

WORLD URBAN FORUM 4

The World's Premier Conference on Cities

Nanjing, China 3-6 November 2008



Venue: Nanjing International Conference Centre

Theme: Harmonious Urbanization: The challenge of balanced territorial development



Night time view of the Nanjing International Conference Centre. Photos © City of Nanjing

China hosts the World Urban Forum 4



Vice-Premier of the People's Republic of China, Zhang Dejiang - *"Cities are facing severe challenges. Governments and municipalities have to strengthen their cooperation".*



Minister of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, Jiang Weixin - *"Harmonious urbanization depicts the wealth of ideas, the old and the new, taking in integrated social, economic and environmental development."* Mr. Weixin was the Chair of the Forum.



Governor of Jiangsu Province, Lou ZhiJun - *"A city is the hub of advanced productivity and advanced culture."*

Jiang Hongkun, Mayor of Nanjing, *"The World Urban Forum in Nanjing is both an important international pageant as well as a holiday for the people of Nanjing."*



A special message from the Secretary General



Ban Ki-Moon, UN Secretary-General

It gives me great pleasure to send greetings to all the participants in the fourth session of the World Urban Forum. Your host, the City of Nanjing, has survived many tests and is an appropriate place to gather to consider the challenges of sustainable urbanization. Indeed, it is not a coincidence that in 2008 Nanjing won the highest award conferred by the United Nations system in this field, the Special Citation of the Habitat Scroll of Honour.

Projections show that by the year 2030, cities will be home to two-thirds of the global population. Never before has the world witnessed such rapid urbanization. But at the dawn of this new urban era, roughly a third of the world's urban population lives in slums and informal settlements. If current trends continue, this figure could reach two billion by 2030. The provision of basic services and decent and affordable housing is no longer just a sectoral objective it is a strategic means for attaining the Millennium Development Goals.

Rapid urbanization also has important links to the major crises facing the world today.

Urban areas consume most of world's energy and are generating the bulk of our waste, including greenhouse gas emissions. Helping cities produce less waste and emissions and consume less energy is an integral part of our work to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

In addition, high food and fuel prices and global financial turmoil rooted in part in housing markets have combined to form a triple crisis that threatens to erase years of effort to eradicate poverty and achieve the Millennium Development Goals. We must not let this happen.

The concept of harmonious urbanization should guide our work. This forum is well placed to contribute significantly to our shared goal of making our cities healthier, safer, economically vibrant and more just and equitable for all.

- The message of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, was delivered at the opening session by Mr. Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA).



Sha Zukang

A special message from the Executive Director



Anna Tibaijuka, Executive Director, UN-HABITAT delivering inaugural speech. Photo © Urban Construction Archive, Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province, China

The Fourth Session of the World Urban Forum held in Nanjing, China from 3-6 November 2008 drew nearly 8,000 participants from 146 countries. The Forum, held every two years, is now established as the world's premier conference on cities.

The World Urban Forum was a wonderful gathering of leaders, mayors, architects, urban planners, urban academics, people's organisations and other partners, including women's and youth groups, business, and everyone with a say in city life. It shows not only the importance of the Forum, but also its value.

The Forum encompassed a rich variety of events – dialogues among key movers, shakers and thinkers, networking events for experts and various seminars, all aimed at helping us find innovative new ways forward in tackling the growing challenges of rapid urbanization. The Forum exhibition alone attracted more than 20,000 visitors in the space of just four days.

The theme of the Forum, Harmonious Urbanization: the challenge of balanced territorial development, was selected to highlight challenges facing humanity as our planet rapidly and irreversibly becomes urbanized. Our flagship report,

the State of the World's Cities 2008/2009, released at the Forum, shows clearly that half of humanity now lives in cities. It also shows that within two decades nearly 60 percent of the global population will be living in towns and cities.

Urban growth is most rapid in the developing world where cities gain an average of 5 million residents every month. As cities grow in size and population, harmony among the spatial, social and environmental aspects becomes of paramount importance. The two cornerstones of this harmony are equity and sustainability both within and between nations and cities.

Thanks to the tremendous efforts of the People's Republic of China to ensure that everything in Nanjing worked smoothly, even though our meeting was held in the aftermath of the Sichuan earthquake – one of the most devastating in living memory, anywhere in the world. Not in the least, it also followed closely on the heels of the 2008 Olympic Games in China.

Key messages of the Forum were that governments must ensure the urban poor have adequate services, especially in these times of financial crisis. It called for enabling policies, inclusive governance, and climate change measures as key pillars of harmonious urbanization.



