

Tenth Regional Consultative Meeting on Good Urban Governance

Hilton Towers, Mumbai, India
3 November 2006

Minutes

AGENDA	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Opening<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcome address by ESCAP2. Adoption of the agenda3. Preparations for the Fourth World Urban Forum (WUF 4). Review of the experience in WUF3 and presentation of ideas and proposals.4. State of the Asian Cities Report (to be presented at WUF 4). Identification of areas for potential collaboration between agencies.5. Any other business6. Next meeting7. Closing
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Introduction

The Regional Consultative Meeting was convened on 3 November 2006 using the opportunity of the presence of several of the Asia-Pacific partners at the 22nd Executive Committee Meeting of Citynet in Mumbai, India. Representatives from 11 organizations attended the meeting (see list of participants attached). Representatives from AIT/UEM and Habitat for Humanity sent their excuses.

The previous Regional Consultative Meeting was held in Vancouver, at the time of the third World Urban Forum (WUF3). In consideration of the low profile of organizations from Asia and the Pacific at that event, the meeting discussed the preparations for the fourth World Urban Forum (WUF4), to be held in Nanjing, China in 2008. The present meeting wanted to continue the discussions started in Vancouver, with a broader range of partners that were not present in the first meeting. Therefore the main agenda item was the preparation of the WUF4, in order to make the region's involvement and participation more visible and substantial. Related to this point, it was also considered appropriate to discuss the preparation of the State of Asian Cities Report, which will be presented at WUF4.

The meeting started with a round of presentations by each participant, stating the nature of their work and highlighting their future activities and the opportunities for partnership with others.

Preparations for the World Urban Forum 4 and State of Asian Cities Report

Participants agreed that few representatives from the Asia-Pacific region, particularly mayors, participated in WUF3, and that the visibility of Asia-Pacific programmes and projects on urban development and urban poverty reduction was generally low. Citynet and ESCAP, for example, only decided their participation at the last moment; EAROPH was invited too late and declined to attend. In this line, participants considered that the intention and timing of this meeting was correct, as it is now that the organizers of WUF4 will be more receptive to ideas and suggestions coming from the group.

There was a call for increasing the participation of mayors from Asian cities in WUF4 as well as other important stakeholders like slum dwellers associations and municipal associations. Pooling resources among organizations was recommended as a way to achieve greater participation and visibility. In this line, ESCAP explained it has submitted to donors a proposal for facilitating the participation of organization from Asia and the Pacific in WUF4, including the organization of a special pavilion where a range of innovations which improve the lives of the urban poor in Asia could be displayed.

Many participants expressed the view that WUF3 suffered from an excessive proliferation of side events that made difficult for people to move around and focus on their areas of interest. It was recommended that WUF4 should have a more focused agenda and that the participation of regional partners in the event should be pursued not only through side events and exhibitions, but also through a plenary session. This request should be conveyed to the organizers.

One specific suggestion regarded the Mayor's Forum, which in previous forums was considered too formal. More efforts should go to make this an appealing session, in which mayors can learn from each other's experiences. This would be crucial to attract mayors to the event. Moreover, in view of the regional variations in urban development issues in Africa, Asia and Latin America, it was suggested that Regional Forums of Mayors should be organised at WUF4 which could focus on discussing urban development issues facing the cities in these regions, sharing lessons learnt from innovative practices, and exploring and promoting opportunities of city-to-city cooperation.

An important part of the discussion was devoted to the themes and topics that the Asian presence in WUF4 could focus on, considering the size and diversity of the region and the fact that the World Urban Forum is a global meeting organized around issues of concern for all countries. Most Asian countries are showing a high rate of economic growth and an abundance of innovative solutions to urban problems but at the same time poverty and inequality persist in our cities and towns. These observations led some participants to suggest *inclusiveness and social harmony* as a unifying theme, framed around the achievement of the MDGs. Specific topics that WUF4 should look at were suggested, such as partnerships with the private sector and community organizations, city-to-city cooperation, disaster prevention, investment and financing mechanisms and security of tenure.

The representative from ESCAP introduced participants to the preparation of the State of Asian Cities Report. This is being prepared by UN-Habitat in consultations with ESCAP and ADB and will be launched in WUF4. A draft concept note was distributed to participants for their information and feedback. Some participants expressed the need to give coherence to the Report, maybe by structuring it along economic, environmental and governance themes. Separately, the intention to devote some chapters to the side effects of urbanization on rural areas and their problems was commended. The representative of ESCAP thanked participants for their immediate feedback and reminded them that at a later stage the organizations preparing the report will request their advice on potential authors for the different sections.

Recommendations and Follow-up

The participants agreed that ESCAP should transmit the recommendations of this meeting to the organizers of WUF4 (UN-Habitat, the city of Nanjing and the Government of China). Citynet will separately forward them to the city of Nanjing, which is a member of their network.

Furthermore, the consultations between the organizations present and others that did not attend this meeting should continue as much as possible in the coming months, either through the internet or face to face. Beyond the existing web page and list of e-mail addresses, some participants suggested exploring other communication tools like user groups.

Participants agreed also on exploring opportunities for further meetings of this group in 2007. Citynet offered some of the workshops already planned in the first half of the year, while the UCLG Congress to be celebrated in October was mentioned as another possibility.

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