



**SUSTAINABLE
URBANIZATION AT
THE UN, FOR
ARCHITECTS AND
OTHER DESIGN
PROFESSIONALS**

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**Sustainable Urbanization at the UN,
for Architects and other Design
Professionals**

Dedication

***This book is dedicated to all the heroes
and victims of Covid 19 which is everyone
on the planet Earth.***

“With the right approach, urbanization can address inequality, economic stagnation, climate change and disasters.

That will advance progress on the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

To realize a life of dignity for all, we need cities that are free of crime, pollution and poverty — cities where diversity is celebrated and the social fabric is strong.”

UN Secretary-General António Guterres, 2017

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Foreword

This document is a tribute to the work of United Nations in the area of sustainable urbanization for the past 75 years. I tried to cover the reason why achieving sustainability in urbanization is important in this century and why it is a gargantuan task. I also tried to explain the challenges of the impact of climate change and pandemics on the living conditions in the cities which are engines of growth and development.

This book has the objective of introducing the amazing work done by the UN in the area of sustainable urbanization, to architects, planners and design professionals who are and will be playing a very important role in shaping the cities so that they are able to absorb in the incoming people while giving them a chance to flourish. A quick look at the history of the UN regarding its work on sustainable development might give an insight to the work at the organization.

The final products of UN's efforts in the area of human settlements and sustainable urbanization; Sustainable Development Goal 11 and the New Urban Agenda are useful blue prints to be achieved and implemented in the next 30 years .They will be improved and altered over the years but I personally hope to see their impact on cities old and new as soon as possible..

Introduction

Year 2020 marks the 75th anniversary of the UN¹. Dialogue among nations is very important at this time in history as the planet has shrunk with the advent of air travel, social media and technological advances. United Nations is the best organization to establish this needed dialogue for partnerships and avoid conflicts. Unfortunately many countries become more introverted and turned to populism or nationalism resulting in fewer resources for the global mission of the United Nations. United Nations which has done a successful job of preventing a world war and also helping the poorest of the poor in the last century is being challenged from many angles. 75th anniversary will be celebrated as, *“Dialogue – and action – on global issues could not be more urgent. Tackling issues such as the climate crisis, inequality, new patterns of violence and the major changes we are seeing in population and technology in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals - our shared vision for the future - will require cooperation across borders, sectors and generations.”*² Sustainability consists of environmental, social and economic sustainability.

At this juncture in history when more than half the population of the planet live in cities, what takes place in the cities dominate the world. Today 54% of the world population lives in urban areas. By 2030, this number is expected to rise to 70%. With the knowledge of the evolution of urbanization in the 20th and 21st centuries and how this issue has been addressed, one understands the reason why the role of the UN is crucial in achieving sustainability in development.

We will try to summarize and interpret the work of the United Nations in these 75 years in the area of human settlements with the hope of its being useful to the designers in reshaping the ever-growing urban areas, to improve lives. The roadmap to sustainable urbanization exists but what is

¹ www.un.org/un75

² UN 75th year anniversary preparations 2019, UN,NY

missing is the political will, allocation of resources and implementation. We hope national and local governments, NGOs, private sector, professionals, academicians and citizens work together to achieve the goal of having sustainable urbanization leading to development.

The wave of urbanization in the next 30 years will have a huge impact on the life of people who are already living in overcrowded situations in big cities especially in developing countries where up to 50% of the population lives in informal settlements, namely, squatters and slums. If the cities are designed and planned to grow in a sustainable manner by investing in infrastructure, public spaces, abundant energy resources, and are resilient to disasters, they will be producers of wealth, culture, science and technology. Otherwise they will be the breeding grounds of sickness, poverty, unrest and misery. If new cities are built in harmony with the principles of sustainability, they will flourish. The support of design professionals, architects, urban planners, engineers is crucial in this endeavor. However they do not have to reinvent the wheel as all the groundwork has been done by the United Nations and the blueprints of sustainable urbanization exist. Design professionals have to do the implementation according to these principles.

In this book, while talking about the work of the UN regarding built environment the most relevant documents are added in their entirety in the Annexes.

Why “Our Common Humanity” is important in the Age of Covid 19 and racial discrimination?

If there was a moment in the history of mankind where our common community became center stage, it is today. We, all the human beings on this planet, are trying to act in the same way; whether poor or rich, American, Asian, African or European. We are trying to do our best not to be killed by the same virus, which infects everyone. Listening to the public health experts, we are all trying to stay at home, have social distancing and wash our hands, but there is a problem out there. In every country; the poor do not have homes to stay

in, enough space for social distancing, or soap or water to wash their hands with. This is the reality of our world, without going further to examine the quality of health care facilities, access to food, and the availability of clean water.

Coronavirus teaches us, one more time, that we all share a tiny planet in the galaxy, and if someone in one country gets sick with a new virus, we all get sick. We are on this planet together and it is imperative that we take care of each other if we want to be well. That means there is no “us”, and there is no “other”. Good for one is good for all. When it comes to natural disasters, pandemics, financial depressions and war, everyone is affected negatively one way or the other. The era of winners and losers are gone. The need to respect every human being is obvious. The privileged have to take care of the unprivileged to sustain the well being of all. The role and importance of partnership is proven time and time again. Our hope is that the scientists all over the world will work together in partnership, supporting each other’s research and find a vaccine or a treatment for COVID-19.

The global community is one family with common values. The United Nations is a positive force based on communication, inclusion and partnership. Creating an awareness that the balance of the planet is fragile and can be compromised by threats to humanity such as poverty, disregard for human rights, climate change, pandemics, natural disasters, famine and conflicts is important. Efforts are needed to deal with these threats to protect the common destiny of all.

It has been said multiple times by scholars like Jeffrey Sachs and others that disease is a fundamental determinant of stagnant progress or no progress in the development of societies, and as such, is a reason for continuous poverty. But no period in history have proven that a pandemic can result in immediate and extreme poverty like it happened for the COVID-19 pandemic. Climate change and disasters are all risk factors for development in the form of conflicts,

hurricanes, droughts, and floods. Today, politics cannot protect people from pandemics but science and decent policies can. Ramifications of political and economic decisions can and do kill people all over the world needlessly. The threat of global pandemics, terrorism and climate change demonstrate that global challenges have no boundaries. The only boundaries are the ones between the rich and poor, the privileged and the disenfranchised in all societies.

Freedom from poverty, hunger and diseases, freedom to access education, health facilities and housing have always been in the UN Development Agenda, which is defined by not only the UN Charter but the UN Global Conferences, summits and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The concept of solidarity has to go to the heart of our community. The UN has been trying to get close to achieving a utopia where all countries are in peace within and with each other, help each other so that they can rise together. A world of partnerships, where there is equity and equality, human rights, where gender equity prevails, where everyone has equal access to health facilities and education is in the core of sustainable development goals.

As Michelle Bachelet of Chile, the High Commissioner of UN Human Rights Office said “Like COVID 19, racism and xenophobia are contagious killers.” All communities, national and local governments, the rich and poor “need to tackle police violence, racial profiling, mass incarceration and structural racial discrimination in health, employment, education and housing.” It is time, high time that human beings should control their violent, destructive urges, as well as their greed, and fight for justice, equality, climate change and threats to humanity rather than each other.

Let us hope that the pandemic makes humanity to realize its profound deficiencies and weaknesses and make a serious effort to achieve the UN SDGs through national and local

governments as well as all stakeholders including the citizens.

Why Sustainable Urbanization?

Around 2.5 billion more people will be living in cities by 2050. So in the next 30 years, these 2.5 billion more people will be moving to cities especially in Africa and Asia.

The Brundtland Commission or the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), Chaired by, Gro Harlem Brundtland, was convened by the United Nations in 1983. The commission published its report, *Our Common Future*, in 1987 and proposed the concept of sustainable development as an ideal for the global economy and corporations. Sustainability was defined as “development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.” Sustainable development highlights the need for reform of market mechanisms to achieve environmental goals and the achievement of a balance with social and economic considerations.

By 2050, two out of every three people are likely to be living in cities or other urban centers, according to a new United Nations report published in May 2018, highlighting the need for more sustainable urban planning and public services.

Owing to both demographic shifts and overall population growth, that means that around 2.5 billion people could be added to urban areas by the middle of the century, according to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). This number is huge especially because most of the increase is expected to be highly-concentrated in just a few countries.

“Together, India, China and Nigeria will account for 35 per cent of the projected growth of the world’s urban population between 2018 and 2050. It is projected that India will have added 416 million urban dwellers, China 255 million and

Nigeria 189 million,” said UN DESA.³ The report also estimates that by 2030, the world could have 43 so-called megacities (up from 31 today) with more than 10 million inhabitants – most of them in developing countries. Right now, the urban areas in most developing countries struggle with lack of infrastructure, clean water, sanitation, energy resources, and have great difficulties in transportation. Lack of affordable housing continues to be the reason for increasing slums and squatters all over the world. What makes all of those even more unbearable is increased number of flooding, draughts, hurricanes and fires due to mostly climate change in developing and developed countries alike.

Whole cities on islands, shores need to be evacuated and resettled on higher ground. Therefore the challenge is not only to keep the cities the way they are but save them from being overcrowded, and worsening of living conditions as well as disasters.

By 2028, New Delhi is projected to become the most populous city on the planet. Right now, Tokyo is the world’s largest, with an agglomeration of 37 million inhabitants. New Delhi (29 million), Shanghai (26 million), Mexico City and São Paulo, each with around 22 million inhabitants are the most populous cities. Today, Tokyo stands to be a great example of what can be achieved with political will for sustainable urbanization and planning. That does not mean that there are no problems, but it shows that every city can achieve an increase in urban population while having decent living standards with sustainable urbanization.

These swelling populations will place extra demands on both resources and services in urban areas. “Many countries will face challenges in meeting the needs of their growing urban populations, including for housing, transportation, energy systems and other infrastructure; as well as for employment and basic services such as education and health care”⁴ said UN DESA, urging governments adopt better integrated policies to improve the lives of both urban and rural dwellers. The report says that at the same time, linkages between

³ UN DESA Report 2019, UN, NY

⁴ UN DESA Report 2019, UN, NY

urban and rural areas will need to be strengthened, building on their existing economic, social and environmental ties.

