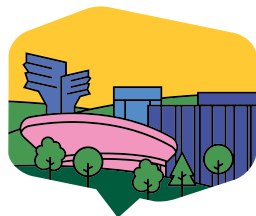


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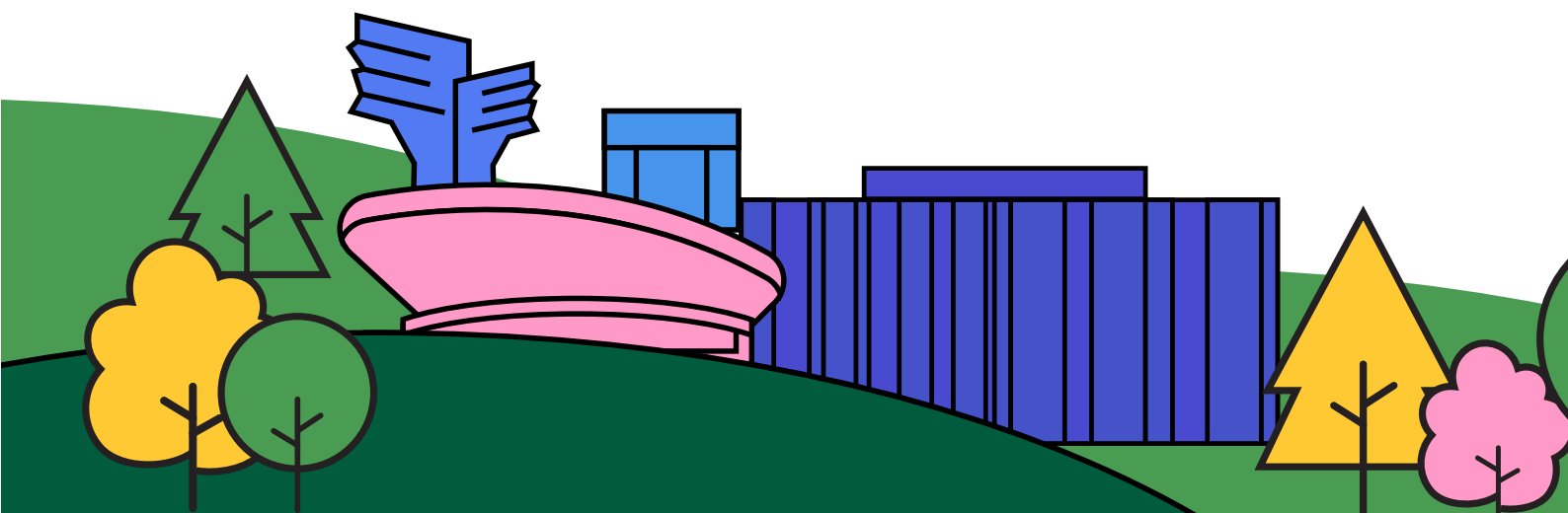


UN HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

KATOWICE, POLAND | 26-30 JUNE 2022

WUF-11 Background Paper

Transforming our cities for a better urban future







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Introduction

Researchers, policymakers, communities across the urban-rural continuum and civil society organizations, among others, have long been preoccupied with the future of cities, often holding varied viewpoints and charting divergent paths— and yet all geared toward realizing a better urban future.

A better urban future will require overcoming the multiple crises facing cities today. The climate emergency, the massive disruption and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on cities and communities, the growing inequalities and breakdown of the social contract and ongoing conflicts in Ukraine, Syria, Yemen, and across the world has underscored the importance and urgency of securing sustainable urban futures.

This important conference on cities and human settlements will be hosted by the City of Katowice, Poland. The crisis in Ukraine has had a devastating impact on the country with over 10 million people displaced inside the country and across neighboring countries, including Poland. By April 2022, Poland was hosting 3 million Ukrainian refugees¹, stretching the capacity of its cities, including in Katowice. As such this is an extraordinary World Urban Forum.

Space will be created for a dedicated focus on the Ukraine crisis, mobilizing action from both international and Ukrainian actors and learning lessons from urban recovery in other contexts. The overall theme of this 11th World Urban Forum will focus on overcoming the multiple urban crises while transforming our cities for a better urban future.

COVID-19 will feature prominently at WUF11 as it has provided a rare inflection point; an opportunity to look back, correct mistakes of the past and transform cities globally for resilience, inclusion, equity, green and economic sustainability.² The pandemic has not only laid bare major challenges

facing our cities, it has also added a sense of urgency for a radical shift from unsustainable practices if the vision of a better urban future is to be realized.

The thematic focus on COVID-19 is borne out of the reality that despite the devastating impacts of the pandemic on urban areas across the world, cities are here to stay. The future of humanity is undoubtedly urban, but not exclusively in large metropolitan areas. Cities are central to sustainable development as they account for more than half (56 per cent) of the world's population and are expected to absorb virtually all the future growth of this population³.

While cities are diverse — in terms of their history, geography, culture, context and institutions, among others — an emerging commonality amid this pandemic is that they should be adequately equipped to respond effectively to a broader range of shocks and threats and to transition to more sustainable, just, green, resilient and healthy futures for communities across the urban-rural continuum.⁴

Sustainable urban futures will be determined by inclusive and transformative policies to eradicate poverty and inequality; productive urban economies that provide opportunities for all; greener investment and sustainable consumption and production patterns; integrated urban and territorial planning that is responsive to emerging realities; collaborative and integrated systems of urban governance; prioritization of public health; inclusive deployment of innovation and technology; and building resilience which enables cities to respond to and withstand a wide range of shocks.

It is for this reason that building economic, social and environmental resilience, including appropriate governance and institutional structures must be at the heart of the future of cities. These basic ingredients for achieving sustainable urban futures are all encapsulated in the global



Cities should be adequately equipped to respond effectively to a broader range of shocks and threats and to transition to more sustainable, just, green, resilient and healthy futures for communities across the urban-rural continuum

1 UNHCR (2022) *Operational Data Portal: Ukraine Refugee Situation*, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

2 United Nations (2020) *Policy Brief: COVID-19 in an Urban World*, <https://unhabitat.org/un-secretary-general%E2%80%99s-policy-brief-on-covid-19-in-an-urban-world>

3 United Nations (2022) *Sustainable Development Goal 11*, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/goal-11/>

4 UN-Habitat (2021) *Cities and Pandemics: Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi, https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2021/03/cities_and_pandemics-towards_a_more_just_green_and_healthy_future_un-habitat_2021.pdf

development agendas, particularly the New Urban Agenda (NUA) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (in SDG11). The effective implementation of these global agendas provides a pathway to transformation in our cities. The failure or weakness in implementing these frameworks partly accounts for the inability to effectively respond to existing and emerging urban challenges, many of which have been amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic. While these frameworks have changed urban discourses in important ways, they have not had the transformative impact that was envisaged. Evaluating their impact should be an important outcome of the World Urban Forum.

The multiple crises affecting cities and countries across the world, also call for a stronger focus on integrated transformative actions that match the complexity of the crises we are facing and the urgency and scale needed to act.

The World Urban Forum

Organized and convened by UN-Habitat, the World Urban Forum has become the foremost international gathering for exchanging views and experiences on sustainable urbanization in all its

ramifications. The inclusive nature of the Forum, combined with high-level participation, makes it a unique United Nations conference and major international gathering on urban issues.

The objectives of the World Urban Forum are to:

- i. Raise awareness of sustainable urbanization among stakeholders and constituencies, including the general public;
- ii. Improve the collective knowledge of sustainable urbanization through inclusive open debates, sharing of lessons learned and the exchange of best practices and good policies;
- iii. Increase coordination and cooperation between different stakeholders and constituencies for the advancement and implementation of sustainable urbanization;
- iv. To provide substantive and strategic inputs from multilateral organizations, subnational and national governments and other stakeholders for reporting on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.



The World Urban Forum has become the foremost international gathering for exchanging views and experiences on sustainable urbanization in all its ramifications

Thematic Objectives of the Eleventh Session of the World Urban Forum WUF 11 Dialogues: Transforming our cities for a better urban future

Extraordinary Dialogue	Dialogue 1	Dialogue 2	Dialogue 3	Dialogue 4	Dialogue 5	Dialogue 6
Urban crises and urban recovery	Equitable urban futures	Building resilience for sustainable urban future	Future urban economy and finance	Integrated governance in spatial planning for a more Just, Green, and Healthy Urban Future	Transforming cities through innovative solutions and technologies	Greener urban futures



Extraordinary Dialogue: Urban crises and urban recovery

Cities are facing multiple crises (climate, health, inequality, conflict, natural disasters) at the same time that increasingly result into acute situations with loss of life and assets, requiring a humanitarian response. As the COVID-19 response has demonstrated, crises are opportunities to fundamentally shift policy and leapfrog forward towards more green, healthy, and just cities. As such, this dialogue cuts across the other thematic dialogues who will zoom in with ideas on how different approaches to urban crises can be applied to ensure prevention, enhance response and accelerate recovery.



Children's new play space, a legacy of the UN-Habitat Assembly at Mlango Kubwa, Mathare Informal Settlement, Nairobi, Kenya. © UN-Habitat/Kirsten Milhahn

Extraordinary Dialogue: Urban crises and urban recovery

Key Issues

Response to crises often still fails to underscore the importance of ensuring a tailored approach to urban areas. The complexity of crises in urban areas requires a much more detailed and granular understanding of its impact to allow for an effective response. The role of local governments, as front-line responders, is often overlooked. The same goes for their local knowledge of urban systems and communities, their capacity to mobilize local actors and their central role in shaping a better urban future, pushing innovation. Taking into account the central role of cities in national economies, including in supporting rural economies, through the urban-rural linkages, there is a strong need to ensure the full integration of urban recovery into national strategies and the international instruments that support them. Over the last decade, important new practices and approaches have emerged in dealing with the variety of crises facing cities. Important lessons learnt can be drawn and new global instruments can be shaped. In a few areas, more needs to be done. This is particularly true when it comes to urban economic and housing recovery, where the private sector plays a central role but enabling policies and plans are crucial.

Objectives of the Dialogue

This Dialogue will explore how national and local governments can better prepare and respond to urban crises and use the recovery to accelerate progress to a more green, healthy and just cities.

Initial Questions

This Dialogue will address the following questions:

- i. How do the multiple crises affecting cities intersect (climate, pandemic, natural/man-made disasters) and what does that mean for the response?
- ii. How can we better understand and manage displacement caused by urban crises, facilitate return to normalcy and offer durable solutions?
- iii. How do we ensure a more effective response across the humanitarian, development and peace nexus?
- iv. How do we ensure that building back better helps us to accelerate towards climate outcomes, more equitable cities that leave no one and no place behind, more healthy cities and more resilient urban environments?
- v. How do we drive urban economic and housing recovery without exerting undue pressure on national budgeting processes?
- vi. How can innovation help accelerate recovery and foster smarter cities?
- vii. What needs to change about existing institutional arrangements, relevant policies and plans and financing instruments to fast track more efficient and impactful urban recovery that can drive national recovery?



