the United Nations and culminated in the United Nations Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium, which reaffirms the will and commitment to implement fully the Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements, in the spirit of the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

### Box 1: Flagship publications of UN-Habitat

**The State of the World's Cities** is published every two years and provides statistics of urban trends and conditions around the world based on a wide range of indicators. It is complemented by **Regional State of the Cities reports**. In the 2012/2013 "State of the World's Cities" edition (UN Habitat 2012a), it introduced a new tool – the **City Prosperity Index** – together with a conceptual matrix that suggests areas for policy intervention called the Wheel of Prosperity. Both elements are meant to measure present and future progress of cities towards the prosperity path and to assist decision makers in designing policy interventions<sup>8</sup>.

The "**Global Report on Human Settlements**" publications are also prepared biannually and provide up-to-date assessments of conditions and trends in the world's cities and other human settlements. Written in non-technical language, they aim to raise awareness on human settlements issues. Past reports centered on issues such as "Planning and Design for Sustainable Urban Mobility" (2013), "Cities and Climate Change" (2011) and "Planning Sustainable Cities" (2009).

UN-Habitat also publishes a quarterly magazine called "**Urban World**" on current urban issues. It covers a wide range of topics, including equality, air pollution, climate change and land rights<sup>9</sup>.

UN-Habitat has also become effective at drawing on **partnerships** – with partners across the UN system, community-based and non-government organisations, and at all levels of government – to leverage influence and resources to achieve its goals. One of its major (partnership-based) advocacy campaigns is the **World Urban Campaign** (see Box 2).

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<sup>8</sup> The authors consider the City Prosperity Index (CPI) as a "tool in the necessary redefinition of the urban policy agenda at local, national and regional levels" and want to see the report as a bridge between research and policy. The CPI includes the five dimensions of urban prosperity: Productivity, Quality of life, Infrastructure development, Environmental sustainability and Equity and social inclusion. Each dimension is further disaggregated in various variables and sub-indices. References to land use are rather indirect in this measurement. However, "Quality of life" includes "public space", while "Environmental sustainability" uses air quality, CO2 emissions and indoor pollution as sub-indices.

<sup>9</sup> "Cities and Land Rights" (volume 3, issue 1, 2011)

## Box 2: World Urban Campaign

The **World Urban Campaign (WUC)** is a global partnership platform to **raise awareness**, promote **dialogue**, and to mutually **learn** about how to improve urban development. The WUC is driven by partners such as the private sector, NGOs, international organizations, governments, research and educational institutions, and civil society groups and is coordinated by UN-Habitat.

The Campaign works to promote the urban agenda within development policies. It also helps partners to **share best practices** and innovative ideas amongst themselves, working together towards a better urban future. To join the World Urban Campaign at the city level, cities can become City Partners by organizing local **'I'm a City Changer' campaigns**. These in turn should help to engage citizens, municipal officials, service providers, and the political leadership of a city.

The campaign is also the partners' platform to **prepare for the Habitat III conference**, facilitate cooperation and build consensus on key issues. This includes the consensus document "The City We Need", agreed in 2013 by the WUC partners as their contribution to the Habitat III conference and containing their common vision of the city for the 21st Century. **"The City We Need" sets principles** and proposes paths for building a New Urban Agenda towards the Habitat III conference.

UN-Habitat convenes **The World Urban Forum (WUF)**, a non-legislative technical forum and the World's Premier Conference on Cities hosted in a different city every two years, to examine the most pressing human settlements issues. The WUF promotes the strong participation of Habitat Agenda partners and relevant international programs, funds and agencies in order to ensure their inclusion in the identification of new issues, the sharing of lessons learned and the exchange of best practices and good policies.

UN-Habitat also aims to ensure that sustainable urbanization is adequately reflected in the **post-2015 development agenda**, including the Sustainable Development Goals. This has primarily involved participating in the United Nations System Task Team on the post-2015 United Nations development agenda and the technical support team to the Open Working Group. Beyond the United Nations system, UN-Habitat has also supported academia-led and civil society-led efforts to strengthen the suggested SDG 11. This includes the Urban SDG campaign, the Communitas Coalition for Sustainable Cities and Regions, the World Urban Campaign, and the Global Task Force. In its 25th governing Council meeting in April 2015, "The role of UN-Habitat in the post-2015 development agenda" will be one of two sub-themes.

Last but not least, UN-Habitat has a key role to play within the **Habitat conferences** that take place every 20 years. While these conferences are decided by the UN General Assembly and part of the UN system at large, the Executive Director of UN-Habitat also serves as focal point on behalf of the United Nations system and as Secretary-General of the conference (see separate chapter in this report about the role of the HABITAT conferences).

### 2.5.3 Organization and funding

UN-Habitat is structured into three main bodies:

1. The **Governing Council (GC)** is responsible for setting the major strategic and policy directions for UN-Habitat and to approve its programs and budget. It is composed of 58 member states that are elected by the UN General Assembly's Economic and Social Council

(ECOSOC). The Governing Council meets every two years. Members are elected for four-year terms (Germany is a current member of the Governing Council, with its term ending 31 December 2015), taking into account the principle of equitable regional representation.<sup>10</sup>

2. The **UN-Habitat Secretariat**, whose task is to ensure the execution of the Governing Council's decisions and to translate these into specific strategies, programs and initiatives. The Secretariat is the executive body of the organization.
3. The **Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR)** is composed of ambassadors or foreign envoys of member states accredited to UN-Habitat. It has a supervising role, ensuring that the Governing Council's decisions are enacted by the Secretariat. It also represents the Governing Council at the Secretariat to address issues arising between the biennial Governing Council meetings.