Knowing that even in the richest cities, traffic jams, old and failing infrastructure, constructions of new buildings and repairs cause endless delays in transportation .How can it be helped? What can be done to help immigrants and vulnerable groups who live in deplorable conditions even in the rich cities where homeless fill the streets? How can we help to reduce or eliminate the use of fossil fuels that pollute, and cause climate change? How can we have a decent life in cities? The only way is by achieving sustainable urbanization. Only when every member of the society understands the importance of this subject we can have a shot at having a livable city and a healthy planet. What is the role of design professionals in all of this?

The urgency and importance of the subject is eluding many for various reasons, some because of ignorance some because of desire to profit at all costs.

Some rich cities and countries panic when faced with a surge of immigrants from other countries and the citizens turn into anti immigrant nationalists fearing that they will be impacted by the newcomers. They forget that their consumption patterns cause many disasters related to climate which is the cause of some immigration and many conflicts. Some countries and societies profit from wars and still complain about the immigrants they receive or close their borders to them. Of course here we are only dealing with the problems, from the perspective of a design professional or a policy maker regarding urbanization and most of the time from the perspective of UN.

Local governments, governments, financial institutions, politicians, developers, architects, corporate institutions, urban planners, in other words anyone dealing with built environment should understand the seriousness of housing 2.5 billion people in urban areas in our lifetime in a manner that is sustainable. This should be considered against a backdrop of climate change and warming of the planet.

According to Quito Declaration on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements for All or the New Urban Agenda (NUA) adopted at Habitat III, “the persistence of multiple forms of poverty, growing inequalities, and environmental degradation remain among major obstacles to sustainable development worldwide, with social and economic exclusion and spatial segregation often an irrefutable reality in cities and human settlements.”⁵

“We are still far from adequately addressing these and other existing and emerging challenges and there is a need to take advantage of opportunities presented by urbanization as an engine of sustained and inclusive growth, social and cultural development, and environmental protection, and of its potential contributions to the achievement of transformative and sustainable development.”⁶

“By readdressing the way cities and human settlements are planned, designed, financed, developed, governed and managed the New Urban agenda will help to end poverty and hunger and all its forms and dimensions; reduce inequalities; promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth; achieve gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls in order to fully harness, their vital contribution to sustainable development; improve human health and well being; foster resilience; protect the environment.”⁷

Today one of the most important elements of sustainability is taking actions to prevent climate change by reducing carbon imprint and to deal with the results of climate change. Economic, social and environmental sustainability have to be achieved in planning for the surge of population moving into cities.

Of course it goes without saying that peace and lack of conflict is the number one condition of sustainability. Armament is not sustainable. In order to provide a decent life to their citizens’ governments must avoid and prevent armed conflicts at all costs.

⁵ New Urban Agenda ,Para 3

⁶ New Urban Agenda Para 4

⁷ New Urban Agenda Para 5

Why United Nations?

“Since modern humans emerged about 200 000 years ago, 2019 was probably the year in which children were least likely to die, adults were least likely to be illiterate and people were least likely to suffer excruciating and disfiguring diseases.”⁸

United Nations⁹ was established with the objective of achieving peace and security in the world. The Charter of the United Nations was signed on 26 June 1945¹⁰ immediately after the Second World War ended. The Charter starts with the words *“We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save the succeeding generations from the scourge of war”* and *“to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small.”*

United Nations is the only International organization or the Club of all nations where national representatives can get together and discuss challenges and opportunities, face to face, without the barrier of language or country. All nations have an equal voting power. Small countries get together sometimes by region and agree on certain issues so that a number of countries can speak in one voice. However their voice can be heard in their individual capacity as a sovereign nation as well if they wish.

As historian Stephen Schlesinger says, “In some ways the UN is a tedious subject-until, that is, one enters general Assembly in New York City and observes with awe all the nations of the world gathered in one chamber. The UN and its labors are in fact the background noise of our global age –sometimes loud, sometimes soft but always emitting a

⁸ This has been the Best Year ever (Again), Nicholas Kristof ,The New York Times December 29.2019

⁹ www.un.org

¹⁰ Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice, UN, New York,1945

hum"¹¹ Its tremendous impact on the world for the last three quarters of a century shows that it has been successful in general. All nations can propose resolutions that are negotiated at the UN meetings. Resolutions are sometimes compromised and sometimes rejected so that the end result can be a consensus document that would more or less satisfy every nation's wishes. Due to the fact that each country has to approve the resolutions whether by vote or consensus creates a set of values for the whole world to. A country that is not interested in supporting a decision or resolution might abstain or reject a resolution but the fact that the resolution is adopted indicates that the majority of countries agree on a specific topic. This way, a value system is created on every topic discussed and agreed by the UN.

As a result, today every nation is aware of the fact that human beings are equal in spite of their race, religion or gender. Some countries approve resolutions however implement exactly opposite of what they approved at the UN. In the area of development, no one can hold them accountable for their deeds as countries are sovereign. However by signing a resolution they agree with the principles.

We owe these shared values to the constitution of the UN, the Charter of the United Nations which was signed on 26 June 1945 in San Francisco at the conclusion of the United Nations Conference on International Organization. At the Millennium Summit in 2000, to mark the new century, the UN Millennium Declaration was signed and to implement the declaration in the area of development Millennium Development Goals were adopted. The objective was to achieve the 8 development goals by 2015. In 2015, 17 Sustainable Development Goals were adopted by the General Assembly.

The UN Purposes and Principles as mentioned in Article 1 of the Charter says,¹²

¹¹ Stephen C. Schlezinger, *Act of Creation, The founding of the United Nations* Westview Press, Oxford, 2003

¹² Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice, UN, New York, 1945

“The Purposes of the United Nations are:

1. To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace;

2. To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace;

3. To achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion; and

4. To be a center for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends”

Of course to have the agreement of all 193 countries with conflicting interests and characteristics, related to their history, geography, culture, race and religion is an extremely difficult objective. However human beings are very similar to one another in many ways. Dr. Allan Bradley, geneticist,¹³ President, Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute, said *“Only one of the 20 000 or so, genes in our gene pool is diverse. There is a very gentle variation of genes across the planet illustrating that really there are no individual genes that define racial groups.”* Human beings are all related to one another. Everyone needs shelter, food, education, health, employment and enjoys laughing, music, dance, good food, clean water, sanitation, energy and comfort based on their experiences. So it is possible to agree on certain aspects of life we want to experience. That makes UN important an

¹³ Dr. Allan Bradley, *Our Common Humanity in the information Age, GAID Series2, Edited by Aliye Pekin Celik, United Nations, NY, 2007*

organization which defines values and which does it with the written approval and consent of all member countries.

Then there is the question of why some people are against the UN. Mostly people judge the performance of the UN in the area of peace and security where 5 winning powers of the Second World War have the power of veto at the Security Council. However the work of the Economic and Social Council is very different from the Security Council as it deals with the development agenda of the UN. Usually there is a lack of awareness regarding the development programs of the UN Secretariat or the UN organizations and agencies in the area of development. Charter of the United Nations, Chapter IX — International Economic and Social Co-operation Article 55 says,¹⁴

“With a view to the creation of conditions of stability and well-being which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, the United Nations shall promote:

- a. higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development;*
- b. solutions of international economic, social, health, and related problems; and international cultural and educational cooperation; and*
- c. universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.”*

The United Nations is constantly evolving and changing according to the political, social, economic developments in the world. New countries emerge and become members. New problems emerge or recede. The organization and funding of the UN Secretariat keeps shifting with different perceptions and politics. A developing country can become an emerging economy or a donor country or an oil producing country can become a country in conflict within a few years. Priorities keep changing, as well technology, needs and demands.

¹⁴ Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice, UN, New York

UN tries to keep up with challenges and use the opportunities. The Secretariat also tries to catch up with the plethora of changes, both due to economic issues, climate change, events, disasters and conflicts but also due to financial, organizational, administrative or legislative restrictions and limitations, but sometimes it cannot deliver enough, to provide long lasting solutions. However it is the only international body which aspires to have equilibrium between the rich and the poor, the powerful and the weak, to the extent possible. Therefore the values it established over the years regarding economic, social and environmental sustainability are very valuable. Road maps such as the Istanbul Declaration, SDGs, and the New Urban Agenda are drawn, revisited and improved frequently. The real question and the problem is how to achieve SDGs, how to implement the New Urban Agenda and all the UN agreements that would help to improve the living conditions of everyone on the planet.

We can easily say that UN is responsible for positive change, even if it is only a catalyst, to improve life on the planet and it will continue to lead the way for a better future.¹⁵

Why Climate Change?

Over the thousands of years human beings inhabited the earth and they made impressive technological progress. They also explored and exploited the planet and still they are ignorant on many topics. In the process of evolution; they used whatever natural resources they can have for their advantage. Using technology, they created a more comfortable life for themselves while discovering new areas for their advancement using the most available sources without considering their impact on the planet. We cannot say that the technological or electronic evolution of human beings led the evolution of their civility, sensibility and empathy as we continue to see examples of war, conflict, terror, and greed all over the world, every day. Luckily,

¹⁵ www.un.org

humanitarian and civilized thinking prevails for the majority. Unfortunately as decades passed and discoveries led to richness and comfortable lifestyles complemented by human being's insatiable greed for power and money, wars, and conflicts continued. War industry's profitability together with the greed factor prevented an end to conflicts. The inequality between the rich and the poor continued to grow even under different political systems. These were and are still the real roadblocks to sustainable development and urbanization.

As use of fossil fuels and therefore awareness about the problems they cause increased, questions started to be asked and solutions started to be discussed. Unfortunately due to economic considerations, their use, could not be prevented for the past 50 years. One of the problems affiliated with the use of fossil fuels was the fact that they could be depleted at one point. Increase in pollution and therefore sicknesses, related to the pollution were another serious problem. In spite the efforts of some countries to switch to renewable resources; scientists realized the harm done by fossil fuels was not limited to air pollution only. Human activity such as heating, cooling, transportation, and industrial production increased global warming. The warming of the oceans resulted in sea rise, melting icebergs and floods, causing fires and draught. Human beings are advanced enough to find the causal effect of human activity and its impact on the planet scientifically. However, unfortunately the drastic impacts of the climate change and the existentialist threat to our planet are not enough to change policies and consumption patterns easily. To this day there are countries that are not able to change their consumption patterns to prevent disasters not only in other parts of the world but even in their own backyard.