Dialogue 1: Equitable urban futures

Over the past decade, “urban equity” has been a central theme underlying major urban fora. The Seventh Session of the World Urban Forum⁵ on *Urban Equity in Development: Cities for Life* was held amid concerns about growing inequalities across the world. Participants considered how to integrate issues relating to urban equity effectively into the development agenda in an increasingly urbanized world.

The *Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Cities 2030* rekindled these concerns by drawing attention to various forms of inequality as a persistent challenge facing cities and communities.⁶ The Tenth Session of the World Urban Forum⁷ noted that while progress was being made in creating more inclusive cities, inequality was “greater than ever,” and still rising; 75 per cent of the world’s cities were more unequal in recent times compared to the two previous decades.⁸

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated poverty and deepened existing inequalities across the urban-rural continuum. It has laid bare the fault lines pervasive in many urban areas. The health, economic and social consequences of the pandemic had a disproportionate impact on vulnerable low-income households, informal sector workers, women and girls, migrants, internally displaced persons, indigenous peoples, persons with disability, older people and the poor.

5 Held in Medellin, Colombia (2014).
6 Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Cities 2030, <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2018/04/Agenda-10-WUF9-KL-Declaration-English-1.pdf>
7 Held in Abu Dhabi, UAE (2020).
8 UN-Habitat (2020) *Report of the Tenth Session of the World Urban Forum*, <https://unhabitat.org/report-of-the-tenth-session-of-the-world-urban-forum>



The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated poverty and deepened existing inequalities across the urban-rural continuum. It has laid bare the fault lines pervasive in many urban areas.

In this regard, recovery efforts that entail progressive urban social programmes can trigger the required transformation needed for a better future for these groups. To achieve a more egalitarian society, well-designed socio-economic policy measures that ensure fair and equitable redistribution of resources and opportunities as well as access to affordable housing for these vulnerable groups are an imperative.⁹ These serve to counter market forces by giving priority to poor neighbourhoods and underserved areas in the provision of urban infrastructure and social services that will reduce inequality and enhance social inclusion.

Social protection aimed at inclusion within communities putting marginalized groups at the centre is also urgently needed and should be mainstreamed in domestic resource frameworks as it is a necessary investment in people, and not a burden.¹⁰ In the US, for instance, the social protection measures kept millions from poverty in 2020; poverty declined from 11.8 percent in 2019 to 9.1 percent in 2020 on account of government relief efforts.¹¹

Urban futures can only be equitable for all when the rights of marginalized groups living in vulnerable situations in cities are protected. When gender equality is promoted. When there is broad-based civic participation. When persons are protected against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, age, or disability. When marginalized groups including slum dwellers, the homeless, indigenous people, youth, older persons,

9 “UN-Habitat places affordability, sustainability and inclusiveness of the housing sector at the core of the urbanization process to ensure access to adequate housing for all. Housing is more than just a roof; it is the opportunity for better lives and a better future” [<https://unhabitat.org/topic/housing>]. It has also been argued housing belongs at the center of the post-pandemic recovery efforts given its multiple cross-societal benefits. [Habitat for Humanity International

(2021) *Housing at the Center of Recovery: Building back better through policies and systems in the developing world*, <https://www.habitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/Housing%20at%20the%20Center%20of%20Recovery-Policy%20Brief%20Discussion.pdf>

10 United Nations (2020) *Policy Brief: COVID-19 in an Urban World*, <https://unhabitat.org/un-secretary-general%E2%80%99s-policy-brief-on-covid-19-in-an-urban-world>

11 According to Supplemental Poverty Measure [United States Census Bureau (2021) ‘Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2020’, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2021/income-poverty-health-insurance-coverage.html>]



On June 20th, 2019, (10 am) members of the Mathare Community, Architects from Arvet, a Swedish architecture firm and representatives of UN-Habitat opened the Children's Corner in Mathare Slum in Nairobi.

persons with disabilities and all minorities are empowered. Approaches such as inclusive design and planning, which embed empathy into their delivery can unlock more equitable futures. Strategies for inclusive city design such as those developed at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in East London, where inclusive design was successful integrated across leadership, planning, design, construction and ongoing maintenance in this part of the city. Persons with disabilities, a key group to integrate to increase equity, were involved throughout through the 'Built Environment Access Panel'.¹²

Equitable urban futures can be realized by taking forward the *Right to the City* and reforming institutional frameworks that entrench poverty and inequality. The *Right to the City* underpins the social value of urbanization and implies that all people, particularly vulnerable and marginalized groups, should have equal opportunities and access to urban resources, services and goods. Local governments that embrace the *Right to the City* can create more equitable outcomes.¹³

It is feared that inequalities are likely to be greater in the post pandemic era if governments do not take decisive actions

¹² GDI Hub, LLDC and Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (2019) 'InclusiveDesignStandards', <https://www.disabilityinnovation.com/news/inclusive-design-standards-updated-for-2019>

¹³ UN-Habitat (2020) *World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi, <https://unhabitat.org/wcr/>

now.¹⁴ Recent analysis of the potential increase in poverty due to the effects of COVID-19 shows that as much as half a billion people or eight per cent of the world's population could fall into poverty.¹⁵ Economic growth in itself will not reduce poverty or increase wellbeing if it is not accompanied by equitable policies that allow low-income or marginalized groups to benefit from such growth.¹⁶ Therefore, investing in human capital formation and fostering sustained economic opportunities for the poor and underprivileged is key to ensuring that the envisaged recovery leaves no one behind.

Cities will not be able to offer a bright urban future if the needs of the most vulnerable are not met. UN-Habitat's report *Cities and Pandemic Report: Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future* makes a case for universal social protection in the form of universal basic income, universal health insurance and universal housing as part of a new social contract as cities seek to recover from the impacts of the pandemic.¹⁷

¹⁴ Stiglitz, J. (2020) 'Conquering the Great Divide', *Finance and Development* September 2020, <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2020/09/pdf/COVID19-and-global-inequality-joseph-stiglitz.pdf>

¹⁵ Sumner, A., C. Hoy and E. Ortiz-Juarez (2020) 'Estimates of the impact of COVID-19 on global poverty', WIDER Working Paper 2020/43 <https://www.wider.unu.edu/sites/default/files/Publications/Working-paper/PDF/wp2020-43.pdf>

¹⁶ UN-Habitat (2020) *World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi, <https://unhabitat.org/wcr/>

¹⁷ UN-Habitat (2021) *Cities and Pandemics: Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi, https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2021/03/cities_and_pandemics-towards_a_more_just_green_and_healthy_future_un-habitat_2021.pdf

Dialogue 1: Equitable Urban Futures

Key Issues

“Urban equity” continues to be a central theme in major urban fora, implying that inequality is still growing, and a lot still needs to be done. While urban areas offer significant opportunities to generate prosperity, which in turn can be leveraged to eradicate poverty, the equitable distribution of benefits and opportunities remains a challenge in both developed and developing countries. Access to economic and life opportunities as well as adequate, safe, and affordable housing and basic services is still elusive to most people especially in developing countries.

Cities are key drivers for protecting and promoting human rights and optimizing the urban advantage for its dwellers. For sustainable urban futures to be realized, measures are needed to address issues relating poverty and inequality. It is thus crucial to institute redistributive policies, promote rights-based policy approaches and promote a more equitable distribution of the urban advantage.

Sound institutions as called for in the NUA are key for leveraging and distributing the benefits associated with urbanization. Such institutions determine the efficacy of urban policies and programmes implemented by all levels of government, including non-state actors.

The SDGs and the NUA offer a roadmap to equitable growth and prosperity by acknowledging the importance of ensuring the distribution of opportunity in the urban development processes for the benefit of all. Implementing these global agenda should thus be a priority at various levels of governance

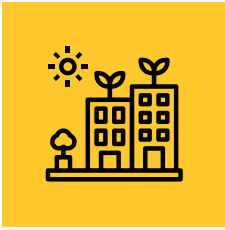
Objectives of the Dialogue

This Dialogue will explore how cities can address the challenges of inequality and poverty as well as strengthen social cohesion so that a prosperous, inclusive and equitable future can be realized for all.

Initial Questions

This Dialogue will address the following questions:

- viii. How can cities respond to the underlying challenges of poverty and inequality to ensure that no one is left behind? What role can that subnational and city governments can play in eradicating poverty and reducing inequality?
- ix. What are the new and transformative approaches that can be taken to address the needs of the most vulnerable groups?
- x. How can cities promote people-centred and place-based interventions?
- xi. How can urban governance institutions reform to be pro-equity in the post-COVID recovery?
- xii. What is the role of local communities in building equitable and inclusive urban futures? How can local communities nurture social cohesion and solidarity with the aim of building equitable and inclusive urban futures?
- xiii. How is the built environment and existing urban systems contribute to deepening inequalities? How can the design of urban spaces and systems contribute to reduction of poverty and inequality?
- xiv. How can cities, the built environment and local governments promote inclusion and equity through inclusive and accessible design of urban spaces, planning and innovation? How are cities addressing the needs of children, women and girls, elderly, persons with disability and other marginalized groups with regard to access to urban spaces?
- xv. How can access to safe, affordable, adequate housing be enhanced for all? What are the new and transformative approaches or innovative solutions being employed by various level of government to achieve equitable housing?



Dialogue 2: Building resilience for sustainable urban future

The COVID-19 pandemic provides cities with the much needed opportunity to refocus and build up resilience¹⁸ against unexpected shocks, especially for those in vulnerable situations.¹⁹ “Resilient cities are those able to absorb, adapt, transform and prepare for past and future shocks and stresses in order to ensure sustainable development, well-being and inclusive growth.”²⁰ Following the effects of COVID-19, building resilience will require a stronger and more effective multilateral systems which can complement and reinforce—not undermine—national and local efforts to put the world firmly on the trajectory of sustainable development.²¹

Building resilience must be at the heart

- 18 Resilience in the urban context refers to the ability of any urban system, with its inhabitants, to maintain continuity through all shocks and stresses, while positively adapting and transforming toward sustainability UN-Habitat and DiMUR (2020)
- 19 Experiences from COVID-19 is evidencing that persons with disabilities, older persons, and persons from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds are among those hardest hit by the pandemic [Alliance (2021), *Survey on the Experience of Persons with Disabilities Adapting to the COVID-19 Global Pandemic*, <https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/content/ida-survey-experiences-persons-disabilities-adapting-covid-19-global-pandemic>; WorldBlind Union (2020) *Amplifying Voices: Our Lives, Our Say: Learning from COVID-19 Through the Experiences of Blind and Partially Sighted Persons across the World*, <https://worldblindunion.org/covid-19-amplifying-voices-our-lives-our-say/>]
- 20 OECD (2016) *Resilient Cities: Policy Highlights of the OECD Report (Preliminary version)*, <https://www.oecd.org/cfe/regionaldevelopment/resilient-cities-report-preliminary-version.pdf>
- 21 United Nations (2021) *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2021* https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/WESP2021_FullReport.pdf

of sustainable urban futures. National governments and relevant stakeholders at various levels and in different contexts must take steps to build resilience across various dimensions— economic, social and environmental, including appropriate governance and institutional structures. The interconnected nature of risks and opportunities in cities calls for a systemic approach in enhancing resilience across different dimensions, with the implementation of the global agendas being crucial in building urban resilience.

