

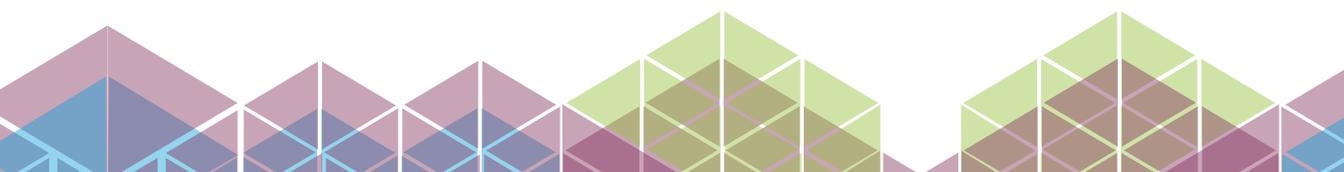
Launch of the Regional Programme on **National Urban Policies** in the Arab States

EVENT SUMMARY

Quito, Ecuador

October 18, 2016

UN  **HABITAT**
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE



EVENT BACKGROUND

The role of National Urban Policies in contributing to the global urban agenda, and its ability to be an important mechanism for the implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda, has been recognized through the selection of National Urban Policy as one of the ten Habitat III (NUA) Policy Units.

With input from the regional and local levels, a synchronized effort from the national level government through a National Urban Policy provides the best opportunity for the development of a coordinating and thorough nation-wide urban development plan. National Urban Policy has been recognized within various international organizations, including UN Habitat, OECD, Cities Alliance and beyond, as a tool for government to achieve a higher level of vertical and horizontal coordination and thus enable countries to capitalize on the opportunities of urbanization.

National Urban Policy touches on many essential components on the NUA, including its transformative and participatory nature. National Urban Policy works to institutionalize important parts of the policy process; particularly the augmentation of capacity and the institutionalization of participatory processes. This encourages transformative change in the processes of policy development and urban planning within the country. The participatory nature of National Urban Policy encourages the validation of the National Urban Policy by all levels of government and all relevant stakeholders. This not only makes the process more sustainable, but also helps to ensure that the voices of all stakeholders are heard and that they are included in the conceptualization of all policies and plans.



Panel 1. © UN-Habitat

OBJECTIVE OF THE SESSION

This event presented National Urban Policy, and its role as a tool for the implementation of the NUA, from the perspective of government officials whose countries have begun the National Urban Policy process and who are at varying stages of completion. Ministers were invited for interventions in a panel discussion.

While this side event reflected on the global perspective of utilizing National Urban Policy as an implementation mechanism for the New Urban Agenda, it also launched a Regional Programme in five Arab States: Jordan, Lebanon, Sudan, Tunisia and Morocco.



Panel 1. © UN-Habitat

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

- The five participating countries – Jordan, Lebanon, Sudan, Tunisia and Morocco – are committed and looking forward to engaging in this Programme.
- There is a diversity of urban challenges in the region and each participating country has its own urban priorities. However, despite the variety of challenges, the value of a National Urban Policy to tackle these challenges is recognized by all country participants.
- There could be scope, perhaps through the League of Arab States, to promote peer to peer learning and knowledge sharing on National Urban Policies more broadly in the region beyond the five pilot countries.



Panel 2. © UN-Habitat



SUMMARY SESSION NOTES

Introduction: Dyfed Aubrey, Director (a.i.), UN-HABITAT Regional Office for Arab States

We all know that urbanization is inevitable. The global population will be about 10 billion soon. People will move to cities. Habitat III is not only about challenges but also about chances. Urbanization can be a force for development. But inequalities are so much visible all over the world.

Environmental development is as important as economic development. A large percentage of greenhouse gases are produced in cities. Cities can be designed by us, and they should be designed, instead of expanding uncontrolled and informally.

Urbanization is the responsibility of national governments. Urbanization will have such a profound effect on next generations; I am astonished to see how little countries have National Urban Policy.

In the lead up to UN-Habitat is working together with OECD on promoting National Urban Policy. Till 2030, all countries should have a National Urban Policy to get ahead, to have urbanization planned in a way that it is taking into account the environmental and economic development.

Introductory Remarks: Remy Sietchiping, Leader, Regional and Metropolitan Planning Unit

UN-Habitat works on several levels to support National Urban Policy: at national levels, but also regional and provincial programmes. Not only developing policies, but to support countries to be transformative through National Urban Policy.

The programmes need to be a vehicle for implementation of the SDGs. Countries will learn, but there is also a large component on peer to peer learning. We bring a regional workshops – learning exercises for countries. We are happy to have many partners in the national government, academia and private sector. UN-Habitat approach is always to be inclusive, sustainable and resilient.

Speaker 1, Mr. Mohamed Salah Arfaoui, Minister, Ministry of Equipment, Housing, and Land Management, Tunisia:

There were many steps taken since 1970. Since 1990 there has been a renovation of housing, and lot of specific programs and policies. The urbanization rate in Tunisia is 67%. But there are future challenges. But Tunisia continues after 5 years of revolution, to continue following the positive path for urbanization. Also there is a new constitution – thanks to the women of Tunisia as this is their achievement.



Three programmes are being realized for cities, with support of financial institutions, to improve the lives of the population. There is a difference of live quality between smaller cities and the capital. The programmes are addressing 100 cities all over Tunisia, and were just started after the revolution in 2011, in collaboration with international financial institutions. Tunisia has prepared a 5 year programme (2016 – 2021) to improve the lives of the citizens. In November, for example, Tunisia will launch the masterplan and infrastructure programme plan. There is also a programme for youth employment.