There are many ways of reducing the carbon imprint in every sector. Governments, local governments, international organizations, professionals, academicians, financiers, communities, and women's groups in fact everyone can have an impact on reducing the consumption of fossil fuels. Sustainability of the human race is in jeopardy because of climate change. Slowing down climate change is an absolute must for the existence of our humanity.

In fact the lockdowns to prevent the spread of Covid19 virus showed us how the climate change can be reversed. The challenge is how to achieve a balance when life returns to “normal”. A new, sustainable “normal” needs to be achieved.

The need for “UN Climate Action” was explained ¹⁶ as such *“Global emissions are reaching record levels. The last four years were the four hottest on record, and winter temperatures in the Arctic have risen by 3°C since 1990. Sea levels are rising, coral reefs are dying, and we are starting to see the life-threatening impact of climate change on health, through air pollution, heat waves and risks to food security.*

The impacts of climate change are being felt everywhere and are having very real consequences on people’s lives. Climate change is disrupting national economies, costing us dearly today and even more tomorrow. But there is a growing recognition that affordable, scalable solutions are available now that will enable us all to leapfrog to cleaner, more resilient economies.

The latest analysis shows that if we act now, we can reduce carbon emissions within 12 years and hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C and even, as asked by the latest science, to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

Thankfully, we have the Paris Agreement – a visionary, viable, forward-looking policy framework that sets out exactly what needs to be done to stop climate disruption and reverse its impact. But the agreement itself is meaningless without ambitious action.”

According to the UN *“To be effective and credible, these plans cannot address mitigation alone: they must show the way toward a full transformation of economies in line with sustainable development goals. They should not create winners and losers or add to economic inequality; they must be fair and create new opportunities and protections for those negatively impacted, in the context of a just transition.*

¹⁶ www.un.org/ClimateChange

And they should also include women as key decision-makers: only gender-diverse decision-making has the capacity to tackle the different needs that will emerge in this coming period of critical transformation. Accelerated climate solutions can strengthen our economies and create jobs, while bringing cleaner air, preserving natural habitats and biodiversity, and protecting our environment.

New technologies and engineering solutions are already delivering energy at a lower cost than the fossil-fuel driven economy. Solar energy and onshore wind is the cheapest sources of new bulk power in virtually all major economies. But we must set radical change in motion.

This means ending subsidies for fossil fuels and high-emitting agriculture and shifting towards renewable energy, electric vehicles and climate-smart practices. It means carbon pricing that reflects the true cost of emissions, from climate risk to the health hazards of air pollution. And it means accelerating the closure of coal plants and halting the construction of new ones and replacing jobs with healthier alternatives so that the transformation is just, inclusive and profitable.”

Why Design Professionals?

When we talk about urbanization and especially sustainable urbanization, there are many actors in the process. The users of urbanization are all the urban citizens, the urban migrants, and refugees. Cities aim to serve them and provide services of all sorts and need the physical structures for that purpose. But cities also serve to those who invest in the real estate, industry and production, work places, financial, education and health services. Obviously it is the job of national and local governments to provide the services and the physical environment we live in. However the developers, the contractors together with design professionals such as architects, engineers, and urban planners, and deliver the end product whether it is a highway, bridge, hospital or housing with the help of financial organizations.

All the actors need to learn about the ultimate goals, set by their national governments regarding urbanization namely “the Sustainable Development Goals” and the “New Urban Agenda” All governments made a commitment to achieve these goals and implement the agenda. Whether all the officials in national governments who make the decisions are aware of them or whether they act accordingly is dubious. The same is true for the local government's .With the efforts of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and the network of similar organizations, such as The Global Task Force most local governments should in principle be aware of these two documents related to the sustainability of their cities.

The principles of sustainability and specifically sustainable urbanization are not widely known by most of the citizens, developers, design professionals, finance organizations. Most NGOS like the Consortium for Sustainable Urbanization try to bridge the gap between the New Urban Agenda, and the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN and the design professionals as well as the general public.

However design professionals are the best in solving complex problems and they can certainly be the best to design a sustainable built environment whether it is a park, a building or a city. They create the buildings, neighborhoods, infrastructure and cities.

As Robert Geddes, architect and urban planner in his book “Fit” say¹⁷ *“Designing means creating, organizing, placing, setting things to achieve a purpose. Working as designers, we make things fit together”* As we saw earlier we need urbanization that is sustainable, socially, economically and environmentally. Why do we design where we live and work?

Do we design our cities, towns, building and neighborhoods so that they will fit us or is what we have as cities is a result of haphazard combination of rules and regulations, solutions to increase developers’, contractors’ profits, political interests? *“We need a more inclusive architecture. It must fit here and now. It must be fit for future possibilities. It must fit.”*

¹⁷ Geddes Robert ,*Fit*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford,2013

“The architect’s task is to formulate things that fit. Fit the purpose. Fit the place. Fit for future possibilities.” Yes, architecture should fit the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda. Architects always fear that there will be lack of originality, artistic expression and free of expression with rules and regulations but there will be even more room for innovation and inclusivity. But in line with Geddes, I would say architects, and design professional’s oath should be “Do not harm and make it fit.” Many accidents have shown that sometimes design can be a matter of life and death. The objective is to design for a better life.

Urbanization and Human Settlements at the UN

United Nations is a complicated but flexible system based on its Charter. To explain the different parts of the system, I think the best way is to talk about the Secretariats, that serve the intergovernmental bodies, and the relevant International Conferences and Summits on certain topics that are organized mainly by the relevant secretariat in partnership with other parts of the UN. The conferences are proposed and approved by the intergovernmental bodies and organized by the secretariats, programmes and organizations.. These conferences are intergovernmental events approved by all the 193 member countries. In this book our topic of interest is only human settlements and urbanization.

Human settlements and sustainable urbanization at the UN is handled by a number of intergovernmental bodies and UN programmes with different levels of involvement. There are many NGOs dealing with this issue, most of them established during Habitat III Conference. At 20 year intervals UN organized three intergovernmental, international conferences that were organized on this topic as well as referring to it in other development agendas.

We can list the programmes, organizations and secretariats as; Centre for Housing, Building, and Planning (United Nations). (1965-1978), UNHabitat (1978-Present), UNDESA (1948-Present).UNDP (1965 Present)

The conferences were; Habitat I Vancouver 1976, Habitat II Istanbul 1996, Habitat III Quito 2016, however the Stockholm Conference on Environment, the 2019 summits, are very interesting from the point of sustainable urbanization.

Intergovernmental Bodies that deal with urban issues; are the following:

Commission on Human Settlements (1978-2000), UNHabitat Governing Council (2000-Present) +Habitat Assembly (2019-Present)

Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) (1945-Present) General Assembly (1945-Present) and its Second Committee

High Level Political Forum (HLPF) (2015-Present)

NGOs and NGO Networks such United Cities and Local Governments, ICLEI, Global Task Force. Global Assembly of Partners, Houairou Commission, Consortium for Sustainable Urbanization (CSU), etc have been dealing with different aspects of urbanization.

First we will explain the conferences as they address to public and usually result in products that have important impacts on the member countries. The products usually determine policies and are very comprehensive. The work of the secretariats, programmes, organizations that organize and concentrate on these topics on a daily basis will be explained. At last but not the least we will try to explain the movers and shakers; that is the intergovernmental bodies.

The history of the Development Agenda of the UN

Since the beginning “to promote higher standards of living, full employment and conditions of economic and social progress and development”¹⁸ was the objective of UN. The

¹⁸ UN Charter Article 25

UN system consisting of UN and its organizations related to it are united in a global effort for economic and social development of developing countries through programmes ranging from technical co-operation to studies, from convening international conferences to comprehensive development planning and policy making.

Development projects by individual countries are carried out at the request of governments. Some programmes are implemented on a regional basis by the UN economic and social commissions for regions, Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe and Middle East. Questions of global concern, such as population, Women, Equality, Development and Peace, Trade and Development etc are scrutinized in Global Conferences. There are many programmes, funds, agencies organizations of the UN System that deal with the complex nature of sustainable development. They all respect the decisions of one another and enhance them. Coordinating their efforts and partnerships is of paramount importance.

Technical Cooperation (UNDP), environment (UNEP), protection of children (UNICEF), Women's (UNWomen), human settlements and urbanization (UNHabitat), refugees (UNHCR), are some of these organizations. All these programs work with their related intergovernmental bodies. In the work of all these bodies there are instances when they look at urbanization and human settlements. However UN development agenda relates to sustainable urbanization.

DESA's work on Development Agenda of the UN started with the Stockholm Conference in 1972.

In 1976 The Habitat I Conference took place in Vancouver.

In 1992, at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, more than 178 countries adopted Agenda 21, a plan of action to build a global partnership for sustainable development to improve human lives and protect the environment.

In 1996 Habitat II Conference was held in Istanbul under the leadership of UN Habitat.

In 2000, Millennium Declaration was adopted at the Millennium Summit and the eight Millennium Development

Goals (MDGs) were adopted to set the goals to reduce extreme poverty by 2015.

In 2002 the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Plan of Implementation, adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in South Africa

In 2012, at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, UN Member States adopted the outcome document "The Future We Want" in which they decided, inter alia, to launch a process to develop a set of SDGs to build upon the MDGs and to establish the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

In 2013, the General Assembly set up a 30-member Open Working Group to develop a proposal on the SDGs.

In September 2015, the General Assembly adopted the "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" with its 17 SDGs at the UN Sustainable Development Summit in New York, after many months of deliberations at the Open Working Group which was attended by NGOs and all the stakeholders as well as the governments.

The Habitat III Conference took place in Quito in 2016 under the leadership of UNHabitat.

There were several other relevant major agreements adopted such as Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, Paris Agreement on Climate Change, .that have impact on human settlements.

World Conferences, Summits, related to Human Settlements and Sustainable Urbanization

The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm, 1972

In 1968 Sweden proposed to the United Nations Economic and Social Council "ECOSOC" the idea of having a UN conference to focus on the environment. ECOSOC passed resolution 1346 supporting the idea. General Assembly Resolution 2398 in 1969 decided to convene a conference in 1972 and mandated a set of reports from the UN on environmental issues; UN Secretary-General U Thant invited Maurice Strong to lead it as Secretary-General of the Conference. The United Nations Environment Programme, or UNEP, was created as a result of this conference. The reports of the Conference were written and the Conference was organized by UN DESA.