Economic resilience can be enhanced through diversification/repositioning the urban economy, building strong economies to grow investments, access to productive employment/income generation opportunities, supporting the informal sector and leveraging new fiscal sustainability frameworks. Policies and programmes designed to ensure access to sustained productive employment, nurture the talent and skills required to thrive in a modern urban economy have a key role to play in building resilient urban economies.²²

Social or societal resilience can be enhanced through policies and actions that address poverty and inequality, including context-specific social protection schemes to protect and promote the rights of marginalized groups living in vulnerable situations. In this regard, social resilience should be people-centred, by focusing on the well-being of individuals, enhancing inclusiveness and reducing inequality.²³ There is a growing consensus that universal basic income, universal health insurance and universal housing should be part of the new normal as cities seek to recover from

- 22 UN-Habitat (2020)
- 23 OECD (2020) *Building Back Better: A Sustainable, Resilient Recovery after COVID-19*, https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=133_133639-s08q2ridhf&title=Building-back-better-_A-sustainable-resilient-recovery-after-Covid-19&ga=2.60021037.1859826171.1621058256-1077390381.1612859062



The drive towards environmentally sustainable futures must consider the role of cities. The investment choices made today would shape our future world; this particularly is the case with urban infrastructure

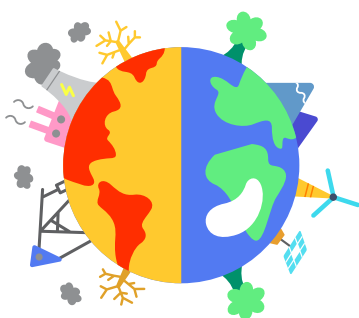
the impacts of COVID-19.²⁴ The promotion of social inclusion and cohesion through social mix— different social categories living in the same neighbourhood — should be part of any social resilience strategy.²⁵ It is also important to recognize the importance of culture in delivering social or societal resilience.

Environmental resilience can be enhanced by investment in green infrastructure, including renewable and cleaner forms of energy that will we create lasting solutions, reduce the risks of future crises and strengthen resilience to the impacts of climate change. Environmental resilience should cover raising awareness about the different types of urban risks at the local level and the identification of feasible solutions for disaster prevention and preparedness.²⁶

Achieving institutional resilience entails: building stronger and more nimble forms of multilevel collaboration that respond to sustainable urban futures; harnessing new technologies in steering resilient urban futures; well-funded and resourced local governments; integrated urban planning as a foundation of resilient urban futures that can withstand various threats and shocks;²⁷

building the required capacity for realizing sustainable urban futures in ways that also help to advance the NUA, SDGs and other development agenda relevant to sustainable urbanization.

Building resilience for sustainable urban futures is a multisectoral, multidimensional and multi-stakeholder effort, which requires effective collaboration and cooperation across all scales, as the various dimension of resilience are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. In practice, well-designed resilience policies can cover these dimensions simultaneously.²⁸ For instance, measures designed to drive the urban economy and thus, enhance economic resilience should be aligned with the long-term objectives of achieving net-zero GHG emissions.²⁹ Moreover, investments in climate resilience strategies such as adaptation not only deliver environmental benefits, but they also have the potential of delivering economic and social benefits.³⁰ The notion of resilience must go beyond *building back better* to *building differently*, in a manner that does not preserve the current situation or represents a palliative, but a real change that confronts structural inequalities in an uneven society and represents a development gain.



Investment in ecosystem services and natural infrastructure are not only a cost effective and sustainable way to improve resilience to climate impacts, they also offer employment opportunities similar to human-made infrastructure investments

24 UN-Habitat (2021) *Cities and Pandemics: Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi

25 UN-Habitat and DiMUR (2020) *City Resilience Action Planning Tool*, https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/05/cityrap_tool_booklet_2020.pdf

26 UN-Habitat and DiMUR (2020)

27 Sharifi, A. and A. R. Khavarian-Garmsir (2020) 'Urban resilience: Ten lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic' <http://haznet.ca/urban-resilience-ten-lessons-covid-19-pandemic/>

28 OECD (2020) *Building Back Better: A Sustainable, Resilient Recovery after COVID-19*, https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=133_133639-s08q2ridhf&title=Building-back-better-_A-sustainable-resilient-recovery-after-Covid-19&ga=2.60021037.1859826171.1621058256-1077390381.1612859062

29 Likewise, building resilient food systems should be aim at a net zero carbon pathway.

30 Global Commission on Adaptation (2019) *Adapt Now: A Global Call for Leadership on Climate Resilience*, https://gca.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/GlobalCommission_Report_FINAL.pdf



Dialogue 2: Building resilience for sustainable urban future

Key Issues

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that urban areas must continually adapt to various challenges in an integrated and holistic manner. At the same time, disruptive shocks such as the pandemic can serve as a catalyst for the transformation of society to a better future

Urban resilience should not just imply being able to withstand adversity, but without changing the underlying conditions that created such adverse situation in the first place—i.e., embracing the notion of resilience that seems to favour endurance (more as a palliative) or maintaining the status quo. Rather, it should be transformative.

The idea of questioning the perspectives on resilience should go beyond *building back better* to *building differently*, in a manner that does not preserve the current situation, but a real change that confronts structural inequalities in an uneven society and represents a development gain. Building resilience should safeguard and sustain development goals (Table 1).

This transformative resilience holds the potential to turn the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic into opportunities for growth and innovation that addresses existing challenges in cities, particularly for urban *weak spots* such as slums and informal settlements that disproportionately suffer from the impacts of climate change and natural disasters.

Objectives of the Dialogue

This Dialogue will explore how urban resilience can be built across various dimensions— economic, social and environmental, including appropriate governance and institutional structures drawing on the lessons and experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, which provides an opportunity to transform our cities and town for a better urban future.

Initial Questions

This Dialogue will address the following questions:

- i. What policy directions can governments at various levels including relevant stakeholders take to build resilience across various dimensions— economic, social and environmental, including appropriate governance and institutional structures?
- ii. What are necessary supportive structure and capacity required to build resilient urban futures in different contexts?
- iii. How can various level of government implement innovative programmes and policies (such as universal basic income, universal health insurance and universal housing) that have the potential to address exclusion and inequalities in cities as well as enhancing societal resilience?
- iv. How do we ensure that resilience is transformative and does not serve as a palliative to maintain the status quo?
- v. How can organizational capacity in building urban resilience be enhanced and sustained in various levels of government?
- vi. How can investment and resources be channelled to local community-based groups to build local level urban resilience that contribute to the overall resilience of cities?
- vii. How can cities mobilise the potential of culture to support resilience for recovery and sustainability?

Table 1. Urban Resilience Principles

<p>Principle 1 Dynamic nature of urban resilience</p>	<p>Resilience is not a condition but a state that cannot be sustained unless the system evolves, transforms, and adapts to current and future circumstances and changes. Therefore, building resilience requires the implementation of context-specific and flexible plans and actions that can be adjusted to the dynamic nature of risk and resilience.</p>
<p>Principle 2 Systemic approach to cities</p>	<p>Recognizing that cities are comprised of systems interconnected through complex networks and that changes in one part have the potential to propagate through the whole network, building resilience thus requires a broad and holistic approach that considers these interdependencies when the urban system is exposed to disturbances.</p>
<p>Principle 3 Promoting participation in planning and governance</p>	<p>A resilient system ensures the preservation of life, limitation of injury, and enhancement of the 'prosperity' of its inhabitants by promoting inclusiveness and fostering comprehensive and meaningful participation of all, particularly those in vulnerable situations, in planning and various governance processes. Such an approach can ensure sense of ownership, thus achieving successful implementation of plans and actions.</p>
<p>Principle 4 Multi-stakeholder engagement</p>	<p>A resilient system should ensure the continuity of governance, economy, commerce, and other functions and flows upon which its inhabitants rely. This necessitates promoting open communication and facilitating integrative collaborations between a broad array of stakeholders, ranging from public entities, private sector, civil society, and academia to all of the city's inhabitants.</p>
<p>Principle 5 Strive towards development goals</p>	<p>Resilience building should drive towards, safeguard, and sustain development goals. Approaches to resilience should ensure that efforts to reduce risk and alleviate certain vulnerabilities do not generate or increase others. It must guarantee that human rights are fulfilled, respected, and protected under any circumstances.</p>

Source:
UN-Habitat and UNCDF (2021) *Global Compendium of Practices on Local Economic and Financial Recovery Building Urban Economic Resilience during and after COVID-19*, <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2021/03/global-compendium-of-practices-covid-19.pdf>



Dialogue 3: Future urban economy and finance

Cities are drivers of economic development and prosperity across the world— they generate economic value and serve as global platforms for production, innovation and trade, creating both formal and informal employment.³¹ As a nation's economic prosperity is intimately linked to that of its cities, urban economic resilience is imperative for the prosperity of countries and the global economy.

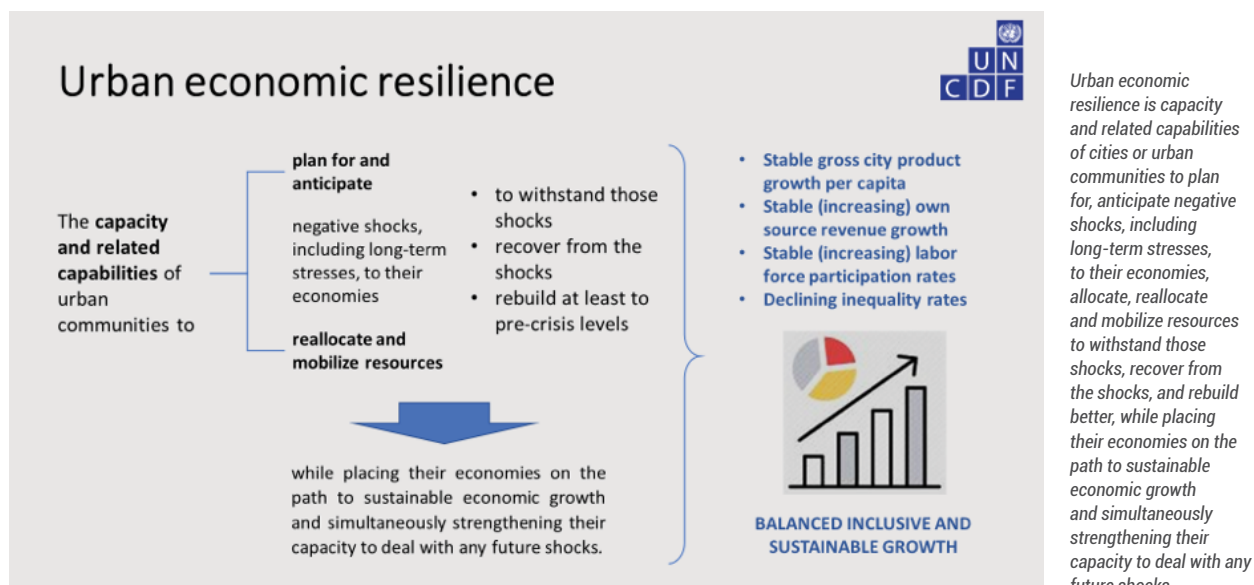
The prevailing trends, however, point to a wide range of unexpected threats and shocks that affect the economy of urban areas in a variety of ways. The COVID-19 pandemic and its containment measures illustrate the scale of the impacts of such shocks. The widespread job loss in urban areas, as well as supply-chain disruptions has exposed the economic vulnerability of cities; the hardest hit sectors are those that are closely associated with the economic wellbeing of cities and towns.³²

The pandemic has also accelerated some pre-existing trends that have significant implications for the urban economy. It has triggered a steep increase in national debt and greater government intervention in economies. It has enhanced focus on building and management of urban economic resilience (Figure 3). It has also brought to fore the need for greater diversification in supply chains, and in some instances, it has given impetus to the political push for deglobalization of supply

31 UN-Habitat (2020) *World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi, <https://unhabitat.org/wcr/>

32 Such as wholesale and retailing; vehicle repairs; real estate; business and administrative activities; manufacturing; tourism and food services; transportation, storage and communication; and arts, entertainment and recreation.

