

GLOBAL TASKFORCE
OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS
FOR **POST-2015** DEVELOPMENT AGENDA
TOWARDS **HABITAT III**

Guidelines for the participation of local governments in the preparatory process towards Habitat III

Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Year 2016)

Global Taskforce meeting in Rabat, 1st October 2016

In its resolution 66/207 of 14 March 2012, the General Assembly decided to convene, in line with the bi-decennial cycle (1976, 1996 and 2016) a Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III). The main objective of the conference is to elaborate the new urban agenda able to guide urban policies for the next decades.

This conference will assess the commitments of UN member states during Habitat II in Istanbul in 1996, but it will also build on the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, such as the Rio+20 Declaration “The Future We Want” and the new development agenda for post-2015 that will concretize with the definition of the Sustainable Development Goals, providing an opportunity for discussing the challenges that the urban dimension brings to the implementation and achievement of the new Goals.

Habitat III represents an extraordinary opportunity for local governments and their associations to participate and influence the international decision-making process on urban issues.

In this context, advantage should be taken of the lessons learnt from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that in year 2000 helped to galvanize international development efforts, to set global and national priorities, and to focus international aid¹. One of the main critics to the MDG process was that the process then concentrated only in identification of priorities, paying little attention to its means of implementation. When countries started to report on progress, it was quite clear the need for localization and explicit focus on disadvantages areas. In this framework, MDG acceleration strategies were often not translated into localized, integrated actions that envisaged a clear role for local governments.². At a certain point of the process, it was quite clear that the concept of territorial cohesion needed to be introduced and measured accordingly.

Habitat III arrives at an exciting historic moment, as 70 per cent of the world’s population is projected to be living in urban areas by 2050. Cities are the essential places where development battles can be won or lost. As more and more people moves to the city, they will increasingly be so.

¹Realizing the Future we want, Report to the Secretary General, UN System Task Team , June 2012,

²Local Development and MDGs: What Role for Local Governments?, United Nations Capital Development Fund

Local governments find themselves in the middle of increasing challenges; they received growing demands of services from their citizens but they are also expected to deliver more on behalf of central governments. In the Rio+20 Declaration, they were recognized as essential players for the achievement of global public goods.

Habitat III will have to give solutions to this new role for cities and local governments. It will also be the first UN Conference that will include local government and their associations in the decision-making process. They will be called to lead the definition of the new urban agenda as principal responsible for its implementation.

While becoming increasingly important for the international development agenda, local governments are, in fact, “invisible” in international law³ as elaborated by central governments and international organizations. Although, with a third of the population living in cities by 2030, the world need to find a new multi-level governance system where local government, and not only world cities, are able to influence the set of decisions and the legal instruments that have important direct effects in urban management.

Habitat III is a big opportunity to make this a reality. The Global Taskforce has been working since 2012 to support this process internationally, but local governments have also the possibility to make a point at national level, influencing in the issues that their Ministries of Foreign Affairs will defend during the negotiation process in New York.

The General Assembly resolution can be found at

<http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=A/RES/67/216>

International action – The Global Taskforce of local and regional governments for 2015 development agenda towards Habitat III

Habitat III is a United Nations Conference, and as such it will be an Intergovernmental process lead by the Missions of the different countries to the United Nations in New York. Nevertheless, and following precedents as Habitat II and both Rio Conferences, the UN would like the process to be as open and participatory as possible.

In this particular case, the main challenge of urbanization is that the issue is multi-sectorial and multilevel in terms of government bodies. Put in another way, responsibility for issues such as planning, regulation, land, water, sanitation, transport, youth, women, economic development and many others are spread and often shared amongst different government ministries, department and agencies. From another perspective, no one issue of urbanization is able to be addressed by a national or sub-national body alone, and hence the need for a functioning, collaborative multi-level governance system

³Frug, Gerald E. & David J. Barron. International local government law. *The Urban Lawyer*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Winter 2006), pp. 1-62. American Bar Association.

between central and territorial governments is particularly acute. The complexity therein is local governments are at the front line of the elaboration and implementation of urban policies and the provision of basic services and their implementation, but are situated within a complex network of relationships and jurisdictions.

We need to further consider that local government face very different legal traditions and frameworks across the world, so to find common “political choices” to be included in the New Urban Agenda 2016 will be naturally different from countries where local government have local autonomy and legislative power and to those without the general power of competence or with limited financial and human resources. But a certain common ground can always be found as the challenges of local government across the world tend to be very similar when it comes to deliver services to their citizens and fight poverty and inequality.