Speaker 2, Mr. Gamal Mahmoud Hamid Elrayah, Secretary General, National Council for Urban Development, Sudan:

Sudan is a large country; population is the third in Arab world. In such a vast country, the federal system of government needs a National Urban Policy. The 18 states of Sudan have full legislative, administrative and financial powers and as such, not much power is left to national government. The National Urban Policy will be vital to consolidate the coordination of the 18 states and make sure the development is balanced. There is also massive urban-rural migration in Sudan which should also be addressed through a National Urban Policy. Sudan is very optimistic and enthusiastic about this National Urban Policy (regional) programme. There is a lot of planning to do at state level, but there was the need of coordinative approach for balanced development. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed with UN-Habitat to intensify these efforts.

Speaker 3, Mr. Mohamad Saadie, Head of Donnieh Union of Municipalities and Representative of UCLG MEWA, Lebanon:

These comments are coming from the land of miracles – Lebanon. Lebanon is so small, 50% is forest and mountains. In 20% of the country, lives 78% of the population. Part of this is due to massive urban-rural migration in order to get education. In Lebanon, the development gap between rural and urban is very large.

Civil war (1975) led to many internally displaced persons In Lebanon and balanced development is very much needed. There is a national development and a master plan, but they are not linked. Public private partnership is not working well in Lebanon. Today's urban policies go back to 1930. Furthermore, Lebanon hosts 1.5 million refugees, and has 4 million Lebanon people. There are large demographic challenges due to migration and a lack of coordination between sectoral constitutions and NGOs.

A National Urban Policy is crucial due to above mentioned challenges for balanced development. Initiation of a national debate is needed. Local, national governments, the public and all other stakeholders should engage and discuss and reach a consensus on the urban vision for Lebanon.



Speaker 4, Mr. Amed Darwish, Deputy Minister for Urban Renewal and Informal Settlements, Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities, Egypt:

Egypt has experience with National Urban Policy since the first steps to develop an NUP in the 1980s. Recently, the government has announced Egypt's "Vision 2030". Case for Egypt for NUP is clear. Quite a lot of challenges: 90 million people in Egypt who are living in 5-6 % of the country, there is a lot of pressure on infrastructure and cities.

Every year there are 2 million migrants entering Egypt and Cairo has 20 million people. The question is - how to manage this? Infrastructure in cities differs and is not balanced across the country. Unplanned areas are a challenge and there are social and economic problems due to this. There are also transportation problems. This is why Egypt needs the NUP. Plans for the coming months include forming an advisory board for National Urban Policy as it is recognized as important to engage all stakeholders, communities and marginalized groups in the National Urban Policy process.

Speaker 5, Ms. Fatna Chihab, Secretary General, Ministry of Housing and Urban Policy, Morocco:

Morocco is happy to participate in the National Urban Policy Regional Programme with the other three countries. Morocco has 100 years of experience in urban planning and development and is supporting the 3 pillars of the NUA. Over time, Morocco has reduced 2/3 of the slums in the country and green space and public spaces are being enforced on the same level of need as housing. Furthermore, basic services and transport and road infrastructure has been improved. Finally, there are many programmes that are integrating the citizens. Morocco is very much interested in sharing its experience on housing, NUP and slum upgrading in this National Urban Policy programme.



Questions:

Why have these five countries been selected?

The choice has been difficult. There are a variety of contexts and circumstances; Morocco has experience, Sudan is in a post conflict situation, Lebanon has started but not implemented the policy and there are challenges at the local level. UN Habitat will sit with all of them and make sure there is a strong regional component. The common language is very important. It will be a long process, but this Regional Programme will be important for implementing the NUA.

What is the regional dimension of the project?

It is possible that there is scope for The League of Arab States to support the peer to peer learning aspect of this Programme and spearhead the knowledge sharing process.

What is the UN Habitat Regional Programme on National Urban Policies in the Arab States?

This Project, entitled Sustainable, Inclusive and Evidence-based National Urban Policies in selected Arab States, aims to strengthen capacities of policy makers in four selected Arab States for more informed, sustainable and inclusive National Urban Policies (NUP). It works with national, sub-national and local governments to strengthen their policy-making processes while promoting a participatory and inclusive approach. Given UN-Habitat's conceptualization of NUP as an effort to rally multiple stakeholders (governments, professionals, academia and civil society organizations) to collectively define a common urban vision, the Project's outreach has a much broader scope that goes beyond building capacities of government authorities (primary beneficiaries). NUP facilitates the role of cities in the transformation of the national economy by providing a coordinating framework and action plan to bring coherence across various urban sectors and scales of urban management. The Project will increase awareness of countries in the region about tools and best practices in NUP making and provide platforms for interactions between state and non-state actors as well as between levels of government. An innovative aspect of the Project is that unlike other agencies assisting governments in selected aspects of NUP, UN-Habitat supports countries throughout the public policy cycle (feasibility, diagnosis, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) while promoting capacity development, participation and demonstration projects throughout the policy cycle. The Project is a timely demonstration of actions that development partners and countries can take to support the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goal 11, specifically Targets 11.a and 11.3.



For more information:

Katja Schäfer

UN-Habitat Regional Office for Arab States

katja.schaefer@unhabitat.org

+ 20 2 37618812/ 13

Jane Reid

Regional and Metropolitan Planning Unit,

Urban Planning and Design Branch, UN-Habitat

+ 254207623715

jane.reid@unhabitat.org

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Contact us

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

P.O. Box 30030, GPO Nairobi, 00100, Kenya

Telephone: +254 20 762 3477

rmpu@unhabitat.org

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