Figure 3: Conceptualization of urban economic resilience



Source: UNCDF (2020) 'Guiding principles and practices for urban economic recovery and resilience' <https://www.uncdf.org/article/6196/guiding-principles-and-practices-for-urban-economic-recovery-and-resilience>

chains in favour of regional and national supply chains.³³ Reduced household incomes and loss of jobs have exacerbated pre-existing crises such as poverty, inadequate housing and food insecurity.³⁴

Countries have responded by implementing economic rescue measures aimed at providing essential liquidity and protecting livelihoods in the face of abrupt losses of income.³⁵ At the same time, cities and countries have been faced with the delicate balancing act of managing the economy and health concerns; the "complex choreography" of reopening economies safely while minimizing the

33 Bremmer, I. (2021) 'This is what awaits us after the pandemic', <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/07/16/perspectives/post-pandemic-outlook-ian-bremmer-imf/index.html>

34 The rising domestic food price inflation in most countries coupled with reduced incomes is forcing households to cut down on the quantity and quality of their food consumption [World Bank (2021) 'Food Security and COVID-19', <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture/brief/food-security-and-covid-19>]

35 OECD (2020) *Building Back Better: A Sustainable, Resilient Recovery after COVID-19*, https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=133_133639-s08q2ridhf&title=Building-back-better-_A-sustainable-resilient-recovery-after-Covid-19&_ga=2.60021037.1859826171.1621058256-1077390381.1612859062

virus' resurgence.³⁶ This undertaking has been fragmented across board as various jurisdictions have varying levels of liquidity, as well as policy and fiscal space. An emerging lesson points to the importance of multilateral capacity as the fiscal space required to salvage the economy while keeping vast sectors of the population at home is beyond the individual strength of some nations.³⁷

The COVID-19 crisis has also shown that stimulus packages play a key role in the economic recovery of cities. Developing a range of tailored economic support and relief packages to help smaller businesses, informal workers and at-risk sectors is vital for building resilient urban economies. In the present setting, this should be done with two-fold purpose: rebuilding urban economies in the "new normal" and doing it "better" by promoting the transition to

36 McKinsey & Company (2020) 'Reimagining the postpandemic economic future', <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/reimagining-the-postpandemic-economic-future>

37 Blanco, M.L. and A. Rosales (2020) 'Global Governance and COVID-19: The Implications of Fragmentation and Inequality', <https://www.e-ir.info/2020/05/06/global-governance-and-covid-19-the-implications-of-fragmentation-and-inequality/>

greener, more equitable urban economies.³⁸ The circular economy holds great potential for a green recovery and a sustainable urban future. In this regard, cities and regions have a key role to play as “promoters, facilitators and enablers of circular economy” and thus adequate conditions should be in place to unlock this potential.³⁹

Policies and programmes designed to ensure access to sustained productive employment; nurture the talent and skills required to thrive in a modern urban economy especially in the face of the new normal; develop endogenous latent resources; ensure effective management of urban growth; identify and overcome the impediments that prevent cities from maximizing their productivity potential, including the effective management of urban diseconomies — all supported by digital technology — have a key role to play in building resilient urban economies.⁴⁰ The crises precipitated by the pandemic should be seen as an opportunity for cities to adopt innovative ways of driving their economies.

Economic diversification can play an important role in building up resilience against the downturns resulting from such multifaceted shocks. The lack of diversity in economic structure of cities and livelihood options increases the vulnerability and scale of economic decline.⁴¹ Cities can utilize existing and potential resources to diversify their economies to create jobs, enhance access to goods and services and reduce poverty and inequality. Greater economic diversity improves productivity and safeguards against major crises and shocks.

The informal sector is a lifeblood of many cities, yet it remains a major challenge for workers' rights, and it is often not included in public policy interventions (such as government measures to save jobs, bankroll

enterprises and provide workers with income support).⁴² Informality represents a significant barrier to financial inclusion, and limits growth opportunities as well as cushion against setbacks. Besides disrupting the livelihoods of millions in the informal sector who often have little or no safety net, the COVID-19 pandemic has introduced new forms of vulnerabilities associated to the nature of work and the workplace itself.

Moving forward, the crisis offers an opportunity to construct a future urban economy that is “more robust, just, ethical and equitable.”⁴³ Effective and equitable governance of the informal sector, spaces and actors is important for achieving the SDGs, and advancing the NUA to realize a better future. In this regard, urban planning must learn to embrace informality in the many parts of the world where it has become the dominant form of urban growth in employment.⁴⁴ Various levels of governments therefore need to explore ways to strengthen capabilities of all urban dwellers by reforming legal and regulatory frameworks as well as integrating urban planning and design with measures that provide greater security to workers, particularly those operating in the informal economy.⁴⁵

Countries can focus on expanding capabilities for marginalized social groups (such as minorities, indigenous peoples, migrants, women, person with disabilities, older persons, among others) whose realities continue to be shaped by inequalities and discrimination. A better urban future can be realized when adequate measures are in place to expand capabilities of such socially and economically vulnerable groups through improved health, education and access to technology in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.⁴⁶

38 UN-Habitat (2021) *Cities and Pandemics: Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi

39 OECD (2020) *The Circular Economy in Cities and Regions: Synthesis Report*, OECD Urban Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/10ac6ae4-en>.

40 UN-Habitat (2020) *World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi, <https://unhabitat.org/wcr/>

41 Sharifi, A. and A. R. Khavarian-Garmsir (2020) 'Urban resilience: Ten lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic', <http://haznet.ca/urban-resilience-ten-lessons-covid-19-pandemic/>

42 UN-Habitat (2020) *World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi, <https://unhabitat.org/wcr/>

43 UN-Habitat (2021) *Cities and Pandemics: Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi

44 UN-Habitat (2018) *Leading Change: Delivering the New Urban Agenda through Urban and Territorial Planning*; https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/Leading%20Change_Web%20Version%2001.02.18.pdf

45 UN-Habitat, 2018

46 UN-Habitat (2021) *Cities and Pandemics: Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi

The deployment of technology is enhancing efficiency of urban operations and services, promoting competitiveness, reducing carbon emissions, increasing access to affordable housing, enhancing participation in policy making, and a wide range of areas that hold the potential for better urban futures

Various levels of government can invest in employment and social protection measures e.g., sustained support for at-risk workers and enterprises, as well as social security and safety nets. It can also create tailored strategies that respond to different forms of vulnerability as well as unexpected shocks. These measures should be nuanced and wide-ranging to ensure that the different risks associated with gender, age, disability, ethnicity, migratory status and other characteristics are effectively identified and addressed in urban welfare programmes.⁴⁷ For example, planning for an ageing urban population requires innovation, infrastructural and architectural changes as well as devoting adequate resources to geriatric care and other social services.⁴⁸

Countries must support their ageing populations in line with the SDGs' overriding principle of "leave no one behind" and the New Urban Agenda's commitment "to addressing the social, economic and spatial implications of ageing populations... and harnessing the ageing factor as an opportunity for new decent jobs and sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, while improving the quality of life of the urban population."⁴⁹ Regions characterised by an ageing population and urban shrinkage, and are under the looming threat of urban economic blight, can—in addition to strategic actions aimed at retaining young and skilled persons and reducing their outflow from cities—increase the openness towards external migrants and integrating them into the cities as a part of reurbanization and revitalization strategies to compensate for the depopulation process.⁵⁰

Major economic activities are increasingly concentrated in large, urbanized regions, or "mega-regions," that are centred in and around large cities. The "winner take all" approach propels such places to growing economically faster than others creating

47 UN-Habitat (2021) *Cities and Pandemics: Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi

48 IMF (2017) *Regional Economic Outlook – Asia and Pacific: Preparing for Choppy Seas*, IMF, Washington, DC

49 United Nations (2018) *Ageing Related Policies and Priorities in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - As reported in the Voluntary National Reviews of 2016, 2017 and 2018*, https://www.un.org/development/desa/ageing/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2019/07/Analysis-Ageing_VNRs_Final28122018.pdf

50 WUF11 preconcept paper

more localized development as opposed to allowing more diffused spatial development across territories.⁵¹ Such asymmetrical development is compounding the urban spatial divide, especially with regard to secondary cities—whose population often face multiple deprivations relating income and employment, health, water and sanitation, and housing in regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa.⁵² To realize sustainable urban futures, various levels of government can develop and implement national urban policies and strategies that ensure integrated spatial growth and development to harness the economic potential of such small and intermediate cities within national urban systems.

Sustainable urban futures are contingent on viable sources of finance. Many cities face multiple constraints such as insufficient and unpredictable transfers from central government, weak fiscal management, poor revenue generation and legal constraints. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this precarious financial situation for cities. Yet, their investment needs to address their social, economic and environmental challenges remain as critical as ever. The "scissors effect" of rising expenditure and falling revenues is currently observed in most cities.⁵³

While government revenues remain the primary source of financing for most cities, the vast investment needed to achieve sustainable urban futures will not be met entirely through the means of the public sector or traditional financing. The path to long-term sustainable financing in cities requires diversification of sources and mobilization of resources from a range of actors. Employing innovative financing mechanisms are thus an imperative.