In order to ensure that the voice of local and territorial governments is heard during the Habitat III process, a group of institutions have combined forces and constituted the Global Taskforce of local and regional governments for Habitat III.

The Taskforce, hosted by United Cities and Local Governments, UCLG, is composed by local government associations, local government partners, member states, Habitat Agenda partners and UN agencies, including UN-Habitat, which holds the Secretariat for Habitat III. The Global Taskforce is now believed to represent nearly all the local or regional governments of the world throughout all the UN member states.

The Global Taskforce was created during Africities in December 2012, it brings together bringing Mayors and Governors to raise their views and concerns at the UN and create awareness on the needs of local government regarding the international development agenda. The first achievement was the inclusion of a strong mention to local governments as essential actors of development and the need to consider the local dimension of the post-2015 development agenda.

Another sign of the increased presence of local governments was the nomination of Mayor Topbas of Istanbul, and President of UCLG as member of the High Level panel of eminent persons for post 2015, who included Mayor Topbas of Istanbul and President of UCLG.

The Global Taskforce also ensure the complementarity between the post 2015 and Habitat III processes, bringing together local government efforts to be recognized and empowered by the future UN Development Agendas.

The Global Taskforce will continue its work being present in the decision making process both in New York and in the Preparatory Conferences planned until 2016.

- PrepCom 1 – September 2014, New York
- PrepCom 2 – April 2015, Nairobi
- Habitat III Conference – 2016

UN-Habitat is also promoting the celebration of Regional Conferences, the first one, comprising the Ibero America and Caribbean countries, will take place in New York on 11-12th December 2013, followed by a side event on Sustainable Cities in preparation to the General Assembly debate on the Sustainable Development Goals, where the Global Taskforce will be one of the main organizers.

Other regional events are being considered for Africa, Asia, Europe, North America and the Arab countries. The Global Taskforce is opened to receive proposals to organize regional events from cities, countries or other Habitat Agenda partners to organize events in preparation for 2016.

More information can be found at <http://www.uclg.org/en/issues/habitat-iii>

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Action at national level – The National Habitat Committees

Whereas the composition of such Committees is a prerogative of each member state, UN-Habitat has issued a set of guidelines to all UN member states recommending the inclusion of the main stakeholders of the Urban Agenda, with particular reference to local governments and their associations.

The National Habitat Committees can also be an essential instrument to facilitate the dialogue between central and local governments on a broader base, creating trust and ensuring the participation of local government in the elaboration of laws and policies.

Composition

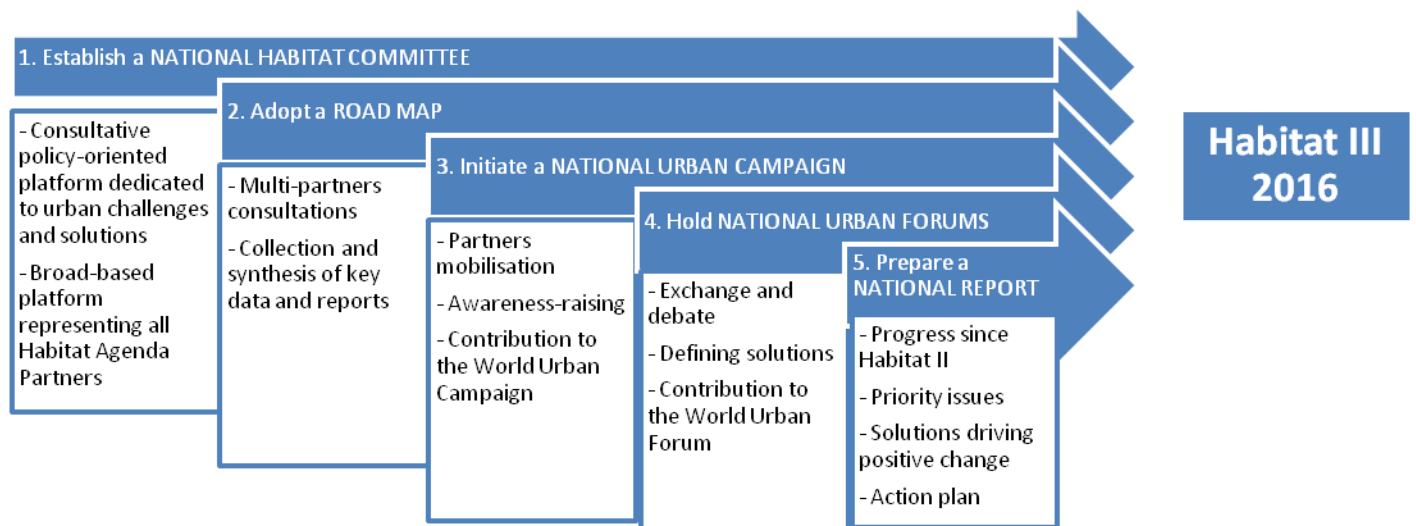
- National government, represented by the key ministries and institutions dealing with urban issues, including local government, urban planning and development, housing, lands, infrastructure, labor, economic development, finance, and gender;
- Local government, including their national associations and/or the capital city, as well as medium and small towns, the latter being also geographically, functionally and historically important;
- Civil society and the private sector, including NGOs, the media, professional societies, the private sector, women's and youth groups, minorities and special interest groups;
- Academic institutions, including universities, as well as research and training institutions; and,
- External support agencies, including bilateral and multilateral donors, the United Nations, international NGOs, and other support agencies.