The United Nations Environment Conference at Stockholm was successful as a catalyst, in the evolution in many UN activities¹⁹, related to human settlements. The Conference on Environment had to look into issues related to human settlements and poverty while solving environmental problems. These two issues cannot be separated from one another. Therefore the Conference on Environment recommended having a Conference on Human Settlements. At its recommendation the Habitat I conference was held in Vancouver in 1976.

In Stockholm, when the Conference also adopted a resolution to establish UN Environment Programme (UNEP) in Nairobi the developed countries wanted to have such an organization while the developing countries negotiated that it should have its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, that is in a developing country in Africa, not in a developed country which hosts other UN headquarters.

The Habitat I Conference, and Vancouver Declaration, 1976 Vancouver

¹⁹ Popovich Michael, The Role of the New Habitat Centre, UN Information Center, London, Pergamon Press, 1978,UK

World Urban Population was 37.9% at the time Habitat I or the first United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, which was held in Vancouver, Canada, between 31 May-11 June 1976,²⁰ It was convened by the United Nations (UNDESA) because governments began to recognize the magnitude and consequences of rapid urbanization and felt the need for a comprehensive approach.

On 16 December 1976 the General Assembly adopted resolution 31/109.taking note of the conference report, the Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements,²¹ which had an action plan with recommendations for National Action. One of the most important outcomes of the conference was that in 1977 a General Assembly resolution 36/162 established the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements–UNCHS (UN Habitat). It designated the Commission on Human Settlements, a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), as the governing body .This Commission became the Governing Council and the recently the Habitat Assembly.

The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements–UNCHS which later changed its name to United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), was established at a time when governments began to recognize the need for sustainable human settlements and the negative consequences of unplanned rapid urbanization especially in the developing world. At that time governments understood how ineffective interventions resulted in a very rapid growth of slums and squatters.

Another major outcome of the Habitat I Conference was the Vancouver Declaration, which urged countries as well as the international community to make a commitment to resolve challenges regarding human settlements. It was considered that spatial planning with economic, social and scientific planning will alleviate the worst conditions of “uncontrolled urbanization” (UN-Habitat, 1976).

²⁰ United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (11 June 1976). *"The Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements – A/CONF.70/15 Chapter I – UN Documents: Gathering a body of global agreements"*. UN Documents

²¹ Vancouver Declaration 1976

The Vancouver Declaration starts with a preamble stating that "*unacceptable human settlements circumstances are likely to be aggravated by inequitable economic growth and uncontrolled urbanization, unless positive and concrete action is taken at national and international levels*". The first action is "*to adopt bold, meaningful and effective human settlement policies and spatial planning strategies considering human settlements as an instrument and object of development.*" Among the general Principles, the Conference advocated improving the quality of life through more equitable distribution of development benefits, planning and regulating land use, protecting the environment, integrating women and youth, and rehabilitating people displaced by natural and man-made catastrophes.²²

In the Guidelines for action, various elements of a human settlements policy are defined. Focus is placed on harmonious integration, reduction of disparities between rural and urban areas, orderly urbanization, progressive minimum standards and community participation.

The Declaration states that "*adequate shelter and services are a basic human right*" and that "*governments should assist local authorities to participate to a greater extent in national development*". The Declaration strongly emphasizes that "*the use and tenure of land should be subject to public control.*"

This Conference can be considered as a reaction of developing countries, to the 1972 Conference on Environment that took place in Stockholm, where environmental problems were at the forefront. At that time environment was the subject of interest to the developed countries whereas human settlements, affordable housing and improvement of living conditions were the important topics for the developing world, which in its struggle to beat poverty and to achieve economic development could not afford the luxury of dealing with deforestation or the quality of air, and biodiversity, the concerns of the Stockholm Conference.

²² Vancouver Déclaration 1976

UNHabitat or as it was called at that time UNCHS, was also a reaction of developing countries, to the establishment of UNEP. Developing countries wanted to have the Habitat I Conference, as it discussed their concerns, such as affordable housing and livable cities at length. They all supported the idea of having a UN Secretariat dedicated to look at the human settlements based in Nairobi just like UNEP which was analyzing environmental issues.

Habitat I was held when governments struggled with the “uncontrollable” enlargement in cities due to the urban pull and rural push. National governments thought that they could prevent homelessness, slums and squatters when they start to get more involved in public housing. Their intention was slowing or stopping the migration from villages to cities. However their expectations were too optimistic. The Conference was of a mindset of seeing government intervention as the solution.

Habitat II Conference and the Istanbul Declaration, Istanbul, 1996

World Urban Population was 45.1% in 1996. Two decades later after Habitat I, governments decided to have another Conference on the topic because in the last 20 years there was no improvement regarding the quality of human settlements.

Habitat II, the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements was held in Istanbul, Turkey from June 3–14, 1996, twenty years after Habitat I. The so called the "City Summit", brought together high-level representatives of national and local governments, as well as private sector, NGOs, research and training institutions and the media.²³ Universal goals of ensuring adequate shelter for all and make human settlements safer, healthier and cities more livable, inspired by the Charter of the United Nations, were discussed and endorsed. The conference outcomes were integrated in the Istanbul Declaration and the Habitat Agenda, and adopted as a new global action plan to

²³ *Istanbul Declaration of Human Settlements "UNHabitat*

implement sustainable human settlements. At this time the Executive Director and Secretary-General of the Conference was Dr. Wally N'Dow from Gambia.

The organizational session of the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for Habitat II was held at UN Headquarters in New York from 3–5 March 1993. Delegates elected the Bureau and took decisions regarding the organization and timing of the process. The topic was like apple pie and motherhood. Nobody could reject it but at first nobody was too interested. Developed countries were not against it but they were not very enthusiastic either. By the end of Organizational Session everyone started to warm up to the idea that this might be an interesting and even ground breaking Conference by hearing from the views of the stakeholders.

The First Substantive Session of the Preparatory Committee of the PrepCom was held in Geneva from 11–22 April 1994. Delegates agreed that the overriding objective of the Conference was to increase world awareness of the problems and potential of human settlements as an important input to social progress and economic growth, and to commit the world's leaders to making cities, towns and villages healthy, safe, just and sustainable. The Second Substantive Session of the PrepCom was held in Nairobi, Kenya from the 24 April - 5 May 1995. The Third Session of the Habitat II Preparatory Committee was held in New York from 5–17 February 1996.

At that time UNHabitat was well established in Nairobi and was trying to raise global awareness about urban and human settlements issues. In spite of all the work done, not only cities got bigger, squatters and slums increased in size and whatever the governments did or not, had no impact on the rate of urbanization or the quality of life in cities. However due to the work done by UNHabitat, governments were more aware of what was going on and realized that they alone cannot solve the overarching problems. For the first time they were aware that they need assistance and support and the thinking of the communities who were living in the slums and squatters and cities as well as the civil society and the stakeholders.

The objectives for Habitat II were to stop the deterioration of human settlements conditions and to achieve improvements in the living environment of all people considering the needs and contributions of women and vulnerable social groups. The Conference adopted a general statement of principles and commitments and formulated a related global plan of action capable of guiding national and international efforts. A slightly different mandate for the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) was accepted to support and monitor the implementation of the Habitat Agenda adopted at the Conference and approved by the General Assembly. Unlike Habitat I which requested governments to solve all housing problems, Habitat II was open to the views of partners. The governments were requested to be enablers for those who wanted to create their housing and communities. Governments started to realize their limitations regarding providing housing.

For the first time in a UN conference, NGOs and civil society organizations were invited to speak and participate in drafting recommendations. The issues demanding the world's attention were summarized in *An Urbanizing World: The Global Report on Human Settlements 1996*, raising awareness on the need to put cities in the forefront of development strategies, and on the growing problem of poverty and poor housing conditions. The conference led to the acknowledgement of cities as engines of global growth, but also raised awareness of the need for competent and accountable urban governance and the importance of paying attention to citizen groups, community organizations and NGOs.

By including NGOs, private sector local governments, professionals, academicians as participants and hearing their problems and views, governments hoped that they will do better in solving the problems and moved from asking the governments to do everything to sharing the burden with others in the society and involve the users in decision making. This way government assumed a secondary role. The extraordinary presence and involvement of women's groups and the civil society was seen for the first time. However private sector remained on the sidelines.

The Istanbul Declaration ²⁴

“2. We have considered, with a sense of urgency, the continuing deterioration of conditions of shelter and human settlements. At the same time, we recognize cities and towns as centers of civilization, generating economic development and social, cultural, spiritual and scientific advancement. We must take advantage of the opportunities presented by our settlements and preserve their diversity to promote solidarity among all our peoples.

3. We reaffirm our commitment to better standards of living in larger freedom for all humankind. We recall the first United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, held at Vancouver, Canada, the celebration of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless and the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000, all of which have contributed to increased global awareness of the problems of human settlements and called for action to achieve adequate shelter for all. Recent United Nations world conferences, including, in particular, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, have given us a comprehensive agenda for the equitable attainment of peace, justice and democracy built on economic development, social development and environmental protection as interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development. We have sought to integrate the outcomes of these conferences into the Habitat Agenda.

4. To improve the quality of life within human settlements, we must combat the deterioration of conditions that in most cases, particularly in developing countries, have reached crisis proportions. To this end, we must address comprehensively, inter alia, unsustainable consumption and production patterns, particularly in industrialized countries; unsustainable population changes, including changes in structure and distribution, giving priority consideration to the tendency towards excessive population concentration; homelessness; increasing poverty; unemployment; social

²⁴ Istanbul Declaration, 1976

exclusion; family instability; inadequate resources; lack of basic infrastructure and services; lack of adequate planning; growing insecurity and violence; environmental degradation; and increased vulnerability to disasters”.

The Habitat III Conference and the New Urban Agenda – Quito 2016

“United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) met in Quito, Ecuador, from October 17-20, 2016. The requesting Intergovernmental body was Habitat Governing Council and the organizing Programme was UNHabitat.

World Urban Population reached 54% of the world population in 2016. Cities were different in economically and socially than the cities of the 20th century, and due to the changes and transformations that have occurred since Habitat II, there was now a need to revisit the urban agenda, and to reconsider the approaches on urban policy. It has become clear that sustainable urbanization is the only way out of this challenge especially with the adoption of the UN2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals. The New Urban Agenda (NUA) which is the outcome document of Habitat III is an action-oriented document setting global standards for the achievement of sustainable urban development, by rethinking the way cities are built, managed, and used. The NUA also seeks to realize Goal 11 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

At this Conference, governments wanted to involve private sector and finance sector in human settlements development as well as the civil society. However the biggest responsibility suddenly was transferred to local governments partly because of the enthusiasm of local governments and their strong presence and contributions to the whole process and also it was the most logical thing to do. At this point governments started to see sustainable urbanization as a tool to achieve development and local authorities as the

strong, enthusiastic partner with resources, which can deliver sustainable cities.