51 UN-Habitat (2020) *World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi, <https://unhabitat.org/wcr/>

52 UNICEF, UN-Habitat and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (2020) *Analysis of Multiple Deprivations in Secondary Cities in Sub-Saharan Africa* <https://www.unicef.org/esa/media/5561/file/Analysis%20of%20Multiple%20Deprivations%20in%20Secondary%20Cities%20-%20Analysis%20Report.pdf>

53 OECD (2021) 'OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The territorial impact of COVID-19: Managing the crisis and recovery across levels of government', <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/the-territorial-impact-of-covid-19-managing-the-crisis-and-recovery-across-levels-of-government-a2c6abaf/>

Dialogue 3: Resilient Economies and Sustainable Finance: Catalyst for Productive Urban Futures

Key Issues

There is little doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted urban economies across the world. Following the pandemic, cities have experienced a decline in economic output, a drop in employment, a shrinking fiscal space, and growing pressure on public finances.⁵⁴ Differences in the scale of the impact of the pandemic can be attributed to the resilience of the urban economy, economic structure of urban areas, exposure to global markets, pre-existing inequalities, fiscal health of various levels of government, employment and social protection measures, among others

Various levels of government have key roles to play in ensuring that the future urban economy is resilient and contributes to inclusive prosperity for all. For those at the bottom of the economic ladder, the economic value of urbanization lies in its contribution to poverty reduction, whether through formal or informal employment.⁵⁵ Government and stakeholders at various levels should thus create conditions that allow for more economic opportunities for all. They should support innovation within cities as a driver of new businesses and growth.

A future where economic aspirations and opportunities are realized for all is envisioned in the SDGs and the NUA. This translates to poverty reduction, expanding capabilities and reducing worker vulnerability through adequate employment and social protection measures. It also means recognizing that the care economy and the informal economy as integral parts of the future urban economy.

Deliberately addressing the vulnerabilities that the pandemic has exposed is integral to putting our cities on the path to economically resilient futures. Fundamental to building a resilient post-pandemic economy is keeping in mind the self-reinforcing objectives of productivity improvement and inclusion.⁵⁶

Financing sustainable urbanization is an investment in the present and future wellbeing of all nations.⁵⁷ It is important to address how urban futures can be adequately financed in the context of dwindling local government revenues amidst COVID-19, increasing national budget deficit and decreasing foreign investment among other fiscal constraints.

Objectives of the Dialogue

This Dialogue will explore how to achieve productive and inclusive urban economies that are resilient to future and unpredictable shocks given the disruptions triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing on perspectives from different parts of the world, the dialogue will also explore how sustainable urban futures can be adequately financed.

Initial Questions

This Dialogue will address the following questions:

- i. What is the path to economically resilient urban futures that guarantees shared prosperity?
- ii. How can urban economies be strengthened and made inclusive following the impacts of COVID-19?
- iii. How can the economy of cities be fully fit for purpose to withstand financial shocks?
- iv. How can cities improve their financial resources to provide a wide range of public goods and services?
- v. What new innovative sources of municipal finance can be leverage for sustainable urban futures?
- vi. How do local governments and their associations implement participatory, tailored strategies for local economic development, social cohesion and choose public investments with high job multipliers?
- vii. What does the future of cities hold for the informal sector and its workers who consider public space as their “workplace”?
- viii. How are city authorities engaging with the informal sector to achieve inclusive growth? What measures are various level of government implementing to enhance inclusion of the informal sector in this growth trajectory? What mechanisms are cities employing to mobilize resources from the sector?

54 UNCDF (2020) 'Guiding principles and practices for urban economic recovery and resilience'<https://www.uncdf.org/article/6196/guiding-principles-and-practices-for-urban-economic-recovery-and-resilience>

55 UN-Habitat (2020) *World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi, <https://unhabitat.org/wcr/>

56 McKinsey & Company (2020) 'Reimagining the postpandemic economic future', <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/reimagining-the-postpandemic-economic-future>

57 UN-Habitat (2020) *World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi, <https://unhabitat.org/wcr/>



Dialogue 4: Integrated governance in spatial planning for a more Just, Green, and Healthy Urban Future

Inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements as set out in SDG 11 are the outcome of good governance that encompasses integrated urban and territorial planning, jurisdictional and multilevel coordination, inclusive participation, effective leadership and adequate financing.⁵⁸ In the NUA, urban and territorial planning along with urban governance are key in achieving sustainable urbanization; with central relevance in economic growth, environmental sustainability and social equity.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a renewed focus on the interconnections between urban planning, governance and health. The pandemic's disruptive nature has redefined the urban landscape in many ways including how we interact in public space. It has also exposed the weaknesses of the current urban planning and governance systems in addressing complex emergencies. This has been evident from the fragmented response to the crisis at various levels of governance and across jurisdictional boundaries, thereby defeating the purpose of planning and how it is undertaken and shaped by the wider context of governance.⁵⁹ Weaknesses of urban planning systems in effectively addressing such crises reflect failings in the society's governance structure.

Putting people
at the centre
is vital to
supporting
homegrown
innovation
systems that
spur contextual
solutions in
urban areas

Planning must continuously adjust to the new realities and this forces the refashioning of the global context to put an end to the current trajectory.⁶⁰ In this regard, urban planning can play a major role in adjusting to the changes foisted on us by the pandemic and in global efforts to leverage recovery that is greener, more inclusive and more sustainable. Better urban futures call for planning paradigms that are responsive to changes in the urban realities— these can play a vital role in addressing multiple and evolving challenges and improving resilience across the urban-rural continuum. This kind of urban and territorial planning will improve preparedness and empower cities to adequately respond to all hazards, including public health threats and future systemic shocks.

In order to be responsive to the future, urban planning and governance should be seen as a public good function as opposed to being an instrument of short-term benefits that are detached from sustainable aspirations. Indeed, planning is only meaningful when it is in consonance with the prevailing socioeconomic milieu, contextual realities institutional arrangements, local capacities as well as resources available to any given context and all social groups within it. This requires research and data that show the challenges, and aspirations of city residents, including disadvantaged groups such as persons with disabilities, as delivered through the Assistive Technology Inclusive City programme.⁶¹ Building upon the *International Guidelines for Urban and Territorial Planning*,⁶² UN-Habitat has crafted a “manifesto” that provides a new way of looking at and implementing urban and territorial planning (Box 1). This enhances the capacities of various actors to be adaptive while reconciling and integrating spatial, social, economic, cultural, political and environmental concerns in the urban-rural continuum for a better future.

58 UN-Habitat (2016) *World Cities Report 2016: Urbanization and Development: Emerging Urban Futures*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi

59 UN-Habitat (2009) *Global Report on Human Settlements 2009: Planning Sustainable Cities*, Earthscan, London and Sterling, VA

60 UN-Habitat (2018) *Leading Change: Delivering the New*

Urban Agenda through Urban and Territorial Planning; https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/Leading%20Change_Web%20Version%2001.02.18.pdf

61 AT2030 (<https://at2030.org/inclusive-infrastructure/>)

62 UN-Habitat (2015) *International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi

Box 1: Manifesto for Urban and Territorial Planning

- UTP should be rooted in a global perspective
- UTP needs to be rights based
- UTP needs to integrate development with infrastructure
- UTP needs to be focussed on implementation
- UTP needs to be informed by budgets but be robust
- UTP needs to secure political legitimacy
- UTP needs to be tuned to subsidiarity and diversity
- UTP needs to be clear, simple and rapid
- UTP needs to respect and capitalise on the special characteristics of places

Source: UN-Habitat (2018) *Leading Change: Delivering the New Urban Agenda through Urban and Territorial Planning*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi.

Urban planning and governance should play a key role in transforming and improving the resilience of urban “weak spots,” which are more difficult in recovering from shocks due to their inherent vulnerabilities.⁶³ This means that the planning and governance of cities should address the economic, environmental and social infrastructure needs of slums dwellers and informal settlements. The current crisis can serve as an opportunity for urban planners and related professionals to seriously consider permanent interventions to enhance the form and function of the city and respond to future the threats.⁶⁴ In this regard, there is renewed focus on compact, mixed-use neighbourhoods and use of non-motorized modes of transport. Centered around proximity, the 15-minute city has emerged as an important concept of making cities more sustainable.

Such proposals imply improving the quality and density of public transport links between neighbourhoods across the city in addition to a raft of other measures. While

COVID-19 has further stigmatized public transport—as it is perceived as a major gateway for the spread of such diseases, —public transport remains integral to achieving greener urban futures. To mitigate this negative perception from taking root, there's need for public transport systems to be accessible, safe, affordable, efficient and reliable, and to serve diverse demands, both now and in the future. This also implies that the enormous amount of public space dedicated to private vehicles need to be reconsidered and prioritized for such public transportation systems and pedestrian walkways, and encourage a shift to modes of transport with significant health and environmental benefits.

The lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the weakness of the current urban governance frameworks in addressing complex global emergencies. The fragmented response at various levels of governance calls for strong, effective and inclusive institutions as well as more integrated, multilevel governance approach. Multilevel governance arrangements are instrumental for creating synergies, reducing overlapping and critical gaps between institutions, and promoting trust and accountability that enhance policy coherence. Stronger multilevel collaborations are crucial in addressing future threats. Effective localization of the global agendas and the realization of the economic, social, environmental, health, infrastructural, and institutional imperatives underlying sustainable urban futures hinges on multilevel governance arrangements.

Innovative governance approaches that include non-state stakeholders (e.g., community groups, civil society and representative organizations) can steer urban areas through the present challenges as well as uncertainty and dynamics of an unpredictable future. This includes harnessing the potential unleashed by civic technologies through portals like Decide Madrid (Madrid City Council, Spain), Jogja Smart Services (Yogyakarta City Government, Indonesia), among others, for e-governance.

63 UN-Habitat (2021) *Cities and Pandemics: Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi

64 Florida et. al (2020)

Dialogue 4: Integrated governance in spatial planning for a more just, green, and healthy urban future

Key Issues

COVID-19 has necessitated the rethinking of the form and function of the city and provided valuable lessons in meeting the present urban challenges as well as mitigating the potential impacts of future threats.⁶⁵ There is no doubt that cities' preparedness, response and recovery from future shocks rests on robust and responsive urban planning and governance systems. The pandemic has underscored the importance of planning and management of cities being inclusive and capable of addressing the economic, environmental and social infrastructure needs for all—including people living in slums and informal settlements. During this pandemic, the fragmentation of actions at various levels have shown that policies to improve urban and territorial planning are essential and "urban planners and leaders must rethink how people move through and in cities."⁶⁶

The pandemic renewed a focus on urban planning, governance and health in policy discourse, is shaping the visions and future design of the built environment as well as reshaping urban mobility, among others. Importantly, the pandemic has called into question the adaptability of urban planning and governance paradigms to the new realities and forces shaping cities. It has brought to the fore the necessity of repositioning planning to play a more proactive role in the transition to more sustainable urban futures.

The rapid pace of urbanization means that the emergence of new urban configurations traversing city boundaries will be a key feature in an emerging future. Innovative arrangements that create new forms of governance across existing administrative boundaries and sectors thus needed to reinforce cross-jurisdiction cooperation at various levels.