The UN-Habitat Secretariat is headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya. There are also four regional **offices** for Africa, Asia & the Pacific, Arab States and Latin America & the Caribbean.

UN-Habitat draws its **budget** from three main sources (UN-Habitat 2015j):

- a) regular budget allocations from the UN main budget (approx. 7%, i.e. USD 10.7 million in 2012),
- b) general purpose contributions from governments (7% of UN-Habitat's total budget) and
- c) special purpose contributions ("earmarked contributions") from donors. Within this third category, UN-Habitat received USD 36.2 million (23% of UN-Habitat's total budget) for UN-Habitat Foundation activities and USD 128.5 million (63% of UN-Habitat's total budget) for technical cooperation at country level.

These numbers show that UN-Habitat depends largely on (special purpose) donor contributions and that the majority of resources are spent at country level. The limited resource allocations from the United Nations Regular Budget and the fact that donors are hesitant with provision of non-earmarked funding limits UN-Habitat's ability to prioritize its global agenda at the headquarters level (UN-Habitat 2012b).

#### **2.5.4 Role of land issues in UN-Habitat's work**

UN-Habitat works to achieve sustainable urbanization, which they define as well-planned, well-governed, and efficient cities and other human settlements with adequate housing, infrastructure, and universal access to employment and basic services, such as water, energy, and sanitation. These goals are derived from the Habitat Agenda (UN Habitat 2015e).

Within that wide range of relevant issues, UN-Habitat (2015d) also acknowledges land as a major issue in the urbanization process in both developed and developing countries and that addressing land issues is a prerequisite to sound urban development.

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<sup>10</sup> With a four-year term, this means that Governing Council members attend only two meetings before their tenure expires, which some states consider as a disadvantage, leading to a low impact of the GC (see Australian Government 2012).

### ***UN Habitat's perception of the problem and its drivers***

UN Habitat as relevant UN agency perceives the **lack of (clear) land policies** as problematic, as it leads to uncoordinated city growth, sprawl and crowded slum. However, it also identifies **excessive regulations** such as **strict zoning** as drivers of urban sprawl and horizontal, low density expansion of urban spaces (UN Habitat 2015d).

In some regions, urban land has grown much faster than the urban population, resulting in less dense and, in general, more inefficient land use patterns. **Low density** also makes it costly and inefficient to provide services and infrastructure and is regarded by UN-Habitat to hinder city development (UN Habitat 2015f). In contrast, urban density brings economic advantages to a region, as urban infrastructures will reach more recipients, resulting in lower emissions, consumption of less energy per capita and the opportunity for inclusive governance (UN-Habitat 2015g).

UN-Habitat frequently emphasizes the importance of **clarified land ownership** and property issues for neighborhood redevelopment and slum upgrading programs. Unfortunately, standard land tools and regulations often remain inadequate in meeting the land needs of slums, where exact land parcels are difficult to identify and land and property units often display overlapping and sometimes conflicting interests. In many developing countries, urban land management is also characterized by fragmented services and institutions, **corruption**, and lengthy and costly procedures. In addition, both developed and developing countries often still address urban and rural land management through **separate jurisdictions**, which leads to uncoordinated land management (UN-Habitat 2015d).

### ***Responses recommended by UN-Habitat***

In order to overcome these problems, UN-Habitat (2015d and 2015f) highlights the importance of **efficient urban land use planning**. Both **expansions and densification plans** are needed to enable cities to accommodate the expected growth in a sustainable way, provide for a rational urban structure to minimize transport and service delivery costs, optimize the use of land, and support the protection and organization of urban open spaces. Densification initiatives include suburban densification, area redevelopment, layout of new areas with higher densities, brownfield development, building conversions and transit-oriented developments (UN-Habitat 2015f).

According to UN-Habitat, cities and national governments must address land issues through land policies and efficient enforcement and management structures. National and local governments should work on harmonized policy frameworks for land management. Overarching policy frameworks should be set up in order for national and local governments to harmonize land management. Moreover, authorities dealing with land should be strengthened and empowered to create, implement and monitor laws and regulation, including land titles/land records. Cities should also establish knowledge networks which, amongst other things, document good practices.

### ***UN-Habitat's own activities***

UN-Habitat's work covers a range of land issues, such as land tenure, provision of and access to public spaces, management, remedial and preventive policy responses to slums and urban sprawl,

etc. Land is also a distinct category in the 16 “**urban themes**” that UN-Habitat works on and a cross-cutting issue within other “urban themes”, such as planning and design, mobility, resilience, legislation, climate change and governance<sup>11</sup>.

In its work, UN-Habitat provides **technical support** on land policy. National and city governments can use UN-Habitat’s **expertise and regional policy frameworks** in order to improve their land policies to ultimately reform their land systems. It also provides **analysis** and technical support on baseline **surveys** and benchmarking, **project planning and implementation**, and also helps to document and **disseminate good practices**. UN-Habitat also facilitates the **Global Land Tool Network (GLTN)**, an alliance of global, regional, and national partners. Founded in 2006, the network aims at contributing to poverty alleviation through land reform, improved land management, and security of tenure, particularly through the development and dissemination of “land tools”<sup>12</sup>. The GLTN’s main objective is to contribute to poverty alleviation through land reform, improved land management and security of tenure.