Since the inception of UNHabitat, the important role of urbanization and construction sector in development was known and advised by UNHabitat, but governments never paid a great attention to urbanization as a tool for development. At the beginning, governments approached the topic from the perspective of improving living conditions in developing countries. However governments could not ignore the tremendous impact of urban areas to the economic development of a country as well as its rural areas. They had to look more closely to what was happening in cities. Finally the positive impact of the cities on the development of countries was comprehended by all.. Urbanization started to be considered of equal importance as industrialization and production in the development process.

The United Nations General Assembly decided to convene The Habitat III Conference in its resolution 66/207. The Habitat III Conference reminded everyone of the global commitment to sustainable urbanization, and to focus on the implementation of a “New Urban Agenda”.

Habitat III was the first United Nations global summits after the adoption of the 2030 Development Agenda. (SDGs) It gave the opportunity to open discussions on important urban challenges and questions, such as how to plan and manage cities, towns and villages for sustainable development. The discussion of these questions shaped the implementation of new global development and climate change goals. In particular the conference elaborated on Goal 11 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable."

UNHabitat III was held under the leadership of Joan Clos, who was the Mayor of Barcelona (1997-2006) who became Executive Director of UN-Habitat in 2010. He was also the Secretary-General of the Habitat III. Besides all Member States, all relevant stakeholders, including parliamentarians, civil society organizations, regional and local governments,

professionals and researchers, academia, foundations, women and youth groups, trade unions, and the private sector, as well as organizations of the United Nations system and intergovernmental organizations *were invited* just like in Habitat II. About 30,000 people in total attended the conference, which was held in Quito.

The first session of the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom1) for Habitat III was held in New York, United Nations Headquarter, from 17 to 18 September 2014.²⁵ The second session of the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom2) was held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 14 to 16 April 2015.²⁶ The PrepCom3 took place from 25 to 27 July 2016, in Surabaya, Indonesia.

The process towards Habitat III included the national and regional reports, a Global Report, to provide information on the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and a comprehensive analysis on the global state of urbanization as well as good practices and tools both regarding policies and implementation around the world.

Habitat III Policy Papers on relevant topics were developed through a collaborative exercise of the United Nations system coordinated by the Habitat III Secretariat. A number of official Regional and Thematic High Level Meetings involving a wide range of participants discussed priorities for the New Urban Agenda and policy recommendations in the form of a final participants' declaration. The final declaration was the official input to the Habitat III process. A total of 10 policy papers on relevant topics were developed by Policy Units composed of 20 experts each, coming from different geographic areas and constituencies.²⁷

New Urban Agenda

The primary goal and outcome of the conference was the agreement by UN member states on the New Urban Agenda (NUA), which serves as a guideline for urban development for the next twenty years till 2036.^[9]

²⁵ Preparatory Committee 1: 17–18 September 2014 Habitat III"UN-Habitat

²⁶ Preparatory Committee 2: 14–16 April 2015 Habitat III"UN-Habitat"

²⁷ Issue Papers and Policy Units "UN-Habitat".

The NUA makes frequent references to related UN agreements, including the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development passed in 1992, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030), and the Paris climate agreement, all issued in 2015.

The four mechanisms envisioned which affected the New Urban Agenda are:

- *National urban policies promoting "integrated systems of cities and human settlements" in furtherance of "sustainable integrated urban development".*
- *Stronger urban governance "with sound institutions and mechanisms that empower and include urban stakeholders" along with checks and balances, to promote predictability, social inclusion, economic growth, and environmental protection.*
- *Reinvigorated "long-term and integrated urban and territorial planning and design in order to optimize the spatial dimension of the urban form and deliver the positive outcomes of urbanization"; and Effective financing frameworks "to create, sustain and share the value generated by sustainable urban development in an inclusive manner."*

Urban planning is the route by which much of the New Urban Agenda²⁸ can be accomplished. In particular NUA²⁹ calls for: urban planning and design instruments that support sustainable management and use of natural resources and land, appropriate compactness and density, and mixed uses, through planned urban strategies as applicable, to trigger economies of scale and agglomeration, strengthen food system planning, enhance resource efficiency, urban resilience, and environmental sustainability. There was an endorsement of a smart city model:

²⁸ *New Urban Agenda*, Habitat III Secretariat, 2017; A/RES/71/256*; ISBN 978-92-1-132731-1

²⁹ *New Urban Agenda* Para 51)

“We commit ourselves to adopting a smart-city approach that makes use of opportunities from digitization, clean energy and technologies, as well as innovative transport technologies, thus providing options for inhabitants to make more environmentally friendly choices and boost sustainable economic growth and enabling cities to improve their service delivery.”

The NUA includes language about a *"right to the city"*, a concept referring to popular control over urban processes, but without definite implications for who will prevail when different parties' interests are in conflict.

“The NUA calls for both public and private financing. Public financing may be derived from the economic gains from urbanization, including land and property value and infrastructure projects. Development funds and development banks are envisioned as intermediaries for urban financing.”

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“Private funding is envisioned especially for real estate and housing; the NUA encourages the participation of a diverse range of multilateral financial institutions, regional development banks and development finance institutions, cooperation agencies, private-sector lenders and investors, cooperatives, moneylenders and microfinance banks to invest in affordable and incremental housing in all its forms.”

Millenium Declaration Goals (2000-2015)

At the Millenium Summit at the UN in 2000, world leaders got together and adopted the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) to set targets for the development agenda for the UN. Setting foreseeable targets were useful tools for policy making and helped the poor a lot. However by 2015 all the targets were not met. These goals referred to problems of cities tangentially. However Goal No 7, Targets C and D were related to built and natural environment. There was an assumption that the development agenda will serve only in

³⁰ New Urban Agenda Para 130-153

developing countries. The Summit was organized by UNDESA and approved by the GA.

The Development Agenda consisting of eight Millennium Development Goals was the blueprint agreed by the international community to improve the living conditions in the developing world by 2015. What was successful and what failed related to these goals was analyzed extensively by the international community, governments, local governments and the civil society. This in depth analysis ended at the conceptions of the sustainable development goals which is the blueprint for sustainable development from 2015 to 2030. However, no one can deny that MDGs showed the world, that setting achievable targets were very useful to clarify the overall objectives. Goal 7 was the goal most directly related to sustainable urbanization.

GOAL 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability (Adopted by GA for 2000-2015)

The two targets most related to sustainable cities and their success rate is reported as such;

Target 7.C: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation

The world has met the target of halving the proportion of people without access to improved sources of water, five years ahead of schedule.

Between 1990 and 2015, 2.6 billion people gained access to improved drinking water sources.

Worldwide 2.1 billion people have gained access to improved sanitation. Despite progress, 2.4 billion are still using unimproved sanitation facilities, including 946 million people who are still practicing open defecation.

Target 7.D: Achieve, by 2020, a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers

Between 2000 and 2014, more than 320 million people living in slums gained access to improved water sources, improved sanitation facilities, or durable or less crowded housing, thereby exceeding the MDG target. This progress was largely offset by internal population growth and rural-urban migration

However the number of people living in slums increased. More than 880 million people are estimated to be living in slums today, compared to 792 million in 2000 and 689 million in 1990.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) (2015-2030)

In 2015 Sustainable Developments Goals ³¹ started to be discussed at an open working group which was very receptive to presentations and comments by NGOs and stakeholders at the UN. Moving from the experience of the MDGs which had some pros and cons, the SDGs were designed to address all nations ,rich and poor .They also aim to consider development and sustainability as one entity ,not two conflicting issues one related to economic growth ,the other for environment for the preservation of the life on the planet. That was the main difference between the two goal sets. 17 SDGs were adopted in 2015 by ECOSOC and GA and the meetings were organized by UNDESA. For the first time a goal was adopted for the sustainable cities after lots of lobbying and discussions. They, provide a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. Global partnerships are very important for the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)., For the SDGs unlike MDGs all developed and developing countries recognized that ending poverty, strategies that improve health and education, reducing inequality, supporting economic growth and climate change are important for all. The understanding that development needs to be sustainable is very strong at SDGs.

³¹ www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org

SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (2015-2030)

SDG 11, on cities and human settlement was adopted after many lengthy discussions and negotiations. Under the leadership of the United Cities and Local Governments a strong organization of local governments and the extensive network of Global Task Force, it was finally possible to convince governments of the important role played by local governments in the development process. UNHabitat of course supported this effort whole heartedly. Many governments opposed to the word “cities” as it sounded as if rural areas are left behind however this SDG looks at urbanization as a continuum of all settlements and their impacts on one another. Another argument was that other SDGs covered this topic however in the past, the importance, and relevance of urbanization was always hidden under the topics on education, health; poverty etc and the data needed to deal with these issues were hidden.

The SDG 11 was adopted based on the following factors: Cities are hubs for ideas, commerce, culture, science, and productivity, social, human and economic development. Urban planning, transport systems, water, sanitation, waste management, disaster risk reduction, access to information, education and capacity-building are all relevant issues to sustainable urban development.

A separate goal could be adopted because, as mentioned earlier, in 2008, for the first time in history, the global urban population outnumbered the rural population. This milestone marked the advent of a new 'urban millennium' and, by 2050, it is expected that two-thirds of the world population will be living in urban areas. With more than half of humankind living in cities and the number of urban residents growing by nearly 73 million every year, it is estimated that urban areas account for 70 per cent of the world's gross domestic product and has therefore generated economic growth and prosperity for many.

More than 1 billion people continue to live in squatters and slums. The vast majority of urban residents is breathing poor-quality air and has limited access to transportation and

open public spaces. With the areas occupied by cities growing faster than their populations, there are real problems for sustainability

There was also recognition of the cross-cutting nature of urban issues, which have an impact on a number of other Sustainable Development Goals, including SDGs 1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 15, and 17, among others.

Three GA Summits, a Historic First, in September 2019

At the 74th session of the GA for the first time 3 summits were held at the same time in September 2019. These were the summits on Climate Change, SDGs and Financing for Development. The delegations held these three summits at the same time at the same place because of the fact that they are all related and achieving one of them without the other is not possible or desirable.

