

**Position paper of different members of
the Major Groups for the thematic cluster
on Sustainable cities and Human
settlements**

**Our vision & priorities for the Sustainable Development
Goals and the post-2015 development agenda : proposition
of a stand-alone SDG on “Sustainable urbanization”**

Introduction

This position paper is a common contribution from different members of the Major Groups, supporting a stand-alone SDG on “Sustainable urbanization”. It has been elaborated on the occasion of several meetings between some members of the Major Groups and a public workshop during the 10th edition of Ecocity, the World Summit on Sustainable cities, on September 27, 2013 in Nantes (France).

This text has been endorsed by the following organizations:

- Local authorities*: UCLG/ICLEI (2 of the Organizing Partners)
- Children and Youth*: MGCY (Major Group for Children and Youth)
- Scientific & Technological Community*: World Federation of Engineering Organisations (one of the organizing partner)
- Business and Industry*: International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), French National Committee
- NGOs*: Ecocity Builders, International Presentation Association, 4D (coordinator for French NGOs –post Rio follow-up), Rede Nossa São Paulo (Our Sao Paulo Network), Medical Mission Sisters
- Women*: Soroptimist International

Urbanization will be the defining trend over the next several decades.

Today, half the world’s 7 billion people live in cities. By 2030 there will be over one billion more urban residents and 60% of the area expected to be urban remains to be built. Up to 2050, the urban population will grow by 2.5 to 3 billion people, especially in low income country and in Africa, increasing the urban share to 2/3 of the world’s population. Urbanization is closely linked to development models.

Cities are spaces of wealth creation and development, but they face many economic, social and environmental issues.

Cities are major places of economic growth, consumption and production, innovation and exchange. Roughly ¾ of global economic activity is urban. Middle classes already exist or are emerging in all the regions of the world; they will have a strong impact on consumption and production patterns.

But cities are also places of important inequalities, with lots of people living in slums standing alongside of rich quarters. More than 70% of the world’s poorest people live today in middle-income countries, and primarily in cities. As cities grow, real estate bubbles often appear, increasing exclusion of poorest people to quality housing.

Cities are also major sources of GHG emission and energy consumption, especially with transport and housing. Rather than achieving greater efficiency, most cities are losing density, missing social relationships, locking themselves into unsustainable land and use patterns, with rising transportation costs, congestion, and segregation of socioeconomic groups.

Sustainable urbanization is therefore a crucial issue for the coming years, particularly in low and middle-income countries, considering rapid transformations and the growth of urban inhabitants.

The new development agenda is one and universal and in all parts of the world, well managed urbanization will be key, taking into account the territory in which global urbanization will have impacts, with the need to overcome the dichotomy of rural versus urban, and ensure cohesion among territories.

Yet, a global urban community is emerging, with similar solutions being implemented in different parts of the world: waste management systems, public transports, food provisions, social cohesion, etc.

Summary

Through the impact they have on energy production and people’s lifestyles, the solutions implemented by cities and urban areas are keys to tackle inequality reduction, foster sustainable consumption and production, and fight climate change (reduction of GHG emissions and adaptation policies).

We, members of the Major Groups, therefore propose a stand-alone SDG on “Sustainable urbanization” complemented by urban and territorial targets across other relevant goals.

Our position

If the concept of “Sustainable urbanization” should be adapted by countries and regions, we should define it by the following criteria (all types of urban areas are concerned by this concept, from small and middle cities to megalopolis, including rural territories directly connected to the cities):

- A sustainable urban area has to be livable for all: people from all cultures, young people, seniors, women and the poorest, have equitable access to basic services and infrastructures, including housing, mobility and green spaces. Violence, criminality and social exclusion are minimized.
- It has to be resilient, environmentally friendly and healthy: with low GHG emissions, sustainable consumption and production patterns, plans to reduce disaster risks and to adapt to societal evolutions, supports for culture and arts, spaces for nature and creation.
- It has to be dynamic and integrative: economically - with frameworks and regulations that allow innovation, firm creations and decent work -culturally and socially.
- It has to be democratic: all people can equally participate in decision-making processes concerning policies and projects impacting their environment.
- Solidarity, territorial cohesion and interaction: the cities should not develop itself at the cost of other regions and rural surroundings connected to them. We would like to insist on the concept of « rurbanization » or urbanization of rural areas, with a focus on the mutual influence rural areas and urban communities have on each other. These areas are often neglected and they need specific attention.