At the level of UN regions, UN-Habitat has, through the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN), steered the African Land Policy Framework from its conception to its approval by African heads of state (UN-Habitat 2015d).

### ***Land within UN-Habitat’s current strategy***

To achieve its goals, UN-Habitat establishes medium-term strategy approaches every six years. The current strategic plan spans from 2014 to 2019.

The plan outlines seven focus areas:

- Urban legislation, land, and governance
- Urban planning and design
- Urban economy
- Urban basic services
- Housing and slum upgrading
- Risk reduction and rehabilitation
- Research and capacity development

The current plan **prioritizes the first four focus areas** (the establishment of **adequate urban policies, legal frameworks and good planning and design**), which have been neglected in the past in favor of other areas. Due to the magnitude of work needed to effectively address the current

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<sup>11</sup> The remaining “urban themes” are: safety, gender, economy, housing and slum upgrading, reconstruction, human rights, water & sanitation, youth, energy (see <http://unhabitat.org/urban-themes/>)

<sup>12</sup> According to GLTN (2015) “A land tool is a practical way to solve a problem in land administration and management. It is a way to put principles, policies and legislation into effect. The term covers a wide range of methods: from a simple checklist to use when conducting a survey, a set of software and accompanying protocols, or a broad set of guidelines and approaches. The emphasis is on practicality: users should be able to take a land tool and apply it (or adapt it) to their own situation.”

urbanization challenges, UN-Habitat will also **strengthen its partnerships** at all levels: with governments, local authorities, NGOs, the private sector, and civil society. The 2014-2019 Strategic Plan places great emphasis on UN-Habitat's catalytic role and leading authority on urbanization matters (UN-Habitat 2015e).

Assessment of the prior strategy highlighted positive approaches as well as lessons learned which were incorporated into the new strategic plan. The assessment of the previous (2008-2013) Strategic Plan (UN-Habitat 2012) found that while the MTSIP had improved UN-Habitat's performance, further sharpened the programmatic focus of UN-Habitat, brought about better alignment of programs, and played a catalytic role in encouraging and enabling partnerships, there were also a number of shortcomings in the implementation of the strategy. Among them was that national and local stakeholders found that the concept of 'sustainable urbanization' needs to be more clearly defined and guiding principles need to be developed. Additionally, regional and country offices pointed out that they were regularly not consulted or involved during the process of initiation, formulation and development of new global programs. Moreover, the assessment identified the general problem of a lack of finance for work on the global level (see chapter organization and funding of UN-Habitat above), inadequate feedback from country level work to Headquarters for the aggregation of knowledge and organizational learning and insufficient time to prepare for implementation of the focus areas after their formulation and adoption.

The Strategic Plan 2014-2019 and the new focus areas address these issues but still draw substantially from the MTSIP focus areas<sup>13</sup>. The new strategy can be characterized as a second-generation plan, which aims to **rectify the problems encountered with the MTSIP** (UN-Habitat 2012b). The new Strategic Plan also corresponds well to what the UN-Habitat country teams consider as priorities (UN-Habitat 2012b).

Finally, in terms of future programming, the **25th session of the UN Habitat Governing Council** (17-23 April 2015) included "**Urban-Rural Linkages**" as a **special focus**. The provisional agenda (UN-Habitat Governing Council 2015) notes that at the 25th Session of the Governing Council two sub-themes will be on the agenda:

1. Enhancing Urban-Rural Linkages Across the Continuum of Human Settlements to Harness the Transformative Power of Urbanization for Sustainable Development
2. UN-Habitat's Role in the Post-2015 Development Agenda

The provisional agenda (UN-Habitat 2015c) further elaborates the reasons for including the agenda item on Urban-Rural Linkages: "Regarding the first sub-theme, since the adoption of the Habitat Agenda, UN-Habitat has had a mandate to **nurture and strengthen the urban-rural continuum**. Several Governing Council resolutions have requested an **end to the discussion on the urban-rural dichotomy**, highlighting how **positive urban-rural linkages can improve living conditions** and employment opportunities **for both urban and rural populations**. That approach was endorsed in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable

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<sup>13</sup> While the UN-Habitat's past strategy, the Medium-Term Strategic and Institutional Plan (MTSIP) 2008-2013, also set the overarching goal "to ensure an effective contribution to sustainable urbanization", it emphasized slightly different priorities through the six focus areas: Advocacy, monitoring and partnership for sustainable urbanization; Urban planning, management and governance; Promotion of pro-poor land and housing; Environmentally sound basic urban infrastructure and services; Strengthened human settlements finance systems; Excellence in management.

Development and the final report of the Open Working Group. However, **national and regional development planning still needs to be strengthened**. The physical boundary between urban and rural areas is becoming blurred owing to a lack of planning and coordination at the metropolitan edge, and persistent **gaps between urban and rural areas**, particularly on issues pertaining to connectivity, infrastructure, energy and the smooth flow of people, jobs, goods, knowledge and finance, **remain to be closed**".

## 2.6 The Habitat conferences

The Habitat conferences are the United Nations Conferences on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development. They are not events of UN-Habitat, but rather they are conferences hosted by the UN system at large and the UN General Assembly is the decision-making body. They only take place every 20 years.

