



Local solutions to global challenges: Making our cities and communities more inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Cities as part of the solution to sustainable development

12 September 2017

Daejeon, RoK

Daejeon Convention Center (DCC), Room 1 F

Concept note & Agenda

Background

In 2008, a major demographic shift occurred when the urban population surpassed the rural population. 200,000 people migrated to cities every day, adding more than 70 million urban dwellers every year. The world's urban population is now expected to reach 60 per cent by 2030 and 70 per cent in 2050. Cities and other urban centers are contributing to sustainable development through economic growth, innovation, education and culture. Some 80 per cent of global gross domestic product (GDP) is created in cities. Cities have great potential, and making the most of it is critical for implementing the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and for achieving the global sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Cities are however also facing some challenges which may, if not addressed rapidly and in an integrated manner, impede the achievement of the SDGs by 2030. While accommodating more than half of the world's population on only 2 per cent of the earth's land, world's cities nonetheless account for 60-80 per cent of global energy consumption and generate as much as 75 per cent of the energy-related greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The critical role cities can play in exacerbating or resolving climate and development challenges of the 21st Century can no longer be ignored.

Cities are themselves also rapidly getting more vulnerable to weather- and climate-related extreme events, which are increasing in frequency and severity with climate variability and climate change. This is particularly true in developing countries, where about one third of urban dwellers—or more than 860 million people—live in slums, their number increasing rapidly as in many cases urbanization is taking place mostly informally, i.e., through uncontrolled urban expansion, poor land use planning and management, environmental degradation, and failures in the design, construction and maintenance of buildings and infrastructure.

In such settings, the urban poor and marginalized communities often have no other choice than to establish themselves in inadequate housing structures on marginal sites such as low-lying floodplains, marshes, riverbanks, shorelines or steep hillsides. Besides lacking environmental services, including

drainage, waste-water collection and treatment, garbage collection and adequate access to safe water, those settlements are particularly susceptible to hazards with natural or human cause. Paradoxically, although they are often the only available options to them, by living on those sites without taking adequate protecting measures the urban poor may exacerbate their vulnerability to existing health and environmental hazards and even, sometimes, induce disasters. New models of sustainable urban development that can be applicable to cities of developing countries and help build their resilience, including of their most vulnerable citizens are so badly needed.

At the same time, the poorest and most marginalized groups have more than once demonstrated flexibility and ingenuity as well as a tremendous capacity of adaptation in front of adversity and could teach us quite a few lessons of resilience that are worth examining. Whilst the interdependence between the formal and informal city is no longer to be established, numerous examples are found around the world where the informal sector not only has been swifter to recover from disasters, but also even contributed to accelerate the formal sector's recovery.

As well, social capital and organization are often the most powerful assets of the underprivileged communities in both developing and developed economies. As in many other Asian countries, the effects of 1997 Asian Financial Crisis and the global financial crisis stemming from the subprime mortgage breakdown in 2008 have been and are still somehow affecting the economy in Korea today. Although the Korean industries have succeeded to show a constant growth very few new jobs are being created. The population is ageing, socio-economic polarization is gradually worsening, whilst the youth is showing impatience. Alternative solutions for inclusive sustainable development are necessary.

In this context, UNOSD will host a session on “Local solutions to global challenges: Making our cities and communities more inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (to make) cities as part of the solution to sustainable development” during the *2017 Asia Pacific Cities Summit & Mayors Forum*, taking place in Daejeon, Republic of Korea, on the 10-13 September 2017. UNOSD-led session will be held on 12 September 2017, from 11:15 to 12:15.

Agenda of the UNOSD-led Session

- 11:15 Opening remarks and introduction of the panel members
Mr. Jong Soo Yoon, Head of UNOSD, Incheon, Republic of Korea (Moderator)
- 11:20 Presentation 1
Mr. Jean D’Aragon, Sustainable Development Expert, UNOSD, Incheon, Republic of Korea
- 11:30 Presentation 2
Mr. Sung-hwan Son, Advisory Ambassador for Green Climate Fund Cooperation, Incheon City, Republic of Korea
- 11:35 Presentation 3
Ms. Meng Xin, Director of International Department of JiaCui Environmental Promotion Center/SUC Programme Management Center, Beijing, China
- 11:40 Presentation 4
Mr. Li Xiang, Head of International Department of JiaCui Environmental Promotion Center/SUC Programme Management Center, Beijing, China Presentation 5

- 11:50 Presentation 5
Ms. Laurence Kwark, Secretary General, Global Social Economy Forum (Gsef), Seoul, Republic of Korea
- 12:00 Open discussion
Mr. Jong Soo Yoon, Head of UNOSD (Moderator)
- 12:10 Conclusion and Closing remarks
Mr. Jong Soo Yoon, Head of UNOSD

Expected Outcomes

It is expected that the participants of this UNOSD-led session will get the following:

- Improved understanding of the 2030 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and SDG 11 in particular
- Enhanced awareness of the impact of cities on the achievement of the 2030 Development Agenda and the SDGs
- Greater knowledge of the challenges faced by cities and the means to build their resilience in regard to climate change
- Expanded acquaintance with sustainable urban development processes
- Better comprehension of the social and solidarity economy and its role in making the cities more sustainable