UN Climate Action Summit New York 2019 ³²

UN Secretary-General António Guterres invited world leaders to come to New York on 23 September 2019 to discuss plans to enhance their commitments, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 45 per cent over the next decade, and to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

His motto was *“I want to hear about how we are going to stop the increase in emissions by 2020, and dramatically reduce emissions to reach net-zero emissions by mid-century.”*

The Summit brought together governments, the private sector, civil society, local authorities and other international organizations to develop ambitious solutions in six areas: a global transition to renewable energy; sustainable and resilient infrastructures and cities; sustainable agriculture and management of forests and oceans; resilience and

³² www.un.org/climatechange

adaptation to climate impacts; and alignment of public and private finance with a net zero economy..The summit was proposed by ECOSOC and GA and organized by UNDESA

Most of the UN member nations are very concerned that global emissions are reaching record levels and show no sign of falling. The last four years were the four hottest on record. Sea levels are rising, coral reefs are dying, and the life-threatening impact of climate change on health, through air pollution, heat waves storms, floods, fires and risks to food security are seen almost on a daily basis all around the globe in rich and poor countries alike. At some locations it is a daily existentialist threat.

The impacts of climate change are being felt everywhere on people's lives. Climate change is disrupting national economies, although there is a growing recognition that affordable, scalable solutions are available now. If they are used there can be a better future. Developing countries want developed countries to be responsible to correct the harm they have done by using fossil fuels The latest analysis shows that carbon emissions can be reduced within 12 years and hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C and even, to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

The Paris Agreement is a, forward-looking policy framework that sets out exactly what needs to be done to stop climate disruption and reverse its impact. But the agreement itself is meaningless without action by local and national governments.”

The Summit brought together governments, the private sector, civil society, local authorities and other international organizations to develop solutions in six areas: a global transition to renewable energy; sustainable and resilient infrastructures and cities; sustainable agriculture and management of forests and oceans; resilience and adaptation to climate impacts; and alignment of public and private finance with a net zero economy.

The summit discussed many strategies either for the first time or again on topics such as the following;

Subsidies for fossil fuels and high-emitting agriculture should be discontinued shifting towards renewable energy, electric vehicles and climate-smart practices. It means use of carbon pricing to reflect the true cost of emissions, from climate risk to the health hazards of air pollution. The closure of coal plants and preventing the construction of new ones is needed. In order to ensure that the transformative actions in the real economy are as impactful as possible, the Secretary-General has prioritized the following action portfolios, which are recognized as having high potential to curb greenhouse gas emissions and increased global action on adaptation and resilience. Some of the topics discussed were very much related to urbanization, building materials, use of energy etc.

- *Energy Transition: accelerating the shift away from fossil fuels and towards renewable energy, as well as making significant gains in energy efficiency;*
- *Industry Transition: transforming industries such as Oil and Gas, Steel, Cement, Chemicals and Information Technology;*
- *Cities and Local Action: Advancing mitigation and resilience at urban and local levels, with a focus on new commitments on low-emission buildings, mass transport and urban infrastructure; and resilience for the urban poor;*
- *Resilience and Adaptation: advancing global efforts to address and manage the impacts and risks of climate change, particularly in those communities and nations most vulnerable.*

At the end of the Summit major announcements were made by government and private sector leaders demonstrating growing recognition that the pace of climate action must be rapidly accelerated.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres, in closing the Summit, said *“You have delivered a boost in momentum, cooperation and ambition. But we have a long way to go.”*

“We need more concrete plans, more ambition from more countries and more businesses. We need all financial

institutions, public and private, to choose, once and for all, the green economy.”

Summit initiatives were designed to ensure the actions undertaken would be fair for all, supporting jobs and clear air for better health, and protect the most vulnerable, as well as new initiatives on adaptation, agriculture and early warning systems that will protect 500 million additional people against the impacts of climate change.

The UNSDG Summit New York 2019

This was a High-level Political Forum (HLPF) meeting on Sustainable Development under the auspices of the General Assembly Accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

On 24 and 25 September 2019, Heads of State and Government gathered at the United Nations Headquarters in New York to follow up and comprehensively review progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The event was the first UN summit on the SDGs since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in September 2015. It was organized by UNDESA like the other summits.

The SDG Summit resulted in the adoption of the Political Declaration, for a decade of action and delivery for sustainable development. World leaders called for a decade of action to deliver the SDGs by 2030 and announced actions they are taking to advance the agenda. The General Assembly endorsed the Political Declaration on 15 October 2019. More than 100 acceleration actions have been announced.

In addition to the inter-governmentally agreed political declaration, voluntary actions to accelerate SDG implementation were announced before and during the SDG Summit. “SDG Acceleration Actions” are initiatives voluntarily undertaken by countries and other stakeholders to contribute to a speeded up implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Such acceleration actions can be registered by

National Governments, local and regional governments, the United Nations system, other intergovernmental organizations, international and regional financial institutions, major groups and other stakeholders including the private sector, civil society organizations, academic and research institutions, the scientific community, and other actors - individually or in partnership.

UN Financing Summit, New York 2019

On 26 September 2019, the General Assembly convened its first High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development since the adoption of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

The Addis Ababa Agenda is the global framework for financing for development. Aligning and mobilizing resources are major challenges for financing the SDGs. Despite progress since the adoption of the Addis Agenda, growing uncertainties and risks threaten development progress and sustainable finance prospects. As global challenges are more integrated, responses become increasingly fragmented. Facing this context, it is more important than ever to bring financing sustainable development to the center of the international agenda. The High-level Dialogue aimed to renew global commitment to financing at the highest political level. It served as a UN call for collective action to energize growth and tackle challenges in the global economy, encourage public and private investment to align with the 2030 Agenda, and promote new and innovative initiatives that target gaps in financing sustainable development.

Departments, Programmes, Organizations, Secretariats

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs UN DESA (1948-Present)

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) is part of the United Nations Secretariat. Unlike most secretariats or programmes of the United Nations, DESA deals with a large number of issues in the development agenda regarding economic, social and environmental issues. It is responsible for the follow-up to major United Nations Summits and Conferences DESA services the United Nations Economic and Social Council and the Second and Third Committees of the United Nations General Assembly in terms of content.³³

DESA is the secretariat for Economic and Social Council consisting of governmental delegations and does the substantive work for it as well as High Level Political forum which is also consists of government representatives.

UN DESA manages sustainable development agenda of the UN. It is responsible for tracking Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's). While working for ECOSOC, HLPF and GA, it prepares for the development agenda together with the delegations according to the interests and priorities of the delegations.

UN DESA helps member countries around the world in agenda-setting and decision-making so that they can achieve their economic, social and environmental goals. Sustainable urbanization is among these goals. DESA supports international cooperation to promote sustainable development for all, based on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which were adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015.

UN DESA is part of the UN Secretariat, which is funded through regular contributions from Member States. The Department was reorganized into its present form in 1997. The Department is headed by Liu Zhenmin appointed the as Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs. Apart from addressing the three pillars of sustainable development—social economic and environmental, DESA

³³ UNDESA Website

oversees the key partnerships with governments, UN agencies and civil society organizations.

UN DESA's mission is to promote sustainable development for all, especially on the weakest and most vulnerable. Looking for equity and equality in countries whether they are developed and developing. DESA interacts with all stakeholders, governments, UN funds and programmes and other international organizations, civil society and the private sector to improve economic and social well-being.

UN DESA's work programme includes setting the norms, value systems, data and analysis and capacity building. UNDESA organizes major global conferences and summits, as mandated by UN Member States on relevant topics that are of interest to the member countries. UN DESA assists countries to agree in the topics of vital importance for them.

It is also tasked with supporting deliberations in two major UN charter bodies: the UN General Assembly and UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), including ECOSOC's subsidiary bodies. It organizes and supports consultations with a range of stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society. While being responsible for ensuring civil society engagement with the UN through the ECOSOC bodies.

UN DESA is the knowledge collecting section of the UN in the area of development. It does this function by generating, analyzing and compiling a wide range of official economic, social and environmental data and information. The research and analytical work covers a range of economic, social and environmental issues. The Department produces a host of flagship publications and major intergovernmental reports, which are essential to UN negotiations and global policy decisions like "Sustainable Urbanization in the Information Age"³⁴.

³⁴ Sustainable Urbanization in the Information Age', Edited by Aliye P.Celik, Roxana Zyman, Rafat Mahdi,, DESA, United Nations, NY, NY 2009, ST/ESA/PAD/SER.E/137

DESA was responsible tracking Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) from 2000 to 2015. Now it deals with SDG's DESA's objectives are helping stakeholders to do their part, to leave no one behind. DESA promotes inclusion, reducing inequalities and eradicating poverty working together with NGOs and other stakeholders as well as national and local governments in finding ways of helping people in poverty by making informed decisions. Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Commissions, Forums, expert group meetings and other bodies

The following UN DESA divisions have more responsibility on sustainable development therefore when sustainable urbanization is in the radar of either ECOSOC or HLPF they get involved.

1) Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development

The Office supports the work of the General Assembly, ECOSOC and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). It works with Member States, other UNDESA divisions, the UN system entities, NGOs and other major groups and other stakeholders to support the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda by UN intergovernmental bodies. The Office organizes HLPF's review of progress towards the SDGs by including Voluntary National Reviews.

The Office supports the General Assembly quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) of the United Nations system's operational activities providing extensive substantive monitoring, analysis and policy support to inform Member States' guidance and oversight of the UN development system This is done through the annual ECOSOC operational activities for development segment, and a continuous engagement with the UN development, as well as with the system's coordination mechanisms.

It assists ECOSOC by studying topics that are on the agenda of the Council. It also brings innovative thinking to ECOSOC, It promotes consensus among delegations by having preparatory, explanatory events on the topics that are of interest to the delegations, It coordinates efforts by Un

programs, NGOs, stakeholders to achieve sustainable development goals (SDGs). The Office supports ECOSOC's oversight of its subsidiary bodies, as well as promotes their contribution to the work of ECOSOC and the HLPF. It also assists Council in identifying emerging challenges and major issues requiring the attention of Member States and the UN system, to build and sustain peace and development and to achieve the SDGs.

The Office organizes the procedures and process for NGOs seeking consultative status with ECOSOC, through its support to the NGO Committee which is an intergovernmental committee. It works with the accredited NGOs on how to contribute to the work of the Council. It also works to support the involvement of major groups and other stakeholders in the work of the HLPF. This is very important for any stakeholders to be very closely linked to the work of the UN as membership allows accredited stakeholders to the UN meetings and gives them a voice to be heard by delegations officially.