The establishment of such committees were a factor of success during Habitat II, ensuring that the position held by national delegations, represented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is technically sound and the product of a broad system of consultation at ground level.

Purpose of the National Habitat Committees,

- To act as a consultative policy-oriented platform dedicated to address urban challenges at the country level, meant to support the design of a policy framework for concerted actions and programs that address national urban policies.

- National Habitat Committees could formulate, adopt and implement a road-map that includes country and local consultations to debate and define priority issues, identify solutions to urban challenges, the preparation of a national report for Habitat III.
- In order to support the preparatory process, National Habitat Committees may initiate a National Urban Campaign to mobilize all partners on key urban issues. The National Urban Campaign should help catalysing the engagement of all partners that have the potential to articulate pressing urban issues and to propose innovative solutions. The Campaign should emphasize positive changes in the urban sector, recognizing successful initiatives and 'City Changers' with the support of the media. Messages and solutions disseminated by National Urban Campaigns contribute to the World Urban Campaign, coordinated by UN-Habitat.
- National Habitat Committees may also hold National Urban Forum, broad-based national events that allow exchange, consultation and debate, engaging all partners in order to build or consolidate their national urban agenda towards Habitat III.



Additionally, NHCs can provide inputs to national preparations for sessions of the UN-Habitat Governing Council and the World Urban Forum, and be involved in UN-Habitat activities at the country and city levels in their respective countries. The NHCs should also be involved in the assessment of progress of the 1996 Habitat Agenda. The Global Taskforce will be happy to provide inputs on the reporting format upon request and in the dedicated webpage.

The Habitat Agenda 1996 can be consulted at

<http://www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?ID=1176&catid=10&typeid=24&subMenuId=0>

In the 6 UN Official languages (English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian and Chinese)

Some countries have opted to organize National Urban Forums, specific events to raise attention to the urban issues and that are being held in different context as a product of the work of the National Habitat Committee or as an independent event in itself.

Contents of the future Urban Agenda – Time for political choices

What are the priorities for local and territorial governments? A preliminary list to start with

1. Establish new multi-level and multi-partnership governance tools
2. Develop legal and financial mechanisms to support local and territorial governments and enable them to appropriately harness their potential
3. Promoting equal access to quality and sustainable basic services
4. Eliminating inequalities and poverty as universal agenda
5. Foster territorial cohesion among territories
6. Urban planning as a tool
7. Promote culture, diversity and creativity as a core element to build sustainable cities

ANNEX I - GLOSSARY

HABITAT II

The II United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, that took place in Istanbul, Turkey, from the 3 – 14th June 1996 and adopted the Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements and the Habitat Agenda, both documents were approved by the General Assembly in resolution A/CONF.165/14 on 7th august 1996.

HABITAT III

The Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development will take place in 2016 in a location and dates still to be determined. The Conference was called by the General Assembly of the UN by resolution 66/207 of 14 March 2012, following the bi-decennial cycle (Vancouver 1976, Istanbul 1996 and 2016). It is expected that Habitat III will be the Conference on cities, where local governments are part of decision making and will get the recognition as development actors that they deserve.

DECENTRALISATION

Process of reorganization of the State that involves a gradual transfer of responsibilities originally concentrated in central government towards other spheres of government (federal states, regional, provincial governments or municipalities) accompanied by the necessary resources to fulfill such responsibilities. The principle behind these processes is the belief that decision making and implementation are more efficient if taken as closest to citizens as possible (subsidiarity principle).