While some assessments (Satterthwaite 1998) have found little evidence that the recommendations of the Habitat conferences so far were having a significant influence on policies and that they also achieved little in setting up effective international mechanisms to promote progress toward the commitments made, it needs to be recognized "that the preparations for these conferences and the drafting process for these international action plans involves many staff from governments and international agencies and this exposes them to new ideas and gives them new contacts. This in turn helps promote new ideas and new and more effective policies." (ibid)

### 2.6.1 Habitat I – Vancouver 1976

In 1976, alarmed by rapid and uncontrolled urban growth, especially in the developing world, the UN General Assembly called for the first United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat I), which was aimed at addressing the challenges and future of human settlements (UN-Habitat 2015a). During the Vancouver conference, it was recognized that the conditions of human settlements directly affect human, social, and economic development and "that uncontrolled urban development can have severe environmental and ecological impacts" (UN-Habitat 2015a). **Uncontrolled urban development was perceived as detrimental for sustainable development** (Moreno 2014).

This led to the Vancouver Action Plan, which outlined the initial strategies at an international level to address and control urban growth. **Governments** were given specific recommendations and were **urged to develop national strategies** and policies to deal with land use and tenure, population growth, infrastructure, basic services, and the provision of adequate housing and employment. At the same time, governments should take into account human and social dimensions as well as the needs of disadvantaged and marginalized population groups (UN-Habitat 2015a). At that time, recommendations adhered to the general idea that it was best to **control and slow down the urbanization process** (Moreno 2014).

### 2.6.2 Habitat II – Istanbul 1996

In 1996, the UN General Assembly organized the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements in Istanbul, Turkey to assess the member nations' progress towards tackling urbanization issues since the Vancouver Declaration (Habitat I) 20 years before (UN-Habitat

2015a). The 1996 conference brought about a **paradigm shift** so that, for the first time, **cities were perceived as engines of growth and development** (Moreno 2014) instead of a “rising challenge – a pathology in search of a cure” (UN-Habitat 2012). Habitat II introduced the notion of poverty eradication and environmental sustainability as fundamental conditions for sustainable development (Moreno 2014). Prior to 1996, global debates regarding sustainability, poverty and development scarcely contained a spatial element and solidified the dichotomy of rural vs. urban without acknowledging that urbanization may bring benefits to all forms of human settlements – rural or urban (UN-Habitat 2012c).

During the conference, the participating governments acknowledged a global deterioration of shelter and living conditions which had already attained crisis proportions in several countries of the developing world. Habitat II resulted in the proclamation of the “**Habitat Agenda**”, a strategic plan adopted by 171 countries and the main political outcome document of that conference containing over 100 commitments and 600 recommendations (UN-Habitat 2015a).

To improve the quality of life within urban areas and human settlements, the Habitat Agenda outlined several **focus areas** necessary for efficient urban development, such as proper urban planning and access to basic services, infrastructure, and adequate housing. Economic, social, cultural, spiritual, and environmental concerns were also taken into account. Chapter IV of the Habitat Agenda (“The Global Plan of Action”) also included a distinct **chapter on “Sustainable land use”** (see Box 3 below).

In addition to advocating decentralized systems, the Habitat Agenda stipulated that financial and institutional capacities of local authorities should be strengthened, thus creating a more enabling environment to solve the problems faced by cities at the ground level (UN-Habitat 2015a).

In the **Istanbul Declaration** – a brief two-page political outcome document, compared to the comprehensive Habitat Agenda document – the relationship between urban and rural areas is also explicitly mentioned: “Rural and urban development are interdependent. In addition to improving the urban habitat, we must also work to **extend adequate infrastructure, public services and employment opportunities to rural areas in order to enhance their attractiveness**, develop an integrated network of settlements and **minimize rural-to-urban migration**. Small- and medium-sized towns need special focus.”

International agencies are not seen as having a major role in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda<sup>14</sup>. The stress is on “enablement” by national governments and actions by local authorities and other local actors (Satterthwaite 1998).

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<sup>14</sup> with a call for better coordination among international agencies

### Box 3: Sustainable Land Use within the 1996 Habitat Agenda

The following (shortened) paragraphs are citations from the Habitat Agenda, in order to illustrate with the original text how sustainable land use and urban-rural interlinkages were perceived in the 1996 document and what actions were recommended.

Paragraph 109. Land is essential for the provision of food, water and energy for many living systems, and is critical to human activity. In rapidly growing urban areas, **access to land** is rendered increasingly difficult by the potentially **competing demands** of housing, industry, commerce, infrastructure, transport, agriculture and the need for open spaces and green areas, and the protection of fragile ecosystems. (...) Bringing the development of **urban areas into harmony with the natural environment** and the overall system of settlements is one of the basic tasks to be undertaken in achieving a sustainable urbanized world.

111. Many cities are using peripheral land for urban-related purposes in a wasteful manner while existing serviced land and infrastructure may not be adequately developed and used. (...) **National, subnational and local policies and development plans** must be carefully re-examined to ensure optimal land use (...), including the **protection of indispensable agricultural land**; land that sustains biodiversity, (...) and other sensitive areas in need of protection.

112. **Green spaces** and vegetation cover in urban and peri-urban areas are essential for biological and hydrological balance and economic development. (...) Healthy and environmentally sound **agricultural activities and the provision of common land** should be **integrated into the planning of urban and peri-urban areas**.

