



NGO Major Group Urban Thematic Cluster 2020 Position Paper

1. INTRODUCTION:

The NGO Major Group Urban Thematic Cluster (the “Urban Cluster”), recognizes that with an estimated two-thirds of humanity - 6.5 billion people of all ages - living in cities by 2050, increasingly from the developing world, governments cannot achieve sustainability without significantly transforming the way we plan, design, build, and manage our urban areas “**to leave no one behind.**” As a majority of the world’s population lives in places that extend from urban to rural, the Urban Cluster addresses Sustainable Development Goal or SDG 11 (“Make cities and human settlements inclusive, adequate, safe, resilient, and sustainable), integrates with the other 16 SDGs, and the other global agreements, such as the *Paris Agreement* and the Sendai Framework. In particular, the Urban Cluster aligns with the *New Urban Agenda* and the documents developed for its localization from the civil society perspective.

As more than 193 countries endorsed the SDGs to address the global challenge of eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development in a balanced, equitable, integrated, and cross sectoral manner, the Urban Cluster is focusing its attention primarily on SDG 11 as a means to ensure access to safe, adequate and affordable housing, and upgrading informal settlements, invest in public transport, create accessible green public spaces, protect natural and cultural heritage, reduce adverse effects of natural disasters and the impacts of climate change on cities while improving urban planning and supporting innovative management. Further, the Urban Cluster draws attention to the urgent need to address inequalities and well-being in cities that may arise from pandemics, structural racism, and climate change inaction. The Urban Cluster holds that balanced territorial development should guide national, regional and local policies in fulfillment of SDG 11 and other relevant goals, including Goals 3, 10 and 16. It insists on broad stakeholder participation inclusive of marginalized groups often left behind in the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of such policies.

2. HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM 2020 THEME: “Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”

While we understand the interlinkages among the SDGs and need to manage the discussion by aligning groups of SDGs under broad categories as specified in the 19 February Concept Note of the Programme for the 2020 HLPF, we observe that SDG 11 has broad application which we have retained. Cities will be the locus of 69% of all of the SDG targets. We illustrate this relationship below which retains the Concept Note language and shows the applicability of SDG 11 and its targets.

- **Advancing human well-being:** “This session will focus notably on various trade-offs and synergies related to improving human well-being, and more particularly ending poverty in all its forms and dimension”. See targets: Housing (11.1), transport (11.2), open space (11.7).
- **Ending hunger and achieving food security for all:** “This session will address policies related to strengthening the livelihoods of the poor, ensuring sustainable and healthy food production systems and improving the lives of all.” See target: urban rural linkages (11.a.).
- **Protecting the planet and building resilience:** “The key focus in this session will be pursuing climate action policies, investments and innovation to address disaster risk reduction and protect the Planet from degradation.” See targets: natural heritage (11.4) resilience (11.5) and (11b.1), environmental impacts on cities. (11.6)
- **Ensuring access to sustainable energy:** “This session will be on ensuring access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services for all and making energy sustainable.” See targets: public transit (11.2) planning (11.3.2) local building materials (11.c).
- **Sharing economic benefits:** “This session will discuss policies to address inequality within and among countries, decoupling growth from environmental degradation, and achieving sustainable development for future generations.” See targets: planning and land consumption (11.3.1); economic impact of disasters (11.5).
- **Bolstering local action to accelerate implementation:** “This session will address measures to empower and support cities, local authorities and communities, as well as issues related to sustainable urban development, infrastructure and people-centered services.” See target: planning (11.3).

3. CONCLUSION:

The Urban Cluster brings attention to the importance of promoting sustainable urbanization and balanced territorial development throughout the SDGs as a critical driver of the ambitious agendas set out in the suite of global agreements signed between 2015 and 2016. To this end, it emphasizes the need to build cohesive and inclusive partnerships to support the just spatial, social, environmental and economic aspects of the SDGs to accelerate their implementation.