



# Coalition for Sustainable Urbanisation

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Partnership Commitments for Implementing Agenda 21

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Progress Report (unedited) for Discussion at the  
World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg

Compiled by UN-HABITAT, August 2002

This report on the "Coalition for Sustainable Urbanisation" is the product of collaboration among a wide range of Habitat Agenda Partners in the run-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). The material has been compiled by UN-HABITAT under the overall coordination of Jochen Eigen, WSSD focal point. The main text reproduces an official outcome of the first session of the World Urban Forum (Nairobi, 29 April – 3 May, 2002), where some 400 Habitat Agenda Partners discussed the concept of "Sustainable Urbanisation" and its implementation ("World Urban Forum, Report on Dialogues II – Sustainable Urbanisation", Nairobi, May 2002). The progress reports on the "implementation commitments" in the Annex have been prepared by Habitat Agenda Partnerships led by the contact persons identified for each. The publication was prepared with the support of the United Nations but the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the policy of the United Nations.

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## Partnership Commitments for Implementing Agenda 21



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Contributions to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) from Habitat Agenda Partners in national governments, inter-governmental organisations, local authorities and their associations, non-governmental organisations, community based organisations, the private sector and other urban development practitioners

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# Coalition for Sustainable Urbanisation

## Partnership Commitments for Implementing Agenda 21

### Introduction

In the week from 29 April to 3 May 2002, in the context of the first Session of the World Urban Forum, some 400 Habitat Agenda partners from national governments, inter-governmental organisations, local authorities and their associations, non-governmental organisations, community based organisations, slum dwellers, and experts came together in Nairobi for a series of half-day dialogues on “sustainable urbanisation”. The dialogues were designed to prepare for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and had three objectives: A **first objective** was to ensure that participants are fully aware of the agreed focus of UN-HABITAT in relation to the WSSD, and also to develop a clearer understanding of what is meant by “sustainable urbanisation” in this context, so that the efforts of diverse partners will be more coherent, consistent, and mutually reinforcing. A **second** was to strengthen collective understanding of the key challenges of sustainable urbanisation, using the thematic dialogues to further develop and synthesise different perspectives and ideas, thus leading to concrete conclusions for the WSSD preparatory process. A **third objective** was to jointly review and further develop Partnership Implementation Commitments, organised as type-2 outcomes of WSSD which can be fed directly into the preparatory process during PrepCom-4 in Bali.

In order to achieve these objectives the dialogue series was initiated with an *Introductory Session*, to create a common base of understanding and to commit participants to the approach, after which there were six *Thematic Dialogues*, to explore the core ideas of sustainable urbanisation from different perspectives; finally, there was a *Closing Session*, to bring together and review the ideas and results from the earlier dialogues, and re-confirm shared understandings and common commitments, in a report to be presented to the over-all WUF final plenary. The six themes addressed in the individual dialogues were: (a) sustainability of cities; (b) the role of cities in sustainable development; (c) the rural dimension of sustainable urbanisation; (d) the management of HIV/AIDS pandemic at the local level; (e) water, sanitation and hygiene, and (f) city-to-city co-operation. For each of these thematic dialogues a background paper had been prepared by the secretariat, and contributions from carefully selected panelists initiated a lively debate, which led to the following principal conclusions.



# What is Sustainable Urbanisation?

"Sustainable Urbanisation", as discussed and elaborated during the dialogue series, has a number of special characteristics. It is, of course, a process – and a very dynamic one. Most important, it is multi-dimensional – it includes not only environmental but also social, economic, and political-institutional sustainability – and it brings together urban and rural, encompassing the full range of human settlements from village to town to city to metropolis. In this way, sustainable urbanisation brings under one heading the crucial linkages between cities and their environment, at local, metropolitan, regional, national and global levels. It thus provides, for example, a framework for dealing with the environmental impact of cities on their hinterlands, or with the economic relationships and ecological linkages between town and countryside. By taking this wider view, sustainable urbanisation moves beyond sterile arguments about urban versus rural, accepts the reality of urban growth and migration among human settlements, and concentrates on effective management of the process.

Poverty, gender inequality, and deprivation are central challenges to sustainable urbanisation – no process of urbanisation or development will be sustainable unless it successfully addresses these issues. This means that economic and social dimensions are crucial for sustainable urbanisation, in human settlements of all sizes. It also means that the scourge of HIV/AIDS, which so powerfully impacts on cities and poverty, is a vital concern to be integrated into sustainable urbanisation.

