Summary of the Policy Dialogue on

Implementing the Habitat Agenda:
Exploring lessons learned and expectations for Habitat III

Monday, May 26, 2014

One UN Hotel New York - One United Nations Plaza, New York, NY

10017 – 3575 United States

Organised by

Cities Alliance Secretariat on behalf of the CA Joint Work Programme

in support of Habitat III and co-hosted by

United Cities and Local Government (UCLG) and the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments for Post-2015 Agenda towards Habitat III

Rapporteur: Rene Peter Hohmann, Sr. Urban Specialist, Cities Alliance Secretariat

Background

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

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Implementing the Habitat Agenda: Exploring lessons-learned and expectations for Habitat III

A Policy Dialogue and Learning event for the
Cities Alliance Joint Work Programme Habitat III co-organised with the
Global Taskforce

Monday, May 26, 2014
4:00 – 6:00 pm
One UN Hotel New York - One United Nations Plaza, New York,
10017 – 3575 United States
Co-Hosted by
United Cities and Local Government (UCLG) and the Global Task Force

The UN General Assembly has decided to convene the third United Nations conference on housing and sustainable urban development (Habitat III) in 2016 to reinvigorate the global commitment to sustainable urbanisation focusing on the implementation of a – New Urban Agenda. This conference will build on the Habitat Agenda and the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, particularly the Rio+20 conference, as well as the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Cities Alliance Partners have set up a Joint Work Programme that aims at preparing inputs to the Habitat III Conferences while discussing priorities and messages key to the Post 2015 Agenda. This policy dialogue aims at fostering discussion among the partners of Cities Alliance at the invitation of the Global Taskforce members.

The event will provide an informal and technical platform to exchange on the expectations of different partners in respect to Habitat III in order to contribute to the development of a New Urban Agenda. Outcomes from this event will feed into the programming of the Joint Work Programme in support of the formal preparation process of the Habitat III conference. The discussion will be based on a key input provided by Robert Buckley, New School and introduced by the Chair of Cities Alliance Executive Committee, Josep Roig.

Contact and RSVP:
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The Joint Work Programme consists of the following Cities Alliance Members: UN Habitat, United Cities and Local Government (UCLG), German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer International Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development (MFA), Agence Française de Developpement (AFD), Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI) and Habitat for Humanity International.

Policy Dialogue: Summary

Around 25 representatives accepted an invitation from the Joint Work Programme and the Global Task Force to discuss lessons learned from the Habitat implementation process and expectations for Habitat III. The policy dialogue was facilitated by Ana Maria Argilagos (Ford Foundation) and featured a kick-off presentation by Robert Buckley (New School).

As a round of introduction, the facilitator invited participants to share their individual expectations for Habitat III. Their responses covered a wide range of expectations on the following areas:

- Legacy of Habitat II: Clarifying the impact of Habitat II to better inform outputs, such as means of implementation, commitments and bold policies of national governments for Habitat III; continuing the legacy and achievements of Habitat II, e.g. role of local governments; capitalising on the Post 2015 process and its localisation; and how to strengthen partnerships and collaborative capacities, e.g. with foundations

- New Urban Agenda: Needs to be cross-sectorial; recognise culture; raise the voices of all, especially of women and slum dwellers; make sure data is collected and used by communities; focus on local governance and the rights of citizens; identify the spaces/opportunities for participation; explore the role of small island states; focus on sustainable urbanisation in Africa and inclusive urbanisation encompassing urban and rural areas; recognise role of medium-sized cities

- Safeguarding the interest representation of local government and communities: Support for local authorities and communities, mechanisms to disperse authority vertically with national governments, and how to use their role as catalysts for development; importance of strong civil society and NGOs and their interest representation.

The key input of the session was presented by Robert Buckley, titled "Habitat III: Making the Argument More Compelling". The presentation was structured in three parts: (1) Evidence of the declining interest in urban affairs; (2) consequences for dealing with climate change, economic growth as well as equity; and (3) the potential role of Habitat III. The presentation drew on historical and statistical analysis for evidence, and its main argument was that the

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framing of urbanisation and urban development has not worked in the last 20 years and is even less likely to work now. A reframing of the argument on behalf of cities is essential.

The first part of the presentation placed the Habitat conferences of 1976 and 1996 in a historical and socio-economic context. Habitat I witnessed the very beginning of political transformations in China and India, with military considerations dominating national and international considerations and the existence of explicit de-urbanisation policies. Habitat I led to the establishment of UN-Habitat; world interest in urban issues peaked at this time, followed however by a steady decline in interest. Habitat II in 1996 established the Habitat Agenda and a bi-annual conference on cities (the World Urban Forum). It was a period when macro and global issues began to attract international attention, for example through the Washington Consensus, the emergence of the climate change agenda and the development of the Millennium Development Goals. In fact, the presentation argued that this shift in attention and major external events may have made urbanisation issues seem less important than they were 20 years earlier.