There is an urgent need to achieve sustainable communities to meet the needs of human well-being and environmental protection.

Goals and Targets

The goal on “Sustainable urbanization” could be composed of different subjects. We propose the following points, which can be completed.

A - Develop strong and accountable institutions:

- **Effective decentralization and strengthening of local authorities**
 - Adopt principles of subsidiarity and consequently decentralized programs as well as a comprehensive legal framework for sustainable human settlements
 - Improve access to requisite financial resources
 - Facilitate the collaboration between the different levels of governance in the territories
- **Improved democratic local governance, with principles of self-governance and participatory democracy**
 - Apply the concept of participation in decision-making with a special focus on women, young and older persons, poor and marginalized people, workers
 - Develop participative budget
 - Provide access to adequate information so that citizens can participate more effectively
 - Reinforce concepts like co-building or numeric territories to improve participation and follow-up of decisions
 - Mobilize for the implementation of sustainable development principles and transition agenda following the Agenda 21’s approach
 - Develop proper structures to ensure youth and children participation, not only on matters of local interest but also on national and international issues.

B - Address poverty eradication, inequality reduction and well-being:

- **Access to quality basic urban infrastructure and social services**
 - Provide quality education and health services
 - Provide quality water and sanitation services
 - Provide access to communication technologies and services
 - Provide access to affordable transport services – while thinking about its nexus with climate and health
 - Improve social inclusion and equity

- Improve participation and human rights in urban development
 - **Access to adequate housing and improving the quality of life of slum dwellers**
- Slum upgrading must remain a priority to build inclusive cities
- Improve access to adequate and affordable housing for all – while thinking about its nexus with energy consumption and transports
 - **Access to decent work and lifelong learning**
- Foster inclusive societies that provide opportunities for young people, women...
- Apply labor rights as defined by the International Labor Organization (ILO), specifically for waste management, transports or buildings as identified sectors for green economy development
 - **Reduce gender inequalities**
- Eradicate violence against women
- Enhance women participation in decision-making
- Enhance women rights and capabilities
- Acknowledge specific conditions of girls
 - **Enlarge social protection for a better social resilience**
 - **Ensure food security in cities and their surroundings**
- Guarantee access to adequate and affordable food for all
- Enhance urban organic food production and prioritize short circuits of production and distribution
- Improve transport infrastructures between rural and urban areas
- Improve land and tenure rights to insure access to the poorest, the women and other marginalized groups
 - **Develop linkages with nature in urban development**
- Develop ecological corridors
- Acknowledge the link between health and nature

C – Develop strong capacity building framework to make sustainable urbanization a reality

- **Strengthen cities' capacities of action, through**
 - Urban planification
 - Laws of decentralization
 - Mutualization of experiences and data platforms
 - Decentralized cooperation among cities
 - Training
 - Capacity of creation and innovation, inspiration by nature
- **Foster well-planned, designed and governed cities, including a territorial approach**
 - Improve urban land management : address urban sprawl ; promote land use planning, social relations and efficient spatial concentration, particularly through a multidisciplinary team approach that brings together engineers with other professionals
 - Foster territorial cohesion among territories
 - Foster the participation of all inhabitants in urban planning and management particularly marginalized populations and those suffering discrimination
- **Access to investment and financial solutions, especially for middle cities**
- **Access to energy – linking with environment and climate issues**
Through sustainable energy actions plans (energy efficiency, energy conservation, low or no-carbon energy supply, equitable and accessible energy provision service)
- **Provide quality education and lifelong learning, information, and participation frame**
- **Fight against corruption**
- **Develop clear and measurable frameworks for partnerships with the private sector and other stakeholders**

- **Promote cross-border trade, investments and education to benefit from the highest level of technologies and innovation developed by all economic operators, private sector included**
- **Build safer and more resilient communities**
 - Apply plans to reduce disaster risk
 - Apply plans to reduce violence and conflict
 - International assistance should focus on fragile and conflict or post-conflict environments
 - Improve access to good education
 - Focus on children among the groups who are most vulnerable and at risk in urban areas
- **Improve resilience to climate change**

D - Ensure a sustainable ecological footprint, taking into consideration common but differentiated responsibilities

An urban SDG will promote integrated management of cities, and urbanization models based on the reduction of GHG emissions, energy consumption and waste, as well as efficient management of urban ecosystems and rural surroundings development.