Good governance (embracing local authorities, other spheres of government, and civil society) is another core concern, being an essential mechanism of the urbanisation process. Local authorities endowed with adequate powers, resources, and operational capacity, combined with empowered and capable communities and other local partners, are at the heart of sustainable urbanisation. Water and sanitation in human settlements, for instance, are vital for health and for economic prosperity – especially for the poor – and for sustainability; but if the current inadequate provisions are to be corrected, communities and civil society and local government will have to work together.

Sustainable urbanisation has both a short-term and a long-term perspective: it is concerned not only with current problems, it also looks ahead, to deal with future issues and situations, not only in relation to the environment but also in combating poverty and social exclusion.



## Challenges and Responses

It is accepted that the principal barriers to sustainable urbanisation lie in the general lack of planning, implementation, and management capacities on the part of local governments and their local partners. Overcoming these barriers, which have many dimensions, is a fundamental challenge of sustainable urbanisation. This challenge, and appropriate responses, can usefully be considered under the heading of Good Governance, which includes: (a) democratisation of decision-making and enabling meaningful participation of all local stakeholders including women and the urban poor; (b) municipal autonomy and empowerment, including an appropriate legal, regulatory and financial framework for local government; (c) public sector reform, especially in changing from a supply-led to a demand-driven approach to public services; (d) effective decentralisation of authority and resources, both from national and regional government to local government, and within local government to sub-units and communities, and (e) vital role of local authorities and their local partners in making sustainable urbanisation a reality.

These challenges call for a variety of responses, but particularly capacity-development initiatives – of many different kinds – directed at the full range of local actors: local authorities, NGOs, communities, private sector, etc. More diverse and active forms of experience sharing, information exchange, and mutual learning are called for, including city-to-city and community-to-community co-operation in its many forms, as well as more effective access to and use of Best Practices information. Making cities aware of – and responsive to – their wider environmental impacts, especially potentially adverse impacts on surrounding rural regions, is another vital awareness-raising and capacity-building task. Equally important is the development of institutions, procedures and capabilities for communities (especially the poor) to become significant and active partners in local urbanisation.

A key challenge is to incorporate gender concerns and responsiveness into operational procedures and actions at the local level. Women have played the leading role in many of the most successful community-level initiatives, especially in poor areas, and are in any case best placed to articulate their own needs and priorities.

Mobilisation of local resources – whether municipal, community and household, private sector, or other – was emphasised as a key challenge throughout the Dialogue. For instance, the ability of poor communities to generate sufficient own-resources to build and maintain local water and sewerage facilities has been well demonstrated in several innovative programmes, and the potential of the private sector for managerial, financial and other resources is very much under-utilised. Adapting and up-scaling this community/private/own-resources approach provides an important basis for making progress toward the goal of providing urban residents with adequate water and sanitation. Initiatives such as community contracting have also proved effective for mobilising local resources, building local skills and capacities, empowering local communities, and generating local jobs and income.

The challenge of integrating urban and rural, and of integrating physical-spatial, economic, social and environmental aspects, calls for a pro-active approach to planning and managing sustainable urbanisation. Strategic planning mechanisms and skills need to be developed to meet this challenge, and to provide a participatory and integrated foundation for urban and regional management. Strategic planning at

the regional (sub-national) scale is a valuable tool for helping to ensure a balance in urban and rural development and coping with the absorption of rural-urban migration while maintaining a good quality of life in both urban and rural areas.

In this respect policy-makers should accept that urbanisation is inevitable – and generally beneficial – and focus on properly managing the process rather than attempting (unsuccessfully) to fight it.

Local responses to the challenges of sustainable urbanisation are also hampered by the lack of coherence and mutual support among the many international support programmes who have an important role to play. A more demand-led approach is called for, with the external agents working on a long-term basis with local authorities and their partners in a more integrated manner.

## Partnership Implementation Commitments

A key message throughout the entire dialogue series was *partnership* – the realisation that to successfully plan, implement and manage the measures needed to achieve sustainable urbanisation, the concerted efforts of a wide range of partners are needed, whether for economic development and poverty reduction, or for coping with the HIV/AIDS pandemic, or for better dealing with the city's environmental impacts, or for providing public services. The various dialogue sessions also focused on identifying and developing “partnership implementation commitments”, as concrete illustrations of how cities and their partners can forge ahead. The following proposals, currently under preparation as part of a “Coalition for Sustainable Urbanisation”, were reviewed and endorsed for further development in the WSSD preparatory process.\*

### 1. *Millennium Cities Partnership:*

A partnership of local governments and their global, regional and national associations and the United Nations to mobilise and assist local governments in planning and implementing local actions for the realisation of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals.