113. Governments at the appropriate levels (...) should support the efforts of human settlements to establish **sustainable urban land-use patterns** and planning and, to that end, should:

(b) Promote efficient and accessible **land markets** (...);

(c) Develop, where appropriate, **fiscal incentives** and land-use control measures, including land-use planning solutions for more rational and sustainable use of limited land resources;

(d) (...) **facilitate greater flows of private investment** in urban development in locations that contribute to sustainable land-use patterns;

(h) Develop and support the implementation of **improved land-management practices** that **deal comprehensively with competing urban land requirements** (...);

(i) Promote the **integration of land-use, communications and transport** planning to encourage development patterns that reduce the demand for transport;

(l) Institutionalize a **participatory approach** to sustainable human settlements (...).

114. To develop and support improved and integrated land management, Governments at the appropriate levels, including local authorities, should:

(b) Establish, as appropriate, **structures for the enforcement of land management laws** (...);

(c) Develop the **land market** through the establishment of an **effective legal framework that incorporates environmental concerns** and encompasses the diversity of tenure systems;

(d) Develop, with the participation of all interested parties, **comprehensive and environmentally sound land-use strategies at the local level**.

### 2.6.3 Habitat III – Quito 2016

#### *Objectives*

Habitat III is the third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development that will take place in Quito, Ecuador, in October 2016. Based on Resolution 66/207 of the United Nations General Assembly, the goal of the conference is to reinvigorate the global commitment to sustainable urbanization and to focus on the implementation of a “New Urban Agenda”, building on the Habitat Agenda of Istanbul in 1996.

It will offer opportunities to discuss the challenge of how cities, towns and villages are planned and managed in order to fulfill their role as drivers of sustainable development, and it will shape the implementation of new global development and climate change goals (UN-Habitat 2015h).

#### *Expected differences compared to Habitat II*

As the preparations for Habitat III are ongoing, it is important to take note of what has changed since the Habitat II conference in 1996. Most importantly, over the past two decades there has been a significant **growth in urban population** – rising from 2.6 billion people living in urban areas in 1996 to an estimated nearly double total of 4 billion in 2016. Of that increase, **95% has been in the developing world**. This has also led to a **shift in the distribution of urban populations** in the different world regions: By 2016, Asia will represent 30% of the global urban population. Africa, meanwhile, will make up just 8% of this population and just 3% of the urban population will live in Europe. Thus, while in 1996 the world was still “urbanizing”, it is now perceived to be “urban”, with more people living in urban areas than in rural areas (Moreno 2015).

Also, the emergence of **new urban configurations**, including megaregions, urban corridors and city regions, require new governance as cities will become more prominent players in global development (Moreno 2014).

**Changes have also taken place in urban policy and ideology** regarding cities and their futures, which are likely to be reflected in the “New Urban Agenda”. In this vein, Eduardo Lopez Moreno, UN-Habitat’s research director and lead urban policy analyst, anticipates the following changes in the outcomes from Habitat III:

First, urbanization before 1996 was not, in most documents, perceived as a positive thing. This has changed, and many, including UN-Habitat, see **urbanization as having a constructive and transformative power** (Moreno 2015).

Second, the 1996 Habitat Agenda saw urban migration from rural areas as bad for urbanization (see Istanbul Declaration quotes above). Yet, the “New Urban Agenda” will most likely **promote migration and the inclusion of migrants** as a human rights approach (Moreno 2015). UN Habitat anticipates, however, that “many governments are still very reluctant to accept this idea” (ibid).

The third difference is likely to be a **new focus on the power and role of cities** to move from sectoral to more city-wide approaches. In the Habitat Agenda, housing, transport and community development were compartmentalized in different sectors and policies were also analyzed by sector. There was no intention in any part of the document to integrate these concerns. Today’s

understanding is quite different in starting not by sector but by the individual context of each city and assuming a key role for local authorities (Moreno 2015).

Fourth, twenty years ago the documents and approaches were in general “spaceless” — they considered space to be nothing more than a platform on which actions could take place. Space was just the general area where policies were focused, either specific to a location or the issues which happen to occur in that location. Today’s understanding is different; **space is considered a vector**. Where there are concentrations of poor populations, the space will generate more poverty. If inequality is concentrated in a space, that space will generate more inequality (Moreno 2015).

Fifth, the Habitat Agenda was an agenda with a focus on the Global South. In contrast, the “New Urban Agenda” will apply much more to **developing countries and developed countries alike** (Moreno 2014).

Finally, the **timing of Habitat III may provide a window of opportunity** for it to have an increased impact compared to Habitat II. While Habitat II in 1996 took place as the last conference in a sequence of global summits, Habitat III aims to shape the agenda as the first global conference after the agreement on the post 2015 development agenda (Moreno 2014).

### ***Preparations towards Habitat III***

In the run up to Habitat II, the sessions of the Preparatory Committee – or **Prepcoms** – are of special importance. These meetings provide **opportunities to set the agenda** and procedural context for Habitat III.

The first meeting of the Preparatory Committee took place during September 2014 in New York. Among its decisions was the appointment of a Habitat III Bureau to collaborate with the Habitat III Secretariat on conference preparations<sup>15</sup>.

The second session of the Preparatory Committee will be held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 14 to 16 April 2015. The third session will be in Indonesia during the month of July 2016.