The second part of the presentation illustrated the current policy context for Habitat III. In 2014, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reconfirmed the adverse effects of climate change; income inequality was rediscovered as major source of rising inequality in general (see Picketty's book on Capital in the 21st century); and concerns grew that economic growth was declining. Even though the major urban concerns—which are outlined in the UNSDSN Paper on why we need an Urban SDG—have been extensively discussed since Habitat II, global attention has not increased. This is why a change in mindset is needed.

The third part of the presentation suggested a set of paradigms that could inform a change in mindset to increase global attention for Habitat III. The presenter recommended a shift away from distributional pleas such as the "right to the city" to a recognition that well-functioning cities are among the best public investments available. A supporting argument for better-functioning cities would be that the tools are in place, and using them would yield extraordinarily high rates of return. Cities are investments not consumption. Moreover, the costs of not making these investments—given urbanisation and youth employment needs—is potentially catastrophic. These arguments would also resonate with finance ministers, who were recommended as key target audiences for Habitat III.

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Policy Dialogue: Summary

While acknowledging the comprehensiveness of the presentation, a number of comments were shared with the presenter highlighting additional observations that could have been taken into consideration.

For example, urbanisation is about to begin in certain national contexts, and attention should be placed on the role of local governments in steering development and stabilising communities in these processes. Generally, the assumption of a general decline in public interest in urbanisation could be related to the applied methodology that informed this presentation. While references to urbanisation in public documents might have indeed declined over the years, it was suggested that including the word cities in the analysis would have changed the results considerably.

Moreover, some participants questioned the recommendation of the presenter to target finance ministers for Habitat III. Given current political and economic transformations, it may be pivotal to keep the focus on citizens and the role of participation. However, there would be an agreement for the need to develop a variety of messages for Habitat III. The traditional rights- based lens and approach is compelling but no enough to convince decision-makers in international negotiations. Arguments fostering economic imperatives to better resource cities may need to be complemented and combined with policies fostering social inclusion in cities.

Key Messages from the discussion

- Consider focusing on inclusive development approaches;
- Adopt clear advocacy messages highlighting the opportunities that a new urban agenda could create for all;
- Continue the legacy of Habitat II, especially its focus on the role of local governments and communities in development;
- Stress Habitat III's potential to create a new, compelling vision for cities with commitments from local and national governments;
- Be aware to speak to the right target audiences and national ministries for Habitat III

After a short Q&A round, the facilitator introduced two key questions guiding the discussion of the session.

What were the biggest achievements and shortcomings of Habitat II?

Participants highlighted that one of the biggest achievements of the Habitat II conference was creating a consciousness of an urban community which was then materialized in the

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World Urban Fora, acknowledging the key role of Habitat Agenda Partners, such as local government organizations and communities. This was, however, undermined by an insufficient recognition of cities and urban development in the MDGs. MDG Target 11 could be considered as unsuccessful because it did not put the focus on underlying causes for growing slums.

A key achievement of the Habitat II conference can also be seen in the focus on local governance and role of local governments, features that should be kept and further promoted in the forthcoming conferences.

It was also noted that national particularities and legacies might have determined national and local policy choices more than global considerations. It should therefore be recognised that the legacy of post-colonialism in a number of partner countries produced some unintended consequences, resulting in tensions between traditional and modern forms of governance and public service delivery.

How can global attention for Habitat III be increased?

Participants generally recommended that given a number of unknown factors around the preparatory process of Habitat III, participants suggested to also focus on substantive aspects. One key question could be to foster a dialogue on what role local governments and cities will play in implementing the forthcoming Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), even though time for a comprehensive participation during the preparatory process, such as for the National Reports, would be short. The message that most of the answers to global challenges can be found at the local level would need to be further communicated. However, it should also be highlighted in a bold manner that some countries are not yet ready to achieve sustainable cities any time soon.

Acknowledging the general recognition of growing inequalities due income inequality may suggest a focus on promoting inclusive development approaches for Habitat III. Given the fact that some countries even restrict the internal movement of people, there might be a need for laws stipulating freedom of movements. Moreover, it would be pivotal to create a common agenda among the major constituencies, for example on inclusive development and participation. Slum dweller organisations should be portrayed as implementing and strategic partners rather than simply advocates for a rights-based approach.