### 2. *Local Capacities for Global Agendas:*

A partnership for developing local capacities and routine mechanisms for adapting and implementing global principles and norms of sustainable urbanisation (including related multilateral environment agreements- MEAs); together with strengthening the capacities of local actors for contributing local experiences and know-how to the formulation of global principles and norms - in collaboration with international support programmes and the UNEP-GEF.

### 3. *Partnership for Local Capacity Development (PLCD):*

A partnership to promote cohesion and collective efficiency in the international support available to the development of local capacities for sustainable urbanisation. This will be accomplished by facilitating joint policy formation between leading international associations of local authorities, international support programmes and funding agencies, and the further development of a systematic information service.

### 4. *Model City-to-City Co-operation Partnership:*

A partnership of associations of local authorities, selected municipalities and key NGOs, illustrating the range of possible forms of decentralised co-operation for the systematic transfer of knowledge, expertise and technology on a North-South and South-South basis.

### 5. *Demonstrating Local Environmental Planning and Management (EPM):*

A partnership for strengthening the capacities of local authorities and their public, private and community partners for socially, economically and environmentally more sustainable urban development, in collaboration with UN-HABITAT, UNEP, ILO, UNDP and other international programme and support partners.

### 6. *National Capacities for Up-scaling Local Agenda 21 Demonstrations:*

A partnership for building nationally the capacities of local and central governments, associations of local authorities, and training institutions to routinely integrate the lessons of experience from local demonstrations into national sustainable urbanisation and poverty alleviation policies, up-scaling strategies, and associated legal frameworks.

### 7. *Local Capacity-Building and Training for Sustainable Urbanisation:*

A public – private partnership for training and capacity-building in the field of sustainable development establishing a link between the global and local spheres for and with local authorities.

### 8. *Learning from Best Practices and Policies in support of Sustainable Urbanisation:*

A partnership for learning from Best Practices, good policies and enabling legislation: aimed at feeding the lessons from best practices into the capacity development of local authorities, supported by UN-HABITAT, research & training institutions, professional and city associations and individual cities.

### 9. *Water for Asian Cities*

A public-private-NGO partnership programme for providing access to water and sanitation for the urban poor in Asian cities, in collaboration with UNEP, the Asian Development Bank, funding agencies and national governments.

### 10. *Partnership for Sustainable African Cities*

A partnership of African Cities and their respective government ministries to promote sharing of experience and know-how for broad based, participatory planning and management of African Cities. The African city plays a key role in sustainable urbanization. A network for sharing information and experience will enable cities and their partners to learn from each other in order to avoid pitfalls and to adopt best practices.

### 11. *Partnership for Managing HIV / AIDS at the Local Level*

A partnership for strengthening the capacity of communities and their local authorities to develop and implement strategies for addressing HIV/AIDS at the local level, in the context of human settlements and shelter and with a focus on the most vulnerable, especially children in distress.

\*The original list of partnership implementation commitments has been updated to reflect ongoing development of the initiatives since the World Urban Forum. The list has also been re-arranged to more readily correspond to the agenda items of the WSSD parallel event of UN-HABITAT and its partners on the “Coalition for Sustainable Urbanisation” (Johannesburg, Crowne Plaza, 27 August 2002).

*A partnership of local governments and their global, regional and national associations and the United Nations to mobilise and assist local governments in planning and implementing local actions for the realisation of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals.*

## Key Objectives

1. To raise awareness amongst local governments of the Millennium Declaration.
2. To raise awareness amongst local governments of the Millennium Development Goals and their direct relevance to local governments, and highlight existing policies and actions.
3. To encourage mainstreaming of the Millennium Development Goals in local government policy-making.
4. To encourage the planning and implementation of local actions to support the realisation of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals.
5. To raise awareness in the international community of the key and essential role of local government in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.
6. To disseminate local government best practices in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.
7. To support collaboration between global, regional and national associations of local governments to develop national campaigns for local action plans in support of the Millennium Development Goals.

## Outputs/Deliverables

1. Web campaign
2. Publicity materials
3. Best practices publication
4. Research into the impact of these materials and collation of examples of resulting local government policy and implementation initiatives

## Partners involved

The initiative is being led by the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) and the United Towns Organisation (UTO) and will be implemented in close cooperation with other international, regional and national associations of local governments. The campaign will be initiated in partnership with strategic UN agencies and international organisations. The support of the UN Secretary General's office will be sought.

## Funding

A small budget will be sought from relevant United Nations agencies and/or national governments in support of the campaign.

## Monitoring Arrangements and indicators

The quality, usefulness and added value of the campaign would be monitored on a continuous basis by the international local government associations to assess its effectiveness. Issues and lessons learnt would be addressed in the periodic reports.

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“To raise awareness amongst local governments of the Millennium Declaration.”

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