New technologies and innovation hold immense potential for urban planning and governance and can be leveraged to help deliver the SDGs and implement the NUA. On the other hand, emerging technologies can also be disruptive to the governance of cities. To realize these benefits and mitigate disruption, we must interrogate the concepts of data sharing, governance, and management, and develop policy options for the ethical governance of disruptive technologies.

Objectives of the Dialogue

This Dialogue will explore the role of urban planning and governance in achieving a better urban future. It will discuss the current gaps in urban governance that affect the transformations in urban planning concepts and approaches. Dialogue will also discuss the lessons learned from the pandemic in different contexts where urban planners and other professionals made key interventions to enhance the form and function of the city.

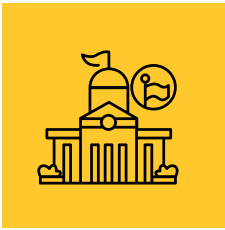
Initial Questions

This Dialogue will address the following questions:

- i. How can urban planning be repositioned to play a more proactive role in the transition to more sustainable urban futures drawing on the lessons and experience of COVID-19?
- ii. How can urban planning create sustainable neighbourhoods particularly in cities with strong spatial inequalities and limited resources drawing on lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic?
- iii. How can various levels of governance promote Urban and Territorial Planning that is adaptive to the changing urban realities?
- iv. How can the different levels of government and civil society promote institutional arrangements to strengthen the governance of metropolises and cities beyond political-administrative jurisdictions?
- v. How can a gender-responsive inclusive participatory process in urban planning and governance promote well-planned and managed urban development, as well as act a driver of sustainable development and a vehicle to achieve green and climate-smart transformation of economies?
- vi. How can public authorities harness the power of less formal governance instruments and narratives? How do we account for and support the contributions and roles of organised grassroots groups towards built environment that is inclusive, providing opportunity for all?
- vii. How can compact city development be encouraged in light of the COVID-19 triggered trend towards low-density developments? Can urban planning bring the *15-minute city* and micro-mobility to fruition in various settings?
- viii. How can frontier technologies be leveraged in cities to support e-governance? How can governance of data and respect of privacy rights be effectively achieved?
- ix. How can alliances be built in contexts where civil society is not favourably perceived by the state? How can alliances be built in contexts where clear decentralized modes of governance are absent or weak?
- x. How can South-South and Triangular Cooperation be enhanced to support urban planning and governance for a better future?
- xi. Is there a need for a paradigm shift in the implementation of the SDGs and NUA?

65 UN-Habitat (2021) *Cities and Pandemics: Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi

66 <https://unhabitat.org/un-habitat%E2%80%AF-report%E2%80%AF-calls-%E2%80%AFfor-cities-post-pandemic-to-lead-the-way-to-a-fairer-greener-healthier>



Dialogue 5: Innovation and Technology for Inclusive Urban Futures

Advances in innovation and technology are inextricably linked with the future of cities. Throughout history, urban areas have served as hubs of innovation and technological breakthrough. The deployment of technology is enhancing efficiency of urban operations and services, promoting competitiveness, reducing carbon emissions, increasing access to affordable housing, enhancing participation in policy making, and a wide range of areas that hold the potential for better urban futures. It is expected that the future of cities will be knowledge-based, driven by the widespread deployment of new technologies in virtually all facets of urban life.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the deployment innovations and technology in urban areas. These include remote working, distance learning, online shopping and entertainment, digital payments, and telehealth care among others.⁶⁷ The acceleration of technology and digital solutions have occurred in countries with a fairly developed digital ecosystem. In these places, the deepened use of digital technologies is altering the world of work ushering in the transition to telecommuting and digital transformation of service activities—all of which have significant implications for the structure of urban labour markets. Large disparities exist in the availability and usage of technology solutions between high and low-income countries, and also within urban areas.⁶⁸

67 UN-Habitat (2020) *World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi, <https://unhabitat.org/wcr/>

68 World Bank (2020) *The Impact of COVID-19 on Disruptive Technology Adoption in Emerging Markets*, World Bank, Washington DC

The ever-increasing application of data is driving the phenomenon of “smart cities,” which, can guide better decision-making with respect to prosperity, sustainability, resilience, emergency management and effective and equitable service delivery.⁶⁹ The global demand for smart city solutions is growing rapidly at almost 25 per cent annually and is expected to reach US\$463.9 billion by 2027.⁷⁰ This is driven mainly by governments investing in technology to meet the demands of a rapidly urbanizing world. Technology firms are also increasingly focussing on cities as markets for smart city technologies as a progressive feature of the future of cities. The discourse from WUF 10 notes that these technologies should be regarded as foundational for the provision of basic services, such as transport, water and sanitation; thereby, increasing inclusion and improving service provision, particularly for the poor.⁷¹

Most smart city projects tend to take a top-down, surveillance-based approach, which raises serious issues related to digital rights, personal safety and end-client inclusion. Consequently, results of smart city experiments have been mixed and particularly poor when these efforts are technology- rather than people-driven.⁷² To address this lapse, some countries and cities have adopted a people-driven approach, in which the concept of smart cities is consistent with critical issues faced by population through a collective and consultative process. Brazil, for instance, launched the Brazilian Charter for Smart Cities in December 2020, which espouses the perspective that every “smart city” action must be based on the two objectives: (i) reduce inequalities and respect diversity and (ii) reduce digital exclusion and take advantage of digital transformation to improve cities.⁷³

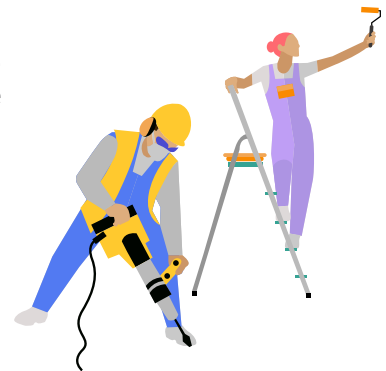
69 UN-Habitat (2020) *World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi, <https://unhabitat.org/wcr/>

70 Ground View Research (2020) ‘Smart cities market size worth \$463.9 Billion by 2027 CAGR: 24.7%’, <https://www.grandviewresearch.com/press-release/global-smart-cities-market>

71 UN-Habitat (2020) *Cities of Opportunities: Connecting Culture and Innovation – The Tenth Session of the World Urban Forum, Report*, https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/09/report_of_the_tenth_session_of_the_world_urban_forum.pdf

72 UN-Habitat (2020) *World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi, <https://unhabitat.org/wcr/>

73 Carta Brasileira para Cidades Inteligentes (https://www.gov.br/mdr/pt-br/assuntos/desenvolvimento-regional/projeto-andus/Carta_Bras_Cidades_Inteligentes_Final.pdf)



The informal sector is a lifeblood of many cities, yet it remains a major challenge for workers’ rights, and it is often not included in public policy interventions

Moving forward, the crisis offers an opportunity to construct a future urban economy that is “more robust, just, ethical and equitable.” Effective and equitable governance of the informal sector, spaces and actors is important for achieving the SDGs, and advancing the New Urban Agenda to realize a better future

While the deployment of innovation and technology has enhanced resilience in some cities, it has exposed the deepening digital divide and social inequalities within cities and across the urban-rural continuum. Since “the future of technology is the future of cities,”⁷⁴ it is imperative to address digital divides and exclusion to ensure that digital revolution in cities is inclusive and leaves no one behind. Some cities are already making strategic investment to deploy technologies that ensure that marginalized groups are not digitally excluded. For instance, in 2020, the Toronto District School Board, in Canada, distributed 60,000 devices to its students during the spring transition for remote learning to ensure that no child is left behind in the learning process.⁷⁵

Some cities are taking a strategic and people-centred approach to technology and innovation— for example, developing digital transformation strategies to ensure that technology initiatives benefit all urban residents, especially marginalized communities. The City of Warsaw (Poland), for instance, recently adopted a Digital Transformation Policy aimed at offering all users highest level of digital services by 2030. The European Commission, through the *Digital Cities Challenge* initiative, has also helped 41 EU cities to create a strategic vision and roadmaps for digital transformation.

Putting people at the centre calls for concerted efforts to close the digital divide (within cities and across the urban-rural continuum, as well as within various population groups); to empower people by building their digital skills; to support job creation in the digital sector; to use digital platforms to deliver services equitably; to protect the most vulnerable online; to mobilize new financing models to reach the unconnected; and to invest in affordable technology solutions.⁷⁶ Ultimately, the people in a city are a city’s greatest resource when it comes to achieving sustainable

74 Cornell Tech (2021) ‘6 Tech Transformations That Will Shape Future Cities’, <https://tech.cornell.edu/news/author/ac2378/>

75 CBC (2020) ‘Nearly 2,000 TDSB students still waiting to receive laptops, tablets for virtual learning’, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/tdsb-students-devices-for-remote-learning-1.5766694>

76 United Nations (2021) ‘Leave No One Behind: A People-Centered Approach to Achieve Meaningful Connectivity’, <https://www.un.org/technologybank/news/leave-no-one-behind-people-centered-approach-achieve-meaningful-connectivity>

innovation and technological transformation for a better future. They provide new ideas for innovation, act as the eyes or ears of the city, help monitor conditions on the ground and are a key asset for priority setting.⁷⁷ Putting people at the centre is thus vital to supporting homegrown innovation systems that spur contextual solutions in urban areas.

Advances in technology and innovation should be harnessed to achieve the global development agendas. In this regard, there was a commitment to “foster a culture of creativity and innovation to be embedded in the way cities and human settlements operate” at the Ninth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF 9).⁷⁸ Similar sentiments were expressed during the Tenth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF 10) and captured in the *Abu Dhabi Declared Actions* recognize that “innovation and advances in science and technology are critical for implementing the New Urban Agenda and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and other global development frameworks relevant to sustainable urbanization.”⁷⁹

While innovation and advances in science and technology are crucial and can facilitate the achievement of the global development agendas, the past few years have clearly demonstrated that these developments are also fraught with risks that, potentially, can disrupt important facets of life (economy, politics and society).⁸⁰ This essentially implies that as governments strengthen diffusion mechanisms for emerging solutions, they need to have adaptive legal and regulatory systems in place to address ensuing challenges. Cities are developing regulatory mechanisms for urban tech companies to rein in their disruptive power with mixed results.⁸¹

77 UN-Habitat (2020) *World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi, <https://unhabitat.org/wcr/>

78 e.g., decent jobs, public space, affordable and adequate housing and security of land tenure, safe, efficient and accessible public transport and mobility systems, infrastructure and other basic services and goods that cities offer

79 Abu Dhabi Declared Actions recognize (<https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/WUF%2010%20final%20declared%20actions%20-%20FINAL.pdf>)

80 European Parliament (2020) *Disruption by Technology: Impacts on politics, economics and society*, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2020/652079/EPRS_IDA\(2020\)652079_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2020/652079/EPRS_IDA(2020)652079_EN.pdf)

81 UN-Habitat (2020) *World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi, <https://unhabitat.org/wcr/>

Dialogue 5: Innovation and Technology for Inclusive Urban Futures

Key Issues

Innovation and technology are key to the transition to more sustainable urban futures. There is an increasing appreciation that innovation and leveraging new technologies is essential for the effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda and realization of the SDGs.⁸² While technology has the potential to contribute to sustainable urban development, this is not the reality in some places.