- **Strengthen environmental sustainability in land use planning**
- **Clean transport, mobility and building standards**
 - Introduce policies, programs, technologies and partnerships to achieve affordable, more energy efficient and sustainable transport systems, while contributing to important co-benefits, including reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, noise and air pollution
 - Promote alternative mobility or relevant mastery of commuting (teleworking, telecentres and coworking space...)
 - Develop thermal efficiency buildings
 - Promote efficient reorganization of supplies and cargo in the city
- **Increase support for renewable energy**
- **Efficiency in water consumption and sanitation**
 - Decrease water consumption
 - Develop innovative rainwater collection methods – linking with the agriculture/water nexus
 - Promote zero phytosanitary policies in cities
- **Reduce, reuse and recycle waste**
 - Promote circular economy, economy of functionality, eco-conception
- **Promote efficiency in the use of resources and sobriety of individual and organizational behaviors**
- **Promote conservation and sustainable management of the biodiversity and natural resources**
- **Use the experience of business to improve, within a regulatory frame, the way urban facilities (such as waste management, energy and water supply, used water treatment, etc.) are operated in cities**

E - Promote local and territorial economic development

- **Create a favorable environment for economic initiatives, while guaranteeing the respect of workers' rights and organizations**
- **Promote sound, clear and responsible practices for small, medium and large companies, taking into account the social and environmental impacts of their activities, in order to develop inter-urban cooperation**
- **Define a clear and cobenefits-oriented framework for public-private partnerships**
- **Develop frameworks to integrate informal economy, with a specific focus on migrant workers**
- **Focus on pro-poor policies and decent job creation in a green urban economy**

F - Promote sustainable consumption and production

In both industrialized and developing countries, middle classes live in cities, which are therefore major places of consumption. That's why new consumption and production patterns will be designed in cities.

- **Address overconsumption and promote sustainable lifestyles while fostering better life conditions for the poor**
- **Facilitate access through business to efficient, productive and friendly environmental technologies**
- **Develop systemic economic models**
- Apply lifecycle thinking
- Promote economy of functionality
- **Penalize programmed obsolescence**
- **Acknowledge the diversity of lifestyles**

G - Culture as driver and enabler of development and people-centered societies

There will be no change in consumption and production patterns, in participation to decision-making, in poverty eradication and inequalities reduction, without accompanying behavior and social acceptance, by helping create social links and feeling of belonging.

- **Enhance cultural diversity respect and cultural exchange, in the spirit of Agenda 21 for culture**
- **Promote citizen education and awareness-raising to sustainable development**
- **Focus on youth and children education**
- **Increase public spaces in urban design and building regulations**

Framework

Cross-cutting Issues

We propose in this position paper a stand-alone SDG on “Sustainable urbanization” because we consider that it is far more efficient to address the cross-cutting issues related to urbanization, which we have exposed previously, through a ‘meta’ goal than through several separate goals.

Monitoring and Evaluation

We, members of the Major Groups, urge the United Nations as well as the Member States to support, facilitate and ensure the elaboration of infra-state indicators in order to consider the inequalities existing between cities and territories and to assess the progress made in reaching the objectives;

Next Steps

We request national governments and multilateral institutions to enable more democratic international governance that includes the contribution of civil society organizations – particularly by strengthening their representatives’ presence and interventions in the multilateral institutions - , which conditions the success of new development strategies;

We commit to strengthen the cooperation and the dialogue between us in the perspective of 2015 international agendas.

Conclusion

We, members of the Major Groups, defend the definition of a stand-alone SDG on “Sustainable urbanization”, as the policies implemented by cities are keys to address development issues in the perspective of 2015: social inequalities and poverty reduction, changing consumption and production patterns, and fight against climate change and its impacts. This SDG would help mobilize cities, empower all urban actors, and thus enable to transform challenges into opportunities.