As part of the preparation for Habitat III, UN-Habitat and its Secretary-General Dr. Joan Clos expressed support for proposals by several countries to organize **regional or thematic events**. Five thematic events have already been proposed: **urban-rural linkages**, housing, urban mobility, municipal finance, and gender participation. They will be elaborated further by the Secretariat and proposed to the Habitat III Bureau in order to organize them as a consultative process prior to Habitat III (Communitas Coalition 2015). Regional or thematic meetings will be organized from May 2015 to February 2016 (UN-Habitat 2015 i).

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<sup>15</sup> Co-chairs are Ecuador and France; members are: France and Germany (Western Group), Senegal and Chad (Africa), United Arab Emirates and Indonesia (Asia), Czech Republic and Hungary (Eastern Europe), Chile and Ecuador (Latin America). Communitas Coalition (2015)

According to current preparations (Communitas Coalition 2015), **Habitat III will feature six thematic areas**, for which a total of 20 short issue papers will be commissioned regarding:

1. Social Cohesion and Equity - Livable Cities (including inclusive cities, migration and refugees in urban areas, safer cities, urban culture and heritage)
2. Urban Frameworks (including urban rules and legislation, urban governance and municipal finance)
3. **Spatial Development (including urban and spatial planning and design, urban land and rural-urban linkages)**
4. Urban Economy (including local economic development, jobs and livelihoods and the informal sector)
5. Urban Ecology and Environment (including urban resilience, urban ecosystems and resource management, cities and climate change and disaster risk management)
6. Urban Housing and Basic Services (including urban infrastructure and basic services and energy, transport and mobility, housing and slum upgrading, smart cities)

The issue papers will take stock of and reflect on what is the current state in each area. They are aimed at feeding into the policy units' work in preparation for Habitat III and the "New Urban Agenda".

A Zero Draft of the New Urban Agenda is expected by April 2016 following the parallel completion of negotiations around the UN post-2015 development agenda & Sustainable Development Goals and the Climate Action Framework, expected after COP 21 of the UNFCCC in Paris, December 2015 (Communitas Coalition 2015). The draft of the "New Urban Agenda" will therefore probably be able to already incorporate, for instance, an implementation framework for the envisaged SDG on Cities, depending on what ultimate agreement will be achieved on the SDGs.

## **2.7 Urban development within other multilateral organizations**

### **2.7.1 UNEP initiatives on the urban environment**

UNEP has been addressing the issue of urban environment for some time, among others within its 'Built Environment Unit' and Green Economy Initiative and through cooperation with UN-Habitat, e.g., in the Sustainable Cities Programme<sup>16</sup>. Presently, three specific UNEP initiatives address 'the growing need to address global environmental concerns from an urban perspective' (UNEP 2014):

- The **Sustainable Buildings and Climate Initiative (UNEP-SCBI)**:<sup>17</sup> This initiative (which is housed within UNEP-DTIE in Paris) started in 2006 and aims to promote policies and practices for a sustainable built environment.

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<sup>16</sup> The joint UN-HABITAT – UNEP Sustainable Cities Programme promotes environmental, social and economic sustainability of cities through an Environmental Planning and Management (EPM) approach which is characterized by a broad-based, participatory decision-making process. Together with UN Habitat, UNEP prepares tools, publications and workshops on EPM and various urban environmental issues. Currently the SCP is active in approximately 40 cities around the world. See UNEPs website [http://www.unep.org/urban\\_environment/key\\_programmes/](http://www.unep.org/urban_environment/key_programmes/)

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.unep.org/sbci/AboutSBCI/Background.asp>; UNEP (2014). Climate Finance for Cities and Buildings - A Handbook for Local Governments. UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE), Paris

- The **Global Initiative for Resource Efficient Cities**<sup>18</sup> (UNEP-GIREC) was launched at the Rio+20 summit. It aims to reduce pollution levels, improve resource efficiency and reduce infrastructure costs in cities by committing cities as members.
- **The Sustainable Social Housing Initiative** (UNEP-SUSHI)<sup>19</sup> started in 2009 with the aim of promoting resource and energy-efficient building solutions in social housing programs in developing countries.<sup>20</sup>

## 2.7.2 FAO: Food for the Cities Initiative; recognition of urban and peri-urban agriculture (UPA) & forestry

The FAO “**Food for the Cities**” multi-disciplinary initiative that was launched in 2001<sup>21</sup>. It addresses a number of sustainable land use issues related to urban-rural linkages. These include, among others, urban food security, nutrition and livelihoods as well as peri-/urban and agriculture, horticulture and forestry

“Urban and peri-urban agriculture” (UPA) is defined as “the growing of plants and the raising of animals within and around cities”<sup>22</sup>. It includes different types of crops (grains, root crops, vegetables, mushrooms, fruits), animals (poultry, rabbits, goats, sheep, cattle, pigs, guinea pigs, fish, etc.) as well as non-food products (e.g., aromatic and medicinal herbs, ornamental plants, tree products including fruit and fuelwood). UPA thus includes urban and peri-urban forestry, which again is defined as “the management of forests, groups of trees and individual trees in and around urban areas for their contribution to the physiological, sociological, and economic well-being of urban and peri-urban society”<sup>23</sup>.