Large disparities exist in the availability and usage of technology solutions between and within countries, and between and within cities. The lack of physical and digital infrastructure in low-income countries, for example, is deepening the existing digital divide and social inequalities within cities and across the urban-rural continuum.

The COVID-19 has accelerated technological innovations in a wide range of areas. The rapid deployment of technological innovation witnessed over the last one and half decades is expected to increase in the years to come. However, a deepening of urban inequalities in the future is likely if adequate measures are not taken to bridge the digital divide by putting people at the centre of technological advancement.

Advances in technology is rewriting the rules of the game for the delivery of public services, community engagement and entrepreneurship in cities.⁸³ Rapidly deploying new technologies presents opportunities for service delivery and addressing a wide range of urban challenges. There are also significant threats to sustainable urban futures in the form of changing labour markets, cyber security and protection of digital rights, the rapid pace of change outstripping regulatory systems and the risks of unregulated artificial intelligence, risks associated with automated vehicles, and other disruptive technology solutions.

Some cities, especially in developing countries, are rolling out ambitious futuristic “smart cities” at great expense; yet key urban challenges— such as housing, adequate infrastructure, employment, poverty etc. — have not been adequately addressed. Such projects end up being exclusive enclaves for the elite and ruling class; thereby, further deepening the digital divide.⁸⁴

Objectives of the Dialogue

This Dialogue will explore role that innovation and technology can play in the transition to more sustainable urban futures as well as the accompanying challenges. The future of cities will be knowledge-based, driven largely by innovation and the widespread use of new technologies and digitization of virtually all facets of our urban space. The dialogue will further explore how the deepening digital divide and social inequalities within cities and across the urban-rural continuum can be addressed with a view to build inclusive connected communities that ensures no one is digitally left behind.

Initial Questions

This Dialogue will address the following questions:

- i. How can cities leverage innovation and new technologies to achieve more productive, prosperous, inclusive and resilient urban economies in different contexts?
- ii. What role can disruptive technologies play in enhancing social inclusion, more equitable cities and quality of life? How can innovation and technology contribute to environmentally resilient urban development?
- iii. What kind of technology do we envision for cities with resource constraints? What kind of technology can be deployed in different urban contexts in view of the large disparities that exist in the availability and usage of technology solutions?
- iv. How can cities mobilize new financing models to reach the digitally unconnected; How can cities invest in affordable technology solutions?
- v. How can a ‘people-centred’ approach to smart cities that is grounded on commitment to rights and inclusion be advanced?
- vi. How can cities apply their own civic technologies and encourage innovations to address their problems before pursuing private sector technology products?
- vii. How are advances in technology altering the world of work in various contexts and what are the ensuing implications for the future of cities?
- viii. What will it take to achieve connected communities, drawing on the potential of digital inclusion as a cohesive force?

82 UN-Habitat (2020) *World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi, <https://unhabitat.org/wcr/>

83 da Cruz, N.F., Rode, P and M. McQuarrie (2019) ‘New urban governance: A review of current themes and future priorities’, *Journal of Urban Affairs* 41:1, 1-19

84 Watson, V. (2015) ‘The allure of ‘smart city’ rhetoric: India and Africa’, *Dialogues in Human Geography* 5(1), 36-39; Watson, V. (2020) ‘Digital visualisation as a new driver of urban change in Africa’, *Urban Planning* 5 (2), pp1-10; Angel, S. (2017) ‘Urban Forms and Future Cities: A Commentary’, *Urban Planning* 2(1), pp. 1–5



Dialogue 6: Greener Urban Futures

Urbanization transforms the relationship of society with its environment in multiple ways, and in the process, impacts the wellbeing of urban and rural dwellers. For this reason, the drive towards environmentally sustainable futures must consider the role of cities. The investment choices made today would shape our future world; this particularly is the case with urban infrastructure. Climate change, a top priority in global development agenda, has changed our thinking about the future but not at sufficient speed. Without concerted action, there is a risk of perpetuating the old ways of doing things; carbon lock-in, loss of biodiversity, resource and energy-intensive consumption patterns, high levels of pollution, and carbon emissions show no sign of abatement. Perpetuating the old ways of doing things means a lost opportunity to build a better urban future for all, addressing sustainability and inequality in tandem.

Rapid and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, improved natural resource efficiency, mitigating the negative impacts of climate change, and safeguarding critical ecosystems and biodiversity are all needed to address the global environmental crisis. Already, faster global warming is being observed, with chances of global temperature expected to cross 1.5°C of warming level over the next decades. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) further warns that limiting warming to close to 1.5°C or even 2°C will be beyond reach unless there are “rapid and large-scale reductions in GHG emissions.”⁸⁵

⁸⁵ IPCC (2021) ‘Climate change widespread, rapid, and intensifying – IPCC’, <https://www.ipcc.ch/2021/08/09/ar6-wg1-20210809-pr/>

The COVID-19 pandemic provided a unique opportunity to observe the impacts of reduced emissions—although short-lived. Results show that a green economic recovery can yield long-term environmental benefits for the future of cities and are likely to influence mitigation strategies. The temporary reduction in carbon emissions and pollutants resulting from the COVID-19 induced lockdowns have had minimal effect on the trajectory of global greenhouse emissions.⁸⁶

Greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere continue at record levels, setting up the planet to future warming and compounding climate hazards.⁸⁷ The recent negotiations at COP 26 that resulted in the Glasgow Climate Pact—which secured net zero commitments from 153 countries—showed that current steps to limit global warming are still not sufficient, and limiting rise in global temperature to 1.5°C “will only be achieved if every country delivers on their pledges.”⁸⁸ While lasting reductions in greenhouse emissions requires deeper and longer-term behavioural and institutional change, the bulk of the action has been watered down to minimal no-regrets measures in the best case, and “greenwashing” in the worst ones. A sense of skepticism towards the appropriation of the sustainability discourse for economic gain is now widespread.

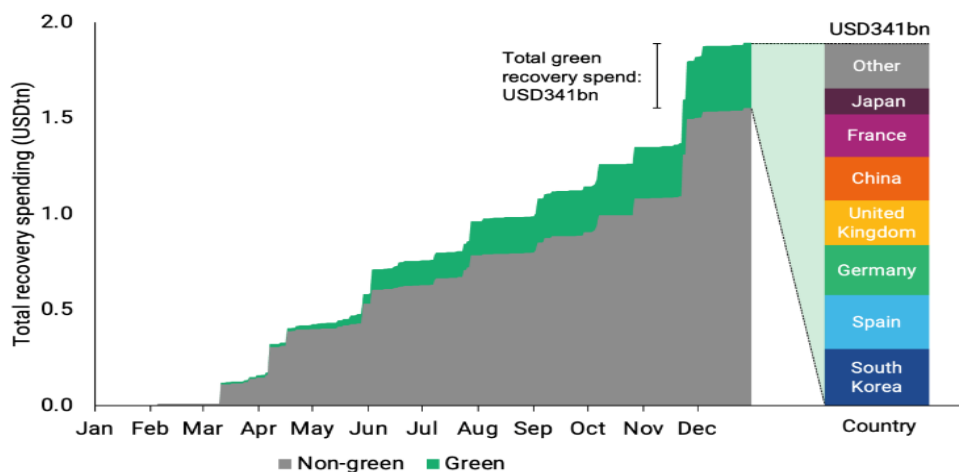
Evidence suggests that global green spending is so far incommensurate with the scale of ongoing environmental crises: climate change, nature loss, and pollution. A recent study by UNEP of largest 50 economies found that only \$368bn of \$14.6tn COVID-induced spending — or just 2.5 per cent of total spending (both rescue and recovery) — in 2020 was green while

⁸⁶ UN-Habitat (2020) *World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi, <https://unhabitat.org/wcr/>: Fossil CO2 emissions peaked at 36.6 GtCO2 in 2019, followed by an extraordinary drop of 1.98 GtCO2 (5.6%) in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic [United Nations (2021) *United in Science 2021: A multi-organization high-level compilation of the latest climate science information* https://public.wmo.int/en/resources/united_in_science]

⁸⁷ United Nations (2021) *United in Science 2021: A multi-organization high-level compilation of the latest climate science information* https://public.wmo.int/en/resources/united_in_science

⁸⁸ COP26: The Glasgow Climate Pact (<https://ukcop26.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/COP26-Presidency-Outcomes-The-Climature-Pact.pdf>)

Figure 1 Recovery spending over the course of the pandemic with total green spending, 2020



Source: UNEP, 2021

only 18 per cent of recovery spending was considered so (see Figure 1).⁸⁹ Further reports show that 15 major producer countries continue to provide significant policy support for fossil fuel production; their production plans and projections would lead to about 240 per cent more coal, 57 per cent more oil, and 71 per cent more gas in 2030 than would be consistent with limiting global warming to 1.5°C.⁹⁰

Climate change burdens cast shadows on the quest to transform our cities for environmentally sustainable and resilient urban development. For example, climate change is a “threat multiplier” that could lead to conflicts and political instability in fragile settings. Climate change also has a disproportionate impact on marginalised groups. Persons with disabilities, for instance, are more likely to be affected by the impact of climate change. Further, climate change is likely to worsen the cycle of poverty between disability and poverty, which must be addressed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.⁹¹

89 UNEP (2021) *Are we building back better?: evidence from 2020 and pathways for inclusive green recovery spending*, <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/35281/AWBBB.pdf>

90 SEI, IISD, ODI, E3G, and UNEP (2021) *The Production Gap Report 2021*, <http://productiongap.org/2021report>

91 Kett, M. and E. Cole (2018) *Disability and Climate Resilience Research Report for UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office*, <https://www.gov.uk/research-for-development-outputs/disability-and-climate-resilience-research-report>

Cities can transition to sustainable urban futures characterized by net-zero GHG emissions and enhanced resource efficiency as called for in SDGs and the NUA. Besides sustainable consumption and production patterns (e.g., through sustainable food systems⁹²), this transition can also be facilitated by the spatial structure of cities and regions. Denser and more compact cities drastically reduce the urban carbon footprint. Policies and planning processes that integrate cities into the ecosystems of subnational regions foster resilience and can contribute to the transition toward a circular economy.⁹³ This includes recognizing and valuing grassroots community generated data as innovative inputs to public policy making and programming and investing in the preservation of the practices, knowledge and culture of indigenous peoples and

92 This also includes the reinvention of food systems to create and implement integrated food policies that reduce greenhouse gas emission as one-third (34 per cent) is attributed to food systems. Yet, one-third of all food produced goes into waste [C40 Cities(n.d) ‘Food Systems’, <https://www.c40.org/what-we-do/scaling-up-climate-action/food-systems/>; United Nations (2021) ‘Food systems account for over one-third of global greenhouse gas emissions’, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/03/1086822>; UNEP (n.d.) ‘Worldwide food waste’, <https://www.unep.org/thinkeatsave/get-informed/worldwide-food-waste>]

93 UN-Habitat (2021) *Cities and Pandemics: Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi, https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2021/03/cities_and_pandemics-towards_a_more_just_green_and_healthy_future_un-habitat_2021.pdf

harnessing it for improved urban and territorial planning, including environmental protection as called for in the *Abu Dhabi Declared Actions*.⁹⁴ Indeed, the quality of life can be improved for all –including indigenous peoples as well as other marginalized groups– while ensuring that cities remain climate resilient and resource efficient.