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

Capacity placed in local governments to govern themselves within the framework of a range of assigned responsibilities. This capacity may be political (capacity to elect their own government bodies, to elaborate policies and to take decisions independently from other government spheres), financial

(capacity to access resources and to dispose of them freely) or administrative (capacity for intern self-organization)

SUBSIDIARITY PRINCIPLE

Principle by which decisions have to be taken at the government sphere that is closest to the citizens, always within the responsibility assigned framework where the efficiency of these decisions is guaranteed.

LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Local government ability to respond to different challenges and needs through the elaboration of policies in agreement with institutional and stakeholders networks. It involves that local government interconnects with strategic stakeholders for collective decision-making and the resolution of conflicts in accordance with a given system of procedures and rules.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS versus LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The traditional United Nations language has been using the term “local authorities” to refer to local governments.

The Global Taskforce believes that this term needs to be revisited to recognize local governments as integral part of the State, as a legitimate form of government with legal powers to provide services, to create policies and to be accountable to the citizens it serve.

Additionally, the term “local authority” can also include utility firms that have a public mandate but are privately managed. A Metropolitan transport authority, for example, is also a local authority.

In this sense, Habitat III should recognize and use the terminology “local governments” all throughout the process leading to the final declaration and future urban agenda.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS versus REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS.... TERRITORIAL GOVERNMENTS?

Each country has a different structure and administrative tradition regarding public administration. Regions, Provinces, Counties...do not have the same meaning or powers across the world. Some countries are federal, others consider ancient cultural traditions as existing structures, others states are considered as “federations of municipalities” and have the local government at the base of the state.

A feasible option would be to use the term “territorial governments” to avoid conflict or exclusion of different spheres of government. The term, mostly generated in the EU by countries of Latin tradition, has gradually taken sense within the Anglo-Saxon world and it is today generally understood.

Certainly, the some-time use of “sub-national” governments should by all means be avoided within the UN context, as it has cultural or ethnical connotations that could frequently be physically placed not exactly within the borders of the present membership of the United Nations.

ANNEX II

UN-HABITAT GUIDELINES AND FORMAT FOR THE PREPARATION OF NATIONAL REPORTS: ON SIX KEY TOPICS, TWENTY-EIGHT ISSUES AND ELEVEN INDICATORS

A. INTRODUCTION

The guidelines contained in the present document have been prepared in response to resolution 24/14 of the UN-Habitat Governing Council titled “Inputs for and support to the preparatory process of the third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III)”, adopted at its twenty-fourth session, by which the Council invited Member States to prepare,

...before the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for Habitat III, to be held in New York during the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, national reports which consider the implementation of the Habitat II agenda and of other relevant internationally agreed goals and targets, as well as new challenges, emerging trends and a prospective vision for sustainable human settlements and urban development, as a basis for the formulation of a “New Urban Agenda”, in line with paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 67/216” (paragraph 40).

Through the same resolution, the Governing Council also requested UN-Habitat to suggest guidelines and format for the preparation of national reports, which should,

... consider the implementation of the Habitat II agenda and new challenges, emerging trends and a prospective vision for sustainable human settlements and urban development, as well as cross-cutting issues, in a balanced way (paragraph 2).

In the Habitat Agenda adopted in 1996, Heads of State and Government committed themselves to two main goals, i.e. “Adequate Shelter for All” and “Sustainable Human Settlements in an Urbanizing World”, and to implementing a Plan of Action based on these goals.

With respect to the goal of “Adequate Shelter for All”, Heads of State and Government committed themselves to enabling people to obtain shelter that is healthy, safe, secure, accessible and affordable and that includes basic services, facilities and amenities, and in which everyone enjoys freedom from discrimination in housing and legal security of tenure – all fully consistent with human rights standards (paragraph 39, Habitat Agenda). In the Millennium Declaration, Heads of State and Government committed themselves to improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. They also committed themselves to halving by 2015 the proportion of the population without adequate sustainable access to drinking water and basic sanitation.

With respect to the goal of “Sustainable Human Settlements in an Urbanizing World”, Heads of State and Government committed themselves to developing societies that make efficient use of resources within the carrying capacity of ecosystems and by providing all people, in particular those belonging to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, with equal opportunities for a healthy, safe, and productive life in harmony with nature and their cultural heritage and spiritual and cultural values, and a life which

ensures economic and social development and environmental protection, thereby contributing to the achievement of national sustainable development (paragraph 42, Habitat Agenda).