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A key question could be to focus on who is delivering the public good in the cities of the future, and how these equitable cities can be achieved. Sharp and clear messages for informing public policy choices would be needed to attract global attention. The language to be used for this advocacy would play an important role; a focus on the opportunities that a new urban agenda could create for all was recommended.
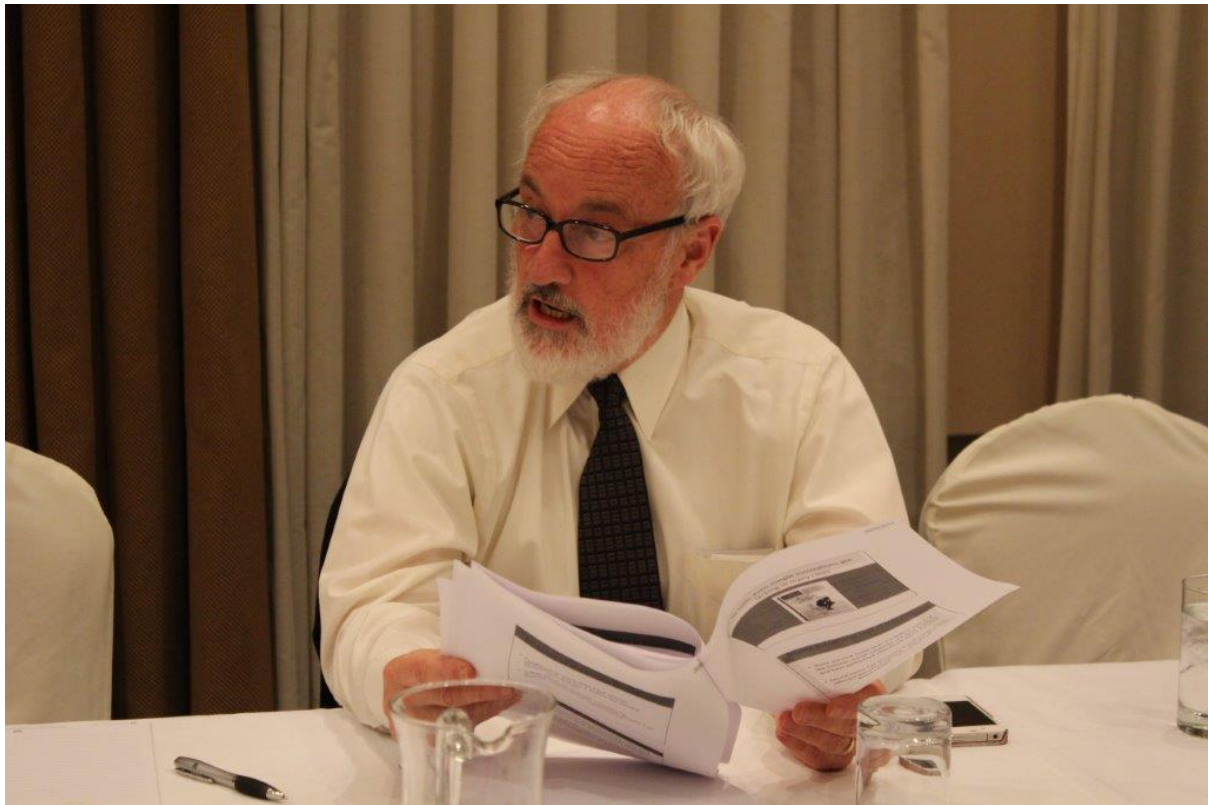
What constitutes a city may still need to be revisited considering that administrative boundaries and settlements are cross-cutting. It was suggested to consider a city as the territory where wealth is created and social development advanced. Habitat III may therefore contribute to a changing view on cities that should go beyond the view of investments. It has the potential to fashion a new and more compelling vision for cities, an urban agenda that creates commitments of local and national governments, e.g urban agenda 31, and agreements on the institutional delivery of these commitments. It was also suggested to kick-start a discourse on possible targets and commitments to be envisaged for Habitat III.

The session was closed by Joan Clos, Executive Director of UN Habitat, who stressed the importance of sustainable urbanisation to the two major global negotiations: the Post 2015 process, and climate negotiations. Discussing the value of National Urban Policies with national governments may help to increase global attention as well as provide a clear policy option to national governments to respond to urbanisation, and to foster sustainable development in cities.

The recommendations of this dialogue will inform further considerations of the Cities Alliance Joint Work Programme to formulate common key advocacy messages and their dissemination in the preparation process for Habitat III. More information on current and planned activities of the Joint Work Programme can be obtained from the Cities Alliance Secretariat (rhohmann@citiesalliance.org).

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Snapshots

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List of Participants

Mr/ Ms	First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
Mr.	Amiri	Nondo,	Mayor of Morogoro, Tanzania
Ms.	Ana	Moreno	UN Habitat
Ms.	Ana Marie	Argilagos	Ford Foundation
Mr.	Carl	Wright	Commonwealth Local Government Forum
Mr.	Chris	Vincent	Habitat for Humanity International
Ms.	Emilia	Saiz	United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)
Ms.	Emilie	Maehera	Agence Francaise de Developpement (AFD)
Ms.	Eugenie	Birch	University of Pennsylvania
Mr.	Edgardo	Blinsky	United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)
Mr.	Frédéric	Vallier	European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)
Mr.	Guenter	Meinert	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
Ms.	Jacqueline	Moustache-Belle	Mayor of Victoria, Seychelles, Association of districts of Victoria
Mr.	Jean Baptiste	Buffet	United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)
Mr.	Jordi	Pascual	Open University of Catalonia/ City of Barcelona
Mr.	Josep	Roig	United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)
Mr.	Joan	Clos	UN Habitat
Ms.	Natalene	Poisson	United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)
Mr.	Nestor	Vega	Platforma
Mr.	Rene Peter	Hohmann	Cities Alliance Secretariat
Ms.	Rose	Molokane	Shack/Slum Dwellers International
Mr.	Robert	Buckley	New School University
Ms	Skye	Dobson	ACTogether Uganda/ Shack/Slum Dwellers Interational (SDI) Secretariat
Ms.	Susanne	Parnell	University of Cape Town

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