Strengthening the resilience to climate change is a major aspect of improving the overall resilience of cities.⁹⁵ Given the vulnerability of infrastructure networks to frequent flooding, drought, heatwaves, and intense rain events along with other climate-related hazards,⁹⁶ as well as the role of infrastructure in building resilience, investment in critical infrastructure offers a pathway to securing greener and more resilient urban futures. These climate change hazards could create a variety of humanitarian disasters with important population flows from environmental refugees to more secure cities, prompting national and local responses for different forms of humanitarian aid and resilience mechanisms. Resilient infrastructure design should be prioritized against major climate change risks. In making the case for climate adaptation, the Global Commission on Adaptation argues that an investment of \$1.8 trillion from 2020 to 2030 could generate \$7.1 trillion in total net benefits in terms of preventing future losses; generating economic benefits through reducing risk, increasing productivity, and driving innovation; and delivering social and environmental benefits.⁹⁷

Sustainable transport systems have a key

94 Abu Dhabi Declared Actions recognize (<https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/WUF%2010%20final%20declared%20actions%20-%20FINAL.pdf>)

95 OECD (2020) *Building Back Better: A Sustainable, Resilient Recovery after COVID-19*, https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=133_133639-s08q2ridhf&title=Building-back-better-_A-sustainable-resilient-recovery-after-Covid-19&_ga=2.60021037.1859826171.1621058256-1077390381.1612859062

National Intelligence Council (2021) *Global Trends 2040: A More Contested*

96 Joint Research Centre (2019) *The Future of Cities – Opportunities, Challenges and the Way Forward*, Publications Office, Luxembourg, https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC116711/the-future-of-cities_online.pdf

97 Global Commission on Adaptation (2019) *Adapt Now: A Global Call for Leadership on Climate Resilience*, https://gca.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/GlobalCommission_Report_FINAL.pdf

role to play in reducing energy consumption, pollution and GHG emissions, given that transportation generates about 15 per cent of all global greenhouse gas emissions with road transport accounting for three-quarters of these emissions.⁹⁸ Greenhouse emissions from transportation are increasing faster than any other energy-using sector. Decarbonizing how we move around in cities is essential if we are to transition to net-zero emissions.⁹⁹ Sustainable transport systems must be designed with inclusion in mind (for instance, fully accessible to person with disabilities and the elderly) to ensure we progress towards a more sustainable and inclusive future.

Nature-based solutions represent an integrated approach to deliver environmental value across the urban-rural continuum¹⁰⁰, as they are critical in reversing the loss of biodiversity and restoring urban ecosystem services. In urban areas, they have been associated with positive effects on both urban biodiversity and human health. Investment in ecosystem services and natural infrastructure are not only a cost effective and sustainable way to improve resilience to climate impacts, they also offer employment opportunities similar to human-made infrastructure investments.¹⁰¹ A recent study shows that ecosystem restoration creates 3.7 times as many jobs as oil and gas production per dollar (see Figure 2).¹⁰²

Lastly, it is important to recognize the role of small and medium size cities in the protection of nature as well as in the

98 UN-Habitat (2021) 'Climate Action for Cities: Key messages' <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/CA4C%20Key%20Messages.pdf>

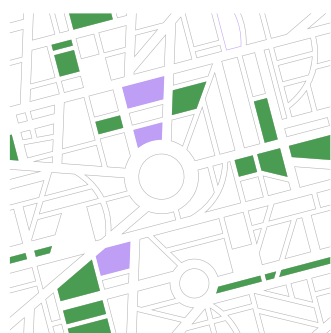
99 Gates, B. (2020) 'How do we move around in a zero-carbon world?', <https://www.gatesnotes.com/Energy/Moving-around-in-a-zero-carbon-world>

100 UN-Habitat (2020) *World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi, <https://unhabitat.org/wcr/>

101 OECD (2020) *Building Back Better: A Sustainable, Resilient Recovery after COVID-19*, https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=133_133639-s08q2ridhf&title=Building-back-better-_A-sustainable-resilient-recovery-after-Covid-19&_ga=2.60021037.1859826171.1621058256-1077390381.1612859062

National Intelligence Council (2021) *Global Trends 2040: A More Contested World*, <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/gt2040-home>

102 WRI (2021) 'Climate-friendly Investments Can Create More Jobs Per Dollar than Polluting Alternatives', <https://www.wri.org/insights/green-investments-create-more-jobs-polluting-alternatives>



In order to be responsive to the future, urban planning and governance should be seen as a public good function as opposed to being an instrument of short-term benefits that are detached from sustainable aspirations

adaptation and mitigation of climate change. These cities are often overlooked in strategies and programmes—national and international—and face enormous constraints (financing, capacity etc.) that inhibit their developmental potential. Yet, they hold “a significant, but often untapped, potential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and contributing to sustainable development.”¹⁰³ It is argued that such cities may have better prospects and flexibility in addressing climate-change issues relating to the management and development of cities, and in resource

103 UN-Habitat (2021) ‘G20 mandates OECD and UN-Habitat to help intermediary cities tackle climate change and achieve their SDGs’, <https://unhabitat.org/g20-mandates-oecd-and-un-habitat-to-help-intermediary-cities-tackle-climate-change-and-achieve>

efficiency.¹⁰⁴ In this regard, it is worth noting that, under the Italian presidency, the G20 recognized the importance of action in light of challenges faced by small and medium size cities in developing countries and mandated OECD and UN-Habitat to help such cities tackle climate change and achieve their SDGs. In this regard, G20 Platform on SDG Localisation and Intermediary Cities (G20 PLIC) was launched to facilitate the exchange of good practices between such cities.¹⁰⁵

104 Roberts, B. H. (2014) *Managing Systems of Secondary Cities: Policy Responses in International Development*, Cities Alliance, Brussels

105 UN-Habitat (2021) ‘G20 mandates OECD and UN-Habitat to help intermediary cities tackle climate change and achieve their SDGs’, <https://unhabitat.org/g20-mandates-oecd-and-un-habitat-to-help-intermediary-cities-tackle-climate-change-and-achieve>

Resilient cities are those able to absorb, adapt, transform and prepare for past and future shocks and stresses in order to ensure sustainable development, well-being and inclusive growth

Figure 2 Job comparison between green and unsustainable investment types



Source: WRI, 2021¹⁰⁶

106 World Resources Institute (2021) Report: *From Commitments to Action*, <https://www.wri.org/annual-report/2021-22>

Dialogue 6: Greener Urban Futures

Key Issues

To achieve greener urban futures, governments at various levels should align spending with existing pledges to build back better. The COVID-19 recovery efforts should be aligned to climate change and air quality strategies to reduce risks from compounding and cascading climate hazards and gain health co-benefits.¹⁰⁷ Lasting reductions in GHG emissions can only be achieved by deeper and enduring behavioural and institutional change. Sustainable consumption and production patterns are therefore an imperative; they are as important as investments in critical infrastructure and ecosystem services.

Countries can deliver greener urban futures by investing in cleaner and more resilient forms of renewable energy that will create lasting solutions, reduce the risks of future crises, and adequately mitigate the impacts of climate change. This builds long-term resilience that enhances the wellbeing of urban and rural dwellers alike.

Net-zero emissions imply that emission control or mitigation and carbon sinks must be implemented concurrently. Whilst cities in a net-zero carbon future will still be generating emissions, viable measures are needed to remove or offset these emissions, and this is where the real challenge lies.

In order to leave no one behind, priority must be given to the needs of disadvantaged groups in the delivery of environmental benefits; the transition to net zero emissions should occur in tandem with the improvement of quality of life for vulnerable segments of society. The poor must therefore be represented, and their needs prioritized in any decision-making process to achieve inclusive greener urban futures.

Objectives of the Dialogue

This dialogue should explore how cities can transition to sustainable urban futures characterized by net-zero GHG emissions and much reduced impacts on the environment. The Dialogue will also share about and advocate for innovative policies and practices of partnerships between organised community-based groups and government that feature participatory and inclusive decision-making process in the implementation of "greening" programmes.

Initial Questions

This Dialogue will address the following questions:

- i. What political and cultural shifts are needed for cities to transition to sustainable urban futures characterized by net-zero GHG emissions and much reduced negative impacts on the environment?
- ii. How can cities implement nature-based solutions and other measures to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity and restore urban ecosystem services?
- iii. Can a new form of governance framework emerge based on resource management, environment protection and sustainability with cities articulating global responses?
- iv. What kind of recovery investments should cities and countries be making to tackle climate change, nature loss, and pollution? What spending pathways are needed achieve an inclusive greener economic recovery and secure environmental sustainability?
- v. How can cities foster behavioural and institutional changes, and innovations built upon these, that will secure green urban futures?
- vi. How can cities co-design green and inclusive urban futures?
- vii. What role can cities play in greening food systems? How can cities enact and implement integrated food policies that reduce GHG emissions?
- viii. How are economic social and other considerations affecting how cities can accelerate climate actions?

¹⁰⁷ United Nations (2021) *United in Science 2021: A multi-organization high-level compilation of the latest climate science information* https://public.wmo.int/en/resources/united_in_science

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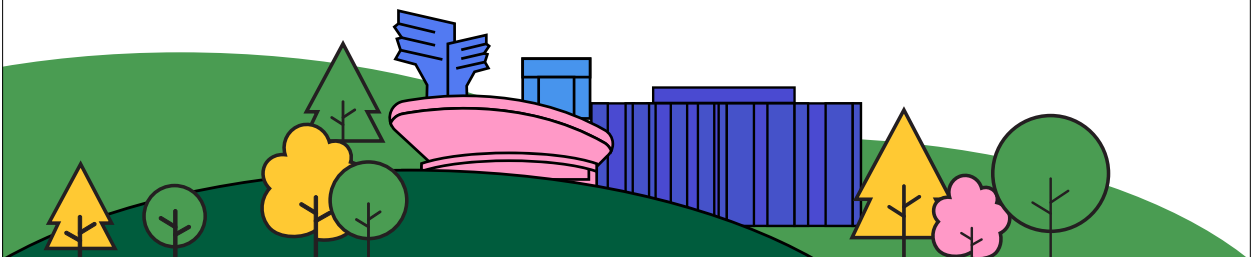
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