2) Division for Sustainable Development Goals

As mandated by GA resolution 70/299, the Division for Sustainable Development Goals acts as the Secretariat for SDG's, focusing on providing substantive support and capacity building to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and their related thematic issues, including water, energy, climate, ocean, urbanization, transport, science and technology, the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR), partnerships.

The Division contributes to the intergovernmental processes on the 2030 Agenda, including those under the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the High-level Political Forum, with its substantive analytical work on thematic issues of the Sustainable Development Goals.

It coordinates substantive inputs for the deliberations on the review and implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It organizes teams on the Sustainable Development Goals and their interlinkages, including UN-Ocean, UN-Water, UN-Energy, UN Transport and UN-climate. It also plays a key role on

evaluation of system-wide implementation of the 2030 Agenda and on advocacy and outreach activities relating to Sustainable Development Goals.

3) Financing for Sustainable Development Office

The Office provides support to Member States in addressing the issues related to financing for development, as well as the means of implementation for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development ensuring that the intergovernmental processes on financing for development, including the Financing for Development Forum, the Development Cooperation Forum, and the relevant subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC, work in harmony..

The Office also provides support to the Secretary-General in coordinating the participation of United Nations representatives in the G20 processes, as well as other global economic and financial institutions and fora. It also tries to strengthen the United Nations cooperation with other international organizations, and to provide analytical support to the Secretary-General. Its activities are serving as a focal point organizational support to the financing for development processes; for sustainable development and means of implementation; contributes to the United Nations' coordinated approaches on global financial issues; serves as the United Nation System's hub for work on international development cooperation and international cooperation in tax matters;

Centre for Housing, Building, and Planning (United Nations). (1965-1978)

“Housing”, was the terminology used in 1970s and it took a prominent place in the UN network of programmes and agencies .From its earliest years the UN has devoted a major segment of its resources to economic and social work. The demand of member states for technical assistance made sure of that. Within the predominantly economic sector, housing and urban and rural planning occupied a significant place however not much funding was allocated to it. Names of the Secretariat units involved changed gradually

to reflect new functions and demands, the “Housing and Town and Country Planning Section” changed into “Housing, Building and Planning” and since 1965, the “United Nations Centre for Housing, Building and Planning”. In the UN system, the work of the Specialized Agencies and other institutions, and the regional economic commissions all served to underline that the conditions of life in both urban and rural settlements were seen as central issues to the sectoral activities of the international community. The need for a comprehensive, integrated and much strong response by the UN system was becoming evident with the unprecedented growth of informal settlements.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (1965-Present)

UNDP works in about 170 countries, helping to achieve the SDG’s such as the eradication of poverty, and the reduction of inequalities and exclusion. It supports countries so that they can develop policies, leadership skills, partnering abilities, institutional capabilities and build resilience.

It is United Nations’ global development network. It advocates, supports and connects countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help their population to improve their living conditions. It provides expert advice, training and grants, support to developing countries; and it promotes technical and investment cooperation among nations.

Headquartered in New York City, the status of UNDP is a program within the United Nations General Assembly. The UNDP Administrator is the third highest-ranking official of the United Nations after the United Nations Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General. The UNDP Administrator has the rank of an Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations .In addition to his or her responsibilities as head of UNDP; the Administrator is also the Vice-Chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group.

The position of Administrator is appointed by the Secretary-General of the UN and confirmed by the General Assembly

for a term of four years. Achim Steiner is the current Administrator.

The UNDP is funded entirely by voluntary contributions from UN member states. It works with local governments to meet development challenges and develop local capacity.

The UNDP publishes an annual Human Development Report (since 1990) to measure and analyze developmental progress. In addition to a global Report, UNDP publishes regional, national, and local Human Development Reports.

UNDP works with nations on their own solutions to global and national development challenges. As they develop local capacity, UNDP works with a wide range of partners. However UNDP offers to help only if nations request it.

The UNDP was founded in 1965 with the merging of the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance (EPTA) and the Special Fund which was Special United Nations Fund for Economic Development (SUNFED) (called the United Nations Fund for Economic Development (UNFED) earlier). EPTA was established in 1949 to help the economic and political aspects of underdeveloped countries. Special Fund had the objective of enlarging the scope of UN technical cooperation capacity.

UNDP plays a significant co-ordination role for the UN's activities in the field of development. This is mainly executed through its leadership of the UN Development Group and through the Resident Coordinator System.

The Resident Coordinator (RC) system, co-ordinates all organizations of the United Nations system dealing with operational activities for development in the field. The RC system aims to bring together the different UN agencies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of operational activities at the country level. Resident Coordinators lead UN country teams and are the designated representatives of the Secretary-General for development operations. Working closely with national governments, Resident Coordinators and country teams advocate the interests and mandates of the UN, drawing on the support and guidance of the entire

UN family. It is now coordinated by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG).

UNDP's Strategic Plan (2018-2021) has been designed to be responsive to the wide diversity of the countries it serves. The diversity is reflected in three broad development contexts:

- *Eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions*
- *Accelerate structural transformations*
- *Build resilience to shocks and crises*

To respond to these issues, and better focus its resources and expertise to deliver on the 2030 Agenda, UNDP has identified a set of approaches that we call our Signature Solutions:

- *Keeping people out of Poverty*
- *Governance for peaceful, just, and inclusive societies*
- *Crisis prevention and increased Resilience*
- *Environment: nature-based solutions for development*
- *Clean, affordable Energy*
- *Women's empowerment and Gender equality*³⁵

UNDP is instrumental in enabling action in every country and ensuring that United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) have the support, guidance and the oversight required as they assist governments to deliver on the 2030 Agenda.

UNDP also administers the UN Capital Development Fund, which helps developing countries grow their economies by supplementing existing sources of capital assistance by means of grants and loans; and UN Volunteers, which fields over 6,500 volunteers from 160 countries, serving with 38 UN partners in support of peace, security, human rights, and development worldwide.

All sources of finance - domestic and international, public and private - are needed to achieve the SDGs. UNDP is redoubling efforts to develop partnerships with International Financial Institutions, civil society, the private sector, as well

³⁵ UNDP website

as individuals. The aim is to have UNDP support governments in securing increasingly diverse sources of innovative financing for development and ensure that such financing is risk-informed.³⁶

UNDP works in the area of human settlements and urbanization when nations request its help in this topic, usually in cooperation with UNHabitat.

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) (1978-Present)

UNHabitat was established in 1978 as an outcome of the First UN Conference on Human Settlements and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat I) held in Vancouver, Canada, in 1976.³⁷ Two years after Habitat I, the creation and funding of a central Secretariat to serve as focal point for all UN work in the improvement of living areas was finalized. UN Centre for Human Settlements (UNHabitat) moved to Nairobi. The Commission on Human Settlements, a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), as the governing body started to work.

UN Secretary-General Waldheim appointed Dr. Arcot Ramachandran as Executive Director of the UN Centre for Human Settlements at the level of Under-Secretary-General. A 58-member Commission on Human Settlements oversaw this organization. The UN Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation started to function, and a new UN Audio-Visual Information Centre for Human Settlements was established.

The UN-Habitat's mandate was originally derived from General Assembly resolution 3327 (XXIX), by which the Assembly established the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation; resolution 32/162, and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat); and in 2001, resolution 56/206, by which the Assembly transformed the Commission on Human Settlements and the

³⁶ UNDP Website

³⁷

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), including the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation, into UN-Habitat. The mandate of UN-Habitat is further derived from other internationally agreed development goals as well. Commission on Human Settlements was later replaced by the Governing Council.

UN-Habitat mandated by the United Nations General Assembly *“to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all.* Dealing with human settlements and sustainable urban development, the present mandate of UN-Habitat derives from the Habitat Agenda, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in Istanbul, Turkey, in 1996 and the New Urban Agenda adopted at Habitat III in Quito in 2016. The twin goals of the Habitat Agenda are adequate shelter for all and the development of sustainable human settlements in an urbanizing world.

Since January 2019 the Executive Director is Maimunah Mohd Sharif, who had served as the Mayor of Penang Island in Indonesia, prior to her appointment in UN-Habitat by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres. UNHabitat is a knowledge base on urban development processes, and understands the aspirations of cities and their residents. For forty years, UN-Habitat has been working in human settlements throughout the world, focusing on building a brighter future for villages, towns, and cities of all sizes and has gained an expertise in urbanization.³⁸

UN-Habitat's governance structure is made up of the UN-Habitat Assembly, the Executive Board and the Committee of Permanent Representatives. The General Assembly of the United Nations in its resolution A/RES/73/239 decided to dissolve the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and to replace it with a United Nations Habitat Assembly of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat Assembly). UN-Habitat Assembly is a universal body composed of the 193 member states of the United Nations and convenes every four years

³⁸ www.un.habitat.org

at the Headquarters of UN-Habitat in Nairobi. The Executive Board is composed of 36 member states elected by the UN-Habitat Assembly and meets three times a year to increase the oversight by Member States of UN-Habitat operations. The Committee of Permanent Representatives of UN-Habitat (CPR) meets twice every four years in an open-ended manner. The three governing bodies together are intended to strengthen the accountability and transparency of UN-Habitat, and provide an effective oversight mechanism for UN-Habitat to enhance its normative and operational activities.

The World Urban Forum is an international conference dedicated to urban issues, organized by UN-Habitat. It was established by the United Nations to examine one of the most pressing issues facing the world today: rapid urbanization and how to ensure a sustainable urban development. It is organized every two years between the UN-Habitat governing councils. It is a gathering of like minded mainly NGOs and local governments as well as delegations .There is negotiated document at the end of this forum.

The World Urban Campaign is the world platform on cities for sharing and learning on initiatives, actions and policies driving positive change towards sustainable urbanization. Coordinated by UN-Habitat, it is a global coalition of public, private and civil society partners for exchange of views on the urban agenda.

The United Nations has designated the first Monday of October every year as World Habitat Day to reflect on the state of our towns and cities and the basic right of all to adequate shelter. World Cities Day is celebrated on 31st of October. And the month of October is considered Urban October by UNHabitat, an occasion to celebrate cities.

UN-Habitat works with partners both local and national governments and civil society in order to formulate the urban vision. It works to ensure that cities become inclusive and affordable drivers of economic growth and social development.