UPA has been officially recognized by FAO since 1999<sup>24</sup> as a “strategy to alleviate urban food insecurity and build cities that are more resilient to crisis”. It can also enhance urban livelihoods by creating income opportunities from selling produce on local farmers’ markets.

FAO has an “Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture Group” with a Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean. At present, FAO directly assists city administration, regional and national governments through various **technical programs**<sup>25</sup> in the development of UPA strategies and action plans, which are to improve (peri-)urban production, processing and marketing systems.<sup>26</sup> FAO also promotes UPA by helping member countries to collect data on UPA’s contribution to food security. In addition, FAO’s Forestry Department is working on the development of ‘Voluntary Guidelines for Policy and Decision Making Promoting Urban and Peri-urban Forestry’.

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<sup>18</sup> [http://www.unep.org/pdf/GI-REC\\_4pager.pdf#sthash.vNr1PjUr.dpuf](http://www.unep.org/pdf/GI-REC_4pager.pdf#sthash.vNr1PjUr.dpuf)

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.unep.org/sustainablesocialhousing/>

<sup>20</sup> [http://www.unep.org/sustainablesocialhousing/pdfs/SUSHI\\_Guidelines\\_2013.pdf](http://www.unep.org/sustainablesocialhousing/pdfs/SUSHI_Guidelines_2013.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.fao.org/docrep/011/ak003e/ak003e00.htm>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.fao.org/urban-agriculture/en/>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.fao.org/ag/agp/greenercities/pdf/GGCLAC/FAO-urban-forestry-guidelines.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> By the 15th session of the Committee on Agriculture, and subsequently by the World Food Summit (2002) and the UN High Level Task Force on the Global Food Crisis (2008).

<sup>25</sup> including the FAO Special Programme for Food Security, its Decentralized Cooperation Programmes, its emergency operations, and TeleFood.

<sup>26</sup> <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/012/ak824e/ak824e00.pdf>

### 2.7.3 UNESCO: Biosphere reserves and the Creative Cities Network

UNESCO aims to encourage a balanced relationship between people and their environment, through the **“Man and Biosphere” (MAB) programme** (see Wunder et al. 2013). The MAB Programme, established by UNSECO in 1971, globally promotes the establishment of biosphere reserves.

The central focus of the biosphere reserve approach is the link between biodiversity conservation and the development needs of local communities. Different from other nature protection areas, biosphere reserves also include settlements in their buffer zone and require an integrated development concept between core areas, buffer zones and transition zones. Biosphere reserves are nominated by national governments and must meet a set of criteria and adhere to a set of conditions before being admitted into the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

Another initiative under UNESCO is the **‘Creative Cities Network’**, which aims to “better capitalize on cities and local governments as major partners for promoting sustainable development through international cooperation between cities of developed and developing countries”. Among other aspects, the network “explores the challenges of rapid global urbanization and urban renewal and (...) promote[s] cities as hubs of creativity and innovation”.

### 2.7.4 UNISDR: Strategy for Disaster Reduction and Resilient Cities campaign

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) was created in 1999 as part of the UN Secretariat to ensure the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. Disaster reduction is very relevant to cities and has a strong link to land use in and around cities (e.g., floodplains, green public spaces, green infrastructure). Environmental urban degradation, increasing informal settlements and failed infrastructure and services make many urban citizens vulnerable to natural hazards.

UNISDR has therefore established the **UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction**. It also launched, in 2010, the **“Making Cities Resilient” campaign**, to address issues of local governance and urban risk while drawing on the sustainable urbanization principles developed in the UN-Habitat World Urban Campaign 2009-2013.

After an awareness-raising and stock-taking phase during 2012-2015, the campaign aims to shift its focus to more implementation support, city-to-city learning and cooperation, local action planning and monitoring of progress in cities. With the support and recommendation of many partners and participants, and a Mayors Statement made during the 2011 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Making Cities Resilient campaign will carry on beyond 2015 (UNISDR 2015).

### 2.7.5 World Bank: Urban and Local Government Strategy

The World Bank focuses on urban development by operating a **unit on “Urban Development”** and implementing its **“Urban Strategy”**, which has been in existence for decades. In recent years, the Bank’s technical and financial assistance for urban development (total commitments for the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and International Development

Association (IBRD/IDA) have increased by 67% from USD 2.57 billion (financial years 2005-09) to an annual average of USD 4.32 billion (FY 2010-14)).<sup>27</sup>

The Bank's current Urban Strategy<sup>28</sup> aims to ensure "that cities are well planned, connected and financed to enhance access, quality and resilience of services – supported by strong systems and governance". The Strategy Paper seems to put a focus on economic growth plus (energy) efficiency and technological solutions. It has multiple sub-initiatives<sup>29</sup>:

- Low-carbon livable cities (it addresses i.a., low-carbon emissions, climate resilient growth, improved solid waste management systems, pollution reduction); part of the initiative is a "City Creditworthiness Program"<sup>30</sup> by the World Bank and partners that is aimed at making municipalities more attractive to private investors and helping them access capital markets to be able to attract infrastructure investments.
- Inclusive cities (i.a., improved access to land, affordable housing, enhanced community participation, reduced urban poverty and social exclusion)
- Resilient cities (i.a., improved ability to cope and better manage climate and disaster risk, etc.)
- Competitive cities (i.a, improved land markets, connectivity and regulation at the sub-national level, better leverage with land and real estate assets)
- Strong city systems and governance (i.a., strengthened land and housing markets, increased capacity to carry out integrated territorial development policies and land use planning)

The "Urbanization Review" of the World Bank is intended to offer a diagnostic framework and tool to guide cities' decisions on their development through diagnostic tools that identify 'policy distortions'<sup>31</sup> and analyze investment priorities.

