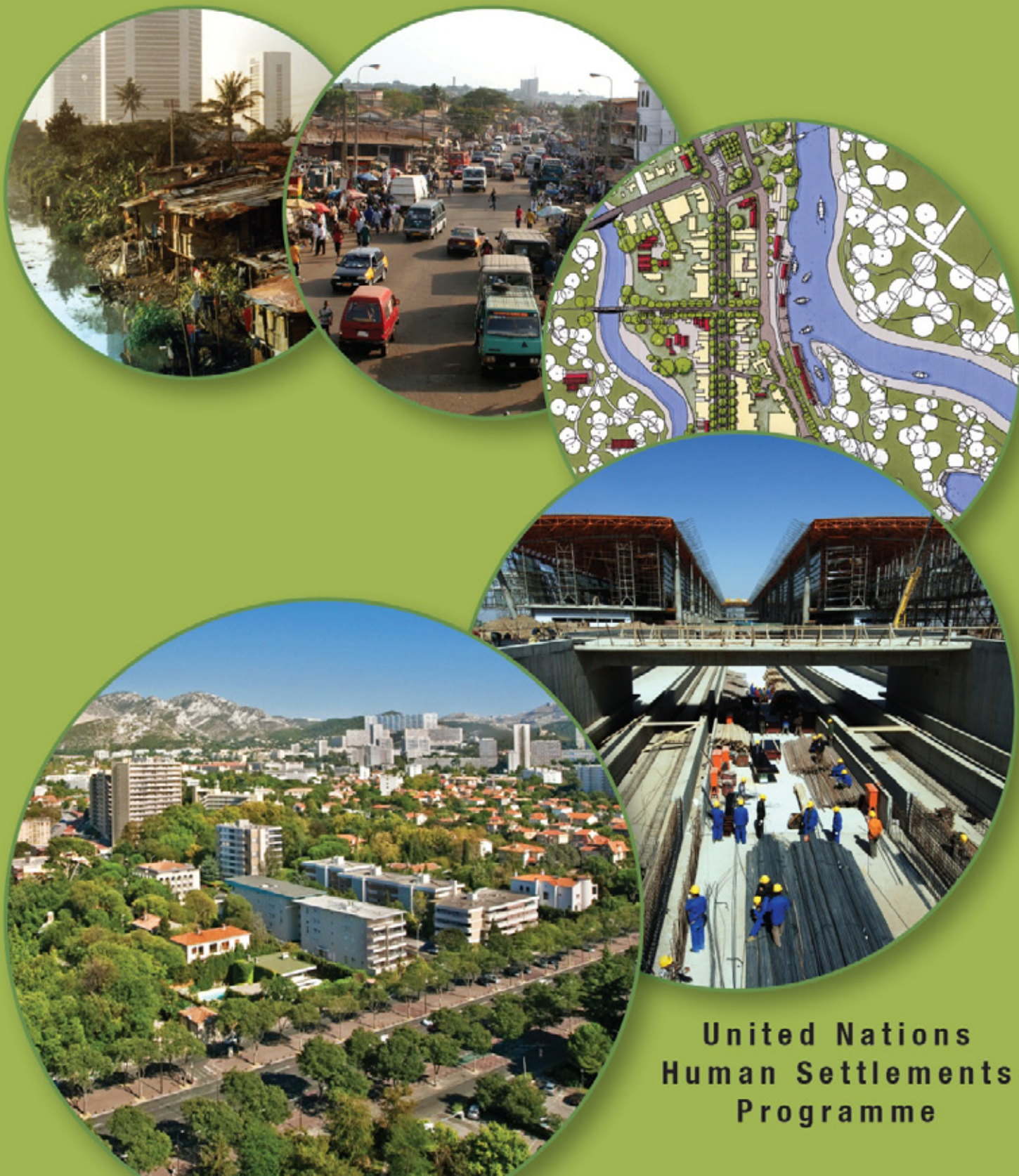


PLANNING Sustainable Cities



United Nations
Human Settlements
Programme

PLANNING SUSTAINABLE CITIES

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GLOBAL REPORT ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS 2009

United Nations Human Settlements Programme

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FOREWORD

The major urban challenges of the twenty-first century include the rapid growth of many cities and the decline of others, the expansion of the informal sector, and the role of cities in causing or mitigating climate change. Evidence from around the world suggests that contemporary urban planning has largely failed to address these challenges. Urban sprawl and unplanned peri-urban development are among the most visible consequences, along with the increasing vulnerability of hundreds of millions of urban dwellers to rising sea levels, coastal flooding and other climate-related hazards.

Planning Sustainable Cities: Global Report on Human Settlements 2009 looks at the widespread failure to meet the needs of the majority of urban inhabitants, especially those in the rapidly growing and predominantly poor cities of the developing world, and identifies ways to reform urban planning.

The report identifies a troubling trend in most cities in developed and developing countries: the growth of up-market suburban areas and gated communities, on the one hand, and the simultaneous increase in overcrowded tenement zones, ethnic enclaves, slums and informal settlements, on the other. Strong contrasts have also emerged between technologically advanced and well-serviced economic production and business complexes such as export processing zones, and other areas defined by declining industry, sweatshops and informal businesses.

This report documents many effective and equitable examples of sustainable urbanization that are helping to define a new role for urban planning. I commend its information and analysis to all who are interested in promoting economically productive, environmentally safe and socially inclusive towns and cities.



Ban Ki-moon
Secretary-General
United Nations

INTRODUCTION

Planning Sustainable Cities: Global Report on Human Settlements 2009 assesses the effectiveness of urban planning as a tool for dealing with the unprecedented challenges facing 21st-century cities and for enhancing sustainable urbanization. There is now a realization that, in many parts of the world, urban planning systems have changed very little and are often contributors to urban problems rather than functioning as tools for human and environmental improvement. Against this background, the Global Report's central argument is that, in most parts of the world, current approaches to planning must change and that a new role for urban planning in sustainable urban development has to be found.

The Global Report argues that future urban planning must take place within an understanding of the factors shaping 21st-century cities, including:

- the environmental challenges of climate change and cities' excessive dependence on fossil fuel-powered cars;
- the demographic challenges of rapid urbanization, rapid growth of small- and medium-sized towns and an expanding youth population in developing nations, and, in developed nations, the challenges of shrinking cities, ageing and the increasing multicultural composition of cities;
- the economic challenges of uncertain future growth and fundamental doubts about market-led approaches that the current global financial crisis have engendered, as well as increasing informality in urban activities;
- increasing socio-spatial challenges, especially social and spatial inequalities, urban sprawl and unplanned peri-urbanization; and
- the challenges and opportunities of increasing democratization of decision-making as well as increasing awareness of social and economic rights among ordinary people.

An important conclusion of the Global Report is that, even though urban planning has changed relatively little in most countries since its emergence about 100 years ago, a number of countries have adopted some innovative approaches in recent decades. These include strategic spatial planning, use of spatial planning to integrate public-sector functions, new land regularization and management approaches, participatory processes and partnerships at the neighbourhood level, and planning for new and more sustainable spatial forms such as compact cities and new urbanism. However, in many developing countries, older forms of master planning have persisted. Here, the most obvious problem with this approach is that it has failed to accommodate the ways of life of the majority of inhabitants in rapidly growing and largely poor and informal cities, and has often directly contributed to social and spatial marginalization.

There are a number of key messages emerging from the Global Report, all of them contributing towards finding a new role for urban planning in sustainable urban development. One important message is that governments should increasingly take on a more central role in cities and towns in order to lead development initiatives and ensure that basic needs are met. This is to

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