Most of UN-Habitat's funding comes from voluntary contributions from governmental and intergovernmental donors, while the UN General Assembly provides part of the regular budget. Other UN bodies, local authorities, the private sector, and multilateral organizations may provide funds for specific projects (termed "earmarked" or "non-core activities"). Besides these sources of funding, there are regular budget allocations, non earmarked voluntary contributions from governments to be used for the work programs: There are also ear marked voluntary contributions from governments or other sources for implementation of specific projects or activities and technical cooperation contributions for the implementation of activities in specific countries.

UN-Habitat is currently active in over 70 countries around the world. It usually has around 400 core staff and 2,000 project personnel. UN-Habitat manages all this work through its headquarters (the UN-Habitat Secretariat) in Nairobi, Kenya, as well as through four regional offices, in Latin America and the Caribbean in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Asia and the Pacific in Fukuoka, Japan, the Arab States in Cairo, Egypt, and Africa also based in Nairobi, Kenya. UN-Habitat also has several liaison and information offices around the world (New York, Geneva, Brussels, Beijing) whose task is to create and maintain links with key governments and other multilateral organizations, development agencies and UN Secretariat.

UN-Habitat's work depends on close partnerships with national and local governments, helping authorities and institutions to identify and address their specific needs. UN-Habitat's tremendous efforts to prevent uncoordinated human settlement growth and urbanization issues from becoming a major crisis, requires involvement from all stakeholders. National and local Governments, policy makers, experts, media NGOs, and members of the society are all vital to addressing the massive urban challenges that we face today.³⁹ In order to achieve its present composition and mandate the organization organized two world Conferences, Habitat II and Habitat III.

³⁹ www.unhabitat.org

In October 2016, at the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development – Habitat III – member states signed the New Urban Agenda. This is an action-oriented document which sets global standards of achievement in sustainable urban development, about the way cities are built, managed, and used. Through cooperation with committed partners, relevant stakeholders, and urban actors, including at all levels of government as well as the private sector, UN-Habitat is applying its technical expertise, normative work and capacity development to implement the New Urban Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 11 to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Intergovernmental Bodies

Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

The Economic Social Council (ECOSOC) consists of the elected 54 national delegations of UN. Seats on the Council are allotted based on geographical representation. ECOSOC members operate at the centre of the UN system's work on all three pillars of sustainable development, economic, social and environmental. It is the unifying platform for integration, action on sustainable development and follow-up and review.

ECOSOC, one of the six main organs of the United Nations established by the UN Charter in 1946, is the principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on economic, social and environmental issues, as well as for implementation of the internationally agreed development goals.

ECOSOC serves as the central mechanism for the activities of the United Nations system and its specialized agencies, and supervises the subsidiary and expert bodies in the economic, social and environmental fields.

As the umbrella for the UN's functional and regional commissions, and operational and specialized agencies, it links the setting of global norms with their implementation. Across diverse fora, it brings together all the different people and partners involved in achieving sustainable development, while fueling broader awareness and action through sharing its own extensive knowledge and issue expertise.

Within the UN system, ECOSOC has the main responsibility for following up on all major past international conferences linked to the three pillars of sustainable development, and will continue to do this alongside the implementation of the sustainable development goals

ECOSOC engages a wide variety of stakeholders – policymakers, parliamentarians, academics, major groups, foundations, business sector representatives and over 3,200 registered non-governmental organizations in a dialogue on sustainable development through a programmatic cycle of meetings. The Council discusses issues, based on annual theme approved by ECOSOC itself each programmatic cycle. This results in a sustained and focused discussion among multiple stakeholders.

The segments of ECOSOC are;⁴⁰

High-Level Segment, Annual Ministerial Review (AMR), held annually since 2007, assesses progress in the implementation of the United Nations development agenda;

Development Cooperation Forum (DCF), held on a biannual basis since 2007, reviews trends and progress in development cooperation on a biannual basis.

Integration Segment, held annually since 2014, promotes the balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development both within the United Nations system and beyond.

⁴⁰ ECOSOC website

Humanitarian Affairs Segment, that takes place in alternate years in New York and Geneva, seeks to strengthen the coordination of the United Nations' humanitarian efforts.

Operational Activities for Development Segment, held annually, provides overall coordination and guidance for United Nations funds and programmes on a system-wide basis.

Coordination and Management Meetings (CMM), held throughout the year, review the reports of its subsidiary and expert bodies; promote system-wide coordination and review of development issues; and consider special country situation or regional issues.

Youth Forum, held annually since 2012, brings the voice of youth into the discussion of the Millennium Development Goals and post-2015 development agenda.

Partnership Forum, held annually since 2008 and linked to the theme of the Council's Annual Ministerial Review, aims at finding innovative ways to collaborate with the private sector and foundations in search of solutions for the many development challenges facing governments today.

ECOSOC has subsidiary bodies which are Functional Commission Seats on the Council are allotted based on geographical representation such as Statistical Commission, Commission on Population and Development, Commission for Social Development, Commission on the Status of Women, Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, Commission on Science and Technology for Development, United Nations Forum on Forests. It has Regional Commissions in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean and Western Asia ECOSOC Standing Committees (Membership by elected national delegations) are Committee for Programme and Coordination, Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, Committee on Negotiations with Intergovernmental Agencies

General Assembly (GA)

The United Nations General Assembly with its universal membership of 193 member countries is the final approving authority; Every year in September, all the Members meet at Headquarters in New York for the General Assembly session.⁴¹

1. Second Committee is one of the six main committees of the United Nations General Assembly.dealing with global finance and economic matters. The Second Committee meets every year in October finishing its work by the middle of December. All 193 member states of the UN can attend as GA has universal memberships. It deals with the resolutions that are adopted at the Second Committee .The General assembly does the final adoption after 5th Committee of the General Assembly discusses the financial implications of the resolutions. All members of the Organization are represented in the General Assembly to discuss and work together on international issues covered by the Charter of the United Nations. Second committee deals with sustainable development and human settlements and sustainable urban development and financing for development.

Two programmes, the United Nations Environment Programme, UNHabitat, as well as the governing bodies of the three Rio conventions; the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) report to the General Assembly through Second Committee.

High Level Political Forum (HLPF)

The establishment of the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) with a universal membership of 193 member countries, was mandated in 2012 by the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), "The Future We Want".⁴² The Forum

⁴¹ Ga Website

⁴² General Assembly resolution 67/290.

meets annually under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, including a ministerial segment and every four years at the level of Heads of State and Government under the auspices of the General Assembly.

The HLPF is the main United Nations platform on sustainable development and it has a central role in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Forum adopts political declarations negotiated by governments. It plays a key role in the evaluation of UN system wide implementation of the 2030 Agenda and on advocacy and outreach activities relating to the SDG's. In order to implement the 2030 Agenda, there is need for a strong commitment by all stakeholders to implement the global goals.

High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) provides political leadership, guidance and recommendations for sustainable development, follow-up and review progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments;

The 2030 Agenda encourages member states to *“conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven.”* The national reviews serve as a basis for the regular reviews by the HLPF. Regular reviews by the HLPF are voluntary, state-led, undertaken by both developed and developing countries, and provides a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders.⁴³

The latest High Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development ran from 9 July - 18 July 2019 with more than two thousand participants, representatives of Member States, as well as businesses, civil society leaders, and heads of UN agencies and Programmes

Secretary-General António Guterres said *“the world’s people are demanding transformative change that is fair and*

⁴³ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Para 84

sustainable,” and called on government leaders “to start a decade of delivery and action for people and planet.” Mr. Guterres observed that the HLPF was “zeroing-in” on the power of SDG action “to support empowerment, equality and inclusion,” and urged the participants to “ratchet up the ambition and highlight the imperative of inclusion. The evidence is clear: Development is not sustainable if it is not fair and inclusive – and rising inequality hinders long-term growth,” ⁴⁴

United Nations Habitat Assembly and the Committee of Permanent Representatives of UN-Habitat (CPR)

United Nations Habitat ⁴⁵Assembly of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat Assembly). UN-Habitat Assembly is a universal body composed of the 193 member states of the United Nations and convenes every four years at the Headquarters of UN-Habitat in Nairobi. The Executive Board is composed of 36 member states elected by the UN-Habitat Assembly and meets three times a year to increase the oversight by Member States of UN-Habitat operations. The Committee of Permanent Representatives of UN-Habitat (CPR) meets twice every four years in an open-ended manner.

⁴⁴ Secretary General’s remarks ,Opening of HLPF Ministerial Segment,2019??16

⁴⁵ www.unhabitat.org

Conclusions

The objective of this narrative is to show architects and other design professionals that there is a blueprint for sustainable urbanization that has been developing in the United Nations System for the past 50 years. This development has taken place in different parts of the system. Sometimes it is difficult to navigate within the system to follow developments. I tried to ease this barrier by indicating who does what and what is the state of the art.

Both the New Urban Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 11 which are in the UN Mandates section of the CSU website are excellent tools to start thinking about how in hundreds of ways architects can make their designs more sustainable not only for their clients and users but the whole neighborhood, city and the nation, for the rich and the poor, for the majority and the minorities.

Design professionals can contribute to the sustainability of life on the planet by the decisions they make on a daily basis. They can also contribute to this cause by preaching about the need for sustainability. They can share their ideas not only by other members of the society and profession but also with the world through the United Nations members, representatives of 193 national governments, other stakeholders, and NGOs.

In order to be heard at the UN, the easiest way is to be a member of a professional group or NGO that has representation at the UN or UNHabitat. Through membership, it is possible to hear and follow the deliberations at the UN, and even to attend UN meetings.

It is important to know that to deal with the challenges related to our cities and the planet, everyone is needed but design professionals are especially needed because of their problem solving skills, insight and design ideas. They should therefore enlighten others while dealing with the existing needs and existentialist threats.

ANNEXES

- Sustainable Development Goal 11,
Sustainable cities and human settlements
(Please see UN Mandates of the website)
- New Urban Agenda
(Please see UN Mandates of the website)

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This publication has the objective of introducing the amazing work done by the UN in the area of sustainable urbanization, to architects, planners and design professionals who are and will be playing a very important role in shaping the cities so that they are able to absorb in the incoming people while giving them a chance to flourish on the 75th anniversary of the UN.

The final products of UN's efforts in the area of human settlements and sustainable urbanization, Sustainable Development Goal 11 and the New Urban Agenda are great blue prints to be achieved and implemented in the next 30 years.