The World Bank is furthermore involved, jointly with partners<sup>32</sup>, in the "**Cities Alliance**" (CA). Formed in 1999, the CA focuses on fighting the growth of slums.

### 2.7.6 GEF: Sustainable Cities Programme

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is the UN system's multilateral, donor-funded aid agency with a focus on environmental issues.

Since 1991, the GEF has provided USD 13.5 billion in grants and leveraged USD 65 billion in co-financing for 3,900 projects in more than 165 developing countries. The GEF's work focuses on **six**

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/overview#1>

<sup>28</sup> World Bank (2010): *Systems of Cities: Harnessing Urbanization for Growth and Poverty Alleviation*. The World Bank Urban and Local Government Strategy. Washington, D.C.

<sup>29</sup> [www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/overview#1](http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/overview#1)

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2013/09/25/planning-financing-low-carbon-cities>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/publication/urbanization-reviews>

<sup>32</sup> UN-HABITAT, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), Metropolis and a range of donor governments; cf.

**main areas**, including biodiversity, climate change, chemicals and waste, international waters, **land degradation**, sustainable forest management/REDD+ (GEF 2015a).

Since 2014, the GEF has worked on a Sustainable Cities Programme. The USD 100 million integrated program on sustainable cities is aimed at demonstrating innovative models of sustainable urban management and high-impact investment. Several agencies within the GEF have expressed interest in implementing components of the Programme. Thus, GEF agencies are planning to submit the Programmatic Framework Document to the GEF Council at the 48th Meeting in June 2015 (GEF 2015b).

### **3 Summary and conclusion**

This discussion paper provides an overview of a range of important UN policies that explicitly aim to address urban development. In particular, it addresses the extent to which these policies tackle the urban-rural linkage and aim to improve sustainable land use within and beyond the formal boundaries of cities. It also elaborates how a change of priorities and paradigms toward urbanization have changed policy making.

The analysis shows that the perception of urbanization has changed significantly. Most importantly, urbanization was seen for a long time as a barrier towards sustainable development with policies trying to slow down and control urbanization. This changed after Habitat II in 1996 when urbanization was also recognized for its constructive and transformative power to bring about development not only for cities but also settlements in rural areas. In line with that perception and acknowledging that the boundaries between urban and rural areas become blurred, UN policies now place a stronger emphasis on the “urban-rural linkage” and the need to nurture and strengthen the urban-rural continuum. However, a lack of integrated urban-rural planning efforts and the differentiation between urban and rural areas is still a predominant policy perspective in many administrations, leading to sub-optimal policies and investments – a problem that remains to be solved.

On the UN level, the debate around sustainable urbanization is largely driven by UN-Habitat, the official UN body dedicated to (sustainable) urbanization and by the Habitat conferences every 20 years as important international platforms to agree on strategies how to address urbanization. Moreover, other UN bodies such as UNEP, the FAO and UNISDR deal with particular aspects of sustainable urbanization, like sustainable buildings, urban and peri-urban agriculture and disaster risk reduction.

In parallel, cities and regions (and their networks) also have a growing influence as international players, both due to the rapid urbanization and growing number of (mega)cities but also due to the increasing acknowledgement of a need to move from sectoral to city-based approaches for planning and policy in order to achieve sustainable urbanization. However, this increasingly raises the question if and how the influence of cities within national urban frameworks can be improved and how to achieve coherent integrated planning that does not focus on sectors and promote “siloed thinking”.

In that context, it must be noted that within the broad range of thematic issues under “sustainable urbanization”, land use and the importance of considering urban-rural linkages play an increasing role (as also reflected in the April 2015 Governing Council meeting of UN-Habitat), e.g., issues of land tenure, the need for expansion and densification plans, and the need to close persistent gaps between urban and rural areas, particularly on issues pertaining to connectivity, infrastructure, energy and the smooth flow of people, jobs, goods, knowledge and finance.

Given the increasing importance of urban issues and the fact that more than half of the world’s population lives in urban areas, with a massive growth in this percentage predominantly in developing countries ahead, it is likely that the focus on sustainable urbanization will continue to rise and play a significant role on the UN level.

Also, the SDG process, with a proposed standalone urban goal, and the Habitat III conference in 2016 are likely windows of opportunity to strengthen attention for sustainable urbanization requirements (and with it sustainable land use in urban and rural settlements) on the UN agenda. They may also bring more support for the global work of UN-Habitat, which is still hampered from expanding its global work due to funding constraints.

Finally, it must be noted that while the global framework, strategies and priorities set at UN level have and have had an impact on efforts to improve sustainable urbanization, the local level remains the key actor that will need to shape and implement change on the ground. It will therefore remain crucial to design local and international policy frameworks in a way that these are mutually enforcing. Activities on the UN level that focus on capacity and partnership building, technical assistance, the preparation of implementation guidelines, etc. can help in that regard and should be strengthened in the future. As the urban-rural linkage receives more attention within UN Habitat and the Habitat III preparations, it also remains crucial to better define the role of “sustainable land use” within “sustainable urbanization” and the New Urban Agenda.

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