B. ASSESSING PROGRESS AND LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: FORMAT AND CONTENT

I. Urban Demographic Issues

Describe what your Central Government, Local Authorities (including the capital or major city) and other subnational governmental authorities, in partnership with stakeholders, have achieved, through the Habitat Agenda, in the areas listed below. Also describe the challenges experienced and lessons learnt in these areas, as well as future challenges and issues that could be addressed through a New Urban Agenda.

1. Managing rapid urbanization
2. Managing rural-urban linkages
3. Addressing urban youth needs
4. Responding to the needs of the aged
5. Integrating gender in urban development

II. Land and Planning

Describe what your Central Government, Local Authorities (including the capital or major city) and other subnational governmental authorities, in partnership with stakeholders, have achieved, through the Habitat Agenda, in the areas listed below. Also describe the challenges experienced and lessons learnt in these areas, as well as future challenges and issues that could be addressed through a New Urban Agenda.

6. Ensuring sustainable urban planning and design
7. Improving urban land management, including addressing urban sprawl
8. Enhancing urban food production
9. Reducing traffic congestion
10. Improving technical capacity to plan and manage cities

III. Environment and Urbanization

Describe what your Central Government, Local Authorities (including the capital or major city) and other subnational governmental authorities, in partnership with stakeholders, have achieved, through the Habitat Agenda, in the areas listed below. Also describe the challenges experienced and lessons learnt in these areas, as well as future challenges and issues that could be addressed through a New Urban Agenda.

11. Addressing climate change
12. Disaster risk reduction

IV. Urban Governance and Legislation

Describe what your Central Government, Local Authorities (including the capital or major city) and other subnational governmental authorities, in partnership with stakeholders, have achieved, through the Habitat Agenda, in the areas listed below. Also describe the challenges experienced and lessons learnt in these areas, as well as future challenges and issues that could be addressed through a New Urban Agenda.

13. Improving urban legislation
14. Decentralization and strengthening of local authorities
15. Improving participation and human rights in urban development
16. Enhancing urban safety
17. Improving social inclusion and equity

V. Urban Economy

Describe what your Central Government, Local Authorities (including the capital or major city) and other subnational governmental authorities, in partnership with stakeholders, have achieved, through the Habitat Agenda, in the areas listed below. Also describe the challenges experienced and lessons learnt in these areas, as well as future challenges and issues that could be addressed through a New Urban Agenda.

18. Improving municipal/local finance
19. Strengthening and improving access to housing finance
20. Supporting local economic development
21. Creating decent jobs and livelihoods
22. Integration of the urban economy into national development policy

VI. Housing and Basic Services

Describe what your Central Government, Local Authorities (including the capital or major city) and other subnational governmental authorities, in partnership with stakeholders, have achieved, through the Habitat Agenda, in the areas listed below. Also describe the challenges experienced and lessons learnt in these areas, as well as future challenges and issues that could be addressed through a New Urban Agenda.

23. Slum upgrading and prevention
24. Improving access to adequate housing
25. Ensuring sustainable access to safe drinking water
26. Ensuring sustainable access to basic sanitation and drainage
27. Improving access to clean domestic energy
28. Improving access to sustainable means of transport

VII. Indicators

Provide data for your country for the following urban indicators. Data should be for 1996, 2006 and 2013, when possible disaggregated by gender.

- (a) Percentage of people living in slums
 - (b) Percentage of urban population with access to adequate housing
 - (c) Percentage of people residing in urban areas with access to safe drinking water
 - (d) Percentage of people residing in urban areas with access to adequate sanitation
 - (e) Percentage of people residing in urban areas with access to regular waste collection
 - (f) Percentage of people residing in urban areas with access to clean domestic energy
 - (g) Percentage of people residing in urban areas with access to public transport
 - (h) Level of effective decentralization for sustainable urban development measured by: (i) participation of local and regional governments in the process leading to legislation and policy formulation regarding urban issues; (ii) percentage of both income and expenditure allocated to local and regional governments from the national budget
 - (i) Number of city, regional and national authorities that have implemented urban policies supportive of local economic development and creation of decent jobs and livelihoods
 - (j) Number of city and regional authorities that have implemented plans and designs for sustainable and resilient cities that are inclusive and respond to urban population growth adequately
 - (k) Share of national gross domestic product (GDP) that is produced in urban areas
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Note: To support countries in the preparation of their national reports with adequate data, it is proposed that a slightly modified version of UN-Habitat's **Urban Indicators Programme** be resuscitated. The Urban Indicators Programme will also provide the data needed for the preparation of the Habitat III global report, to be led by UN-Habitat.