Inga Björk-Klevby, Deputy Executive Director of UN-HABITAT. Photo © City of Nanjing

A glittering global conference

At the epoch-making Fourth Session of UN-HABITAT's World Urban Forum, the strongest message coming out was that the swelling cities of the world are posing fresh challenges every day

The ancient historical city of Nanjing called the participants of the fourth session of the World Urban Forum to forge a positive vision of urbanization. Particular attention is to be paid to respect nature by ensuring a balanced and a holistic approach to planning, protecting the environment, regional balance, social justice, empowering the poor, preserving historical and cultural heritage and cooperation across all jurisdictions in pursuit of harmonious cities. The WUF 4 took place at the spectacular New Nanjing International Conference Centre.



Setting the tone in the first opening statement, Mr. Jiang Hongkun, the Mayor of Nanjing, said: "Building harmonious cities is our vision. This session of the Forum convened to discuss the theme, harmonious urbanization, will promote new ways of building cities at home and abroad."

The city was adorned with flyers and posters welcoming Forum visitors and laser light shows lit up the night skies from high buildings in the newly modernized city.

Against the background of the global financial crisis, world leaders at the meeting warned that dangerous new threats had emerged on the international development agenda as developing countries grapple with the effects of the growing tide of people swarming into cities in search of better livelihoods.

The staggering attendance figures are testimony that the Forum, held every two years, is now firmly established as the world's premier conference on cities.

The buzzwords on everyone's lips in Nanjing were "harmonious urbanization", and barely a speaker missed a chance to give their views of what a harmonious city is all about.

World leaders speak out during the Forum

At the opening session world leaders spoke. The Mayor of Nanjing, Hon. Jiang Hongkun welcomed the delegates to the historical city. The Governor of Jiangsu province praised the Forum for being an interactive exchange platform for World's cities. The Minister of Housing and Urban-Rural Development of China emphasized that the theme of "harmonious urbanization" reflected the importance of the international community attaches to the harmonious development of cities. Mr. Sha Zukang, who delivered the message of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, said that Nanjing had survived many tests and was an appropriate place to consider the challenges of sustainable urbanization. The Vice Premier of People's Republic of China, H.E Dejang Zhang highlighted the importance of the Forum for providing opportunities to discuss problems facing urban development.



H.H. Sheikh Khalif Bin Salman Al Khalifa, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain, Photo © City of Nanjing

The Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain, H.H. Sheikh Khalif Bin Salman Al Khalifa, underscored the importance of the forum in the quest for sustainable urbanization. He said the forum was instrumental in drawing attention to the need for policies and interventions for inclusive and sustainable development.

Another world leader, Kenya's Prime Minister Raila Odinga said the urbanization challenge now facing countries in the developing world had already snowballed into a "crisis of global dimensions." He provided the example of the Nairobi capital city of Kenya whose population has increased from 250,000 in 1960 to about 3 million 2009. He said that this increase has been accompanied by pressure on natural resources as well as the proliferation of slums, emphasizing that such pressure was shared by many cities world-wide.



Noli De Castro, Vice President of the Philippines
Photo © City of Nanjing

The Vice President of the Government of Philippines, H.E. Noli de Castro, said "The world is facing a financial crisis due to which many economies are slowing down. As a result, cities are also facing severe challenges," he said in welcoming remarks. "Governments and municipalities have to strengthen their cooperation in order to translate challenges into opportunities."

The Vice President noted that China had made great strides in reforms over the past three decades, and the rate of urbanization had reached 44.9% at the end of 2007.



Raila Odinga, Prime Minister of the Republic of Kenya.
Photo © City of Nanjing

UN System wide participation at senior level



Mr. Kandeh Yumkella, The Director-General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), called attention to the contribution of industrial development to promote technology transfer, building domestic industrial capacity, and contributing to urban economic growth across different geographical regions.

Mr. Antonio Maria Costa, Director-General, United Nations Office in Vienna (UNOV) and the Executive Director United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) warned that in a new urban age, with most of the people living in cities, urban crime was likely to increase. He said that when it comes to health, most drug users live in cities which themselves are increasingly a source of drug supplies. He emphasized that vulnerability to crime and disease was always highest in poor neighbourhoods where there was less security, justice and public services, creating an environment in which crime thrives and investors turn away.



Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), said that strong urban agglomerations contribute to wealth because they are home to vital sectors for economic growth such as industry, commerce and finance.

Ms. Kyun Wha-Kang, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), emphasised the importance of promoting adequate housing as a right of women.



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