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TENTH PARLIAMENT-SECOND SESSION

A REPORT  
OF THE PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION TO

THE 4<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE WORLD URBAN FORUM (WUF) HELD  
IN NANJING, CHINA

3<sup>RD</sup> TO 5<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2008

Clerk's chambers,  
National Assembly,  
NAIROBI

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November, 2008

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

No.		Page
1.	Preface.....	1
2.	Background.....	3
3.	The urban world.....	4
4.	The path to harmonious urbanization.....	5
5.	Promoting social equity and inclusiveness.....	6
6.	Social harmony.....	7
7.	Slum prevalence in developing countries.....	8
8.	Policies and practices that work.....	9
9.	Making cities economically productive and more equitable.....	10
10.	Economic harmony.....	11
11.	Harmonizing the built and natural environment.....	13
12.	Environmental harmony.....	14
13.	A city for all generations.....	16
14.	Cultural and generational harmony.....	17
15.	Territorial balance in urban development.....	19
16.	Spatial harmony.....	2.0

## **1. PREFACE**

**Hon Speaker Sir,**

The UN-Habitat is the United Nations Organization's (UNO) agency for human settlements and is mandated to assist the urban poor by transforming cities into safer, healthier and greener places with better opportunities where everyone can live in dignity. The UN-Habitat works with organizations at every level, including the government, civil society and the private sector to build, manage, plan and finance sustainable development. The Habitat's vision is "cities without slums that are livable places for all, which do not pollute the environment or deplete natural resources"

At the dawn of a new urban era, with most of human beings now living in cities, the UN-Habitat is on the frontline of the battle against fast growing urban poverty and the scourge of climate change that is caused by poorly planned urbanization which threatens the lives and livelihoods of entire cities and communities. The habitat is constantly improving its focus and responsiveness to the aspirations of cities and their residents. Towards this end, the Habitat works with hundreds of cities and communities around the world to achieve tangible improvements in living conditions and livelihoods of the urban poor. Key areas of focus in supporting governments attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) are adequate water provision, improved sanitation and slum upgrading.

The fourth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF) was organized by the UN-Habitat in conjunction with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Rural Development of the People's Republic of China and was held from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2008 at the Nanjing International Expo Centre in Nanjing, China. The conference drew participants from all parts of the world. Key among them were the Vice Premier of the People's Republic of China, H. H. Dejiang Zhang, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain, H.H. Shaikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kenya Rt. Hon. Raila Amolo Odinga and the Vice President of the Republic of the

Philippines, H. E. Mr. Noli de Castro. The former three sessions of the forum were respectively held in Kenya (Nairobi), Spain (Barcelona) and Canada (Vancouver).

The Kenyan Parliamentary delegation to the forum comprised:-

- (i) Hon Boaz Kaino, M.P. - Leader
- (ii) Hon. John Olago Aluoch, M.P.
- (iii) Hon. Joyce Laboso
- (iv) Hon Emilio Kathuri; and
- (v) Hon. David Ngugi
- (vi) Mr. George Gazemba - secretary

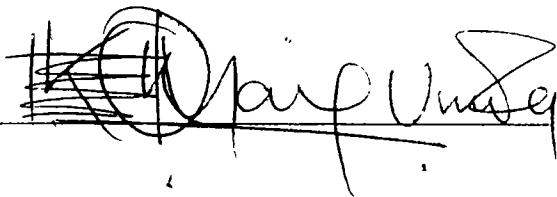
The delegation expresses its sincerest gratitude to the Hon Speaker for mandating it to represent the National Assembly of Kenya at this important event. The delegation also expresses gratitude to the Clerk for providing technical support and overall guidance which were crucial for participation to the event.

**Hon. Speaker Sir,**

On behalf of the delegation, it is my pleasant pleasure and privilege to lay a report of the delegation in respect of the attendance to the forum pursuant to provisions of Standing Order 162.

**The Hon. Boaz Kaino, M.P.**  
**Leader of delegation**

Signed



Date

10-02-2009

## **2. BACKGROUND**

The World Urban Forum was convened by the Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat pursuant to paragraph 10 of resolution 18/5 of the Commission on Human Settlements in which the Commission requested the Executive Director "to promote a Merger of the Urban Environment Forum, with a view to strengthen the co-ordination of international support to the implementation of the habitat agenda".

Subsequently, the United Nations General Assembly decided in its resolution 56/206, that the Forum would be a non-legislative technical forum in which experts can exchange views in the years when the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme does not meet. At the same session, the General Assembly in paragraph 7 of its resolution 56/2005 encouraged Local Authorities and other Habitat Agenda partners to participate, as appropriate, in the World Urban Forum in their role as advisors to the Executive Director of the UN-Habitat.

The subjects on which the forum focuses *inter alia* are land, housing, infrastructure, environment, sanitation, energy, education, health, safety and slum redevelopment. The theme of the forum was "harmonious urbanization" and mainly concerned about social economic, environmental, spatial, historical and intergeneration harmony in urban areas.

### **Objectives of the forum**

The objectives of the meetings of the forum are:-

- (i) Building on the very valuable experience of the Urban Environment Forum and the International Forum on Urban Poverty, the Unified World Urban Forum is to substantively focus on international cooperation in shelter and urban development and serve as a advisory body to the Executive Director of the United Nations Habitat on these issues.

- (ii) Facilitate the exchange of experiences and the advancement of collective knowledge among cities and their development partners. In this regard, the meetings shall place a strong emphasis on the participation of the Habitat agenda partners and relevant international programmes, funds and agencies, thus ensuring their inclusion in the identification of new issues, the sharing of lessons learnt and the exchange of best practices and good policies.
- (iii) Facilitate the elimination of overlaps and identification of synergies among development agencies in implementation of the Habitat agenda. The report of the forum will be presented the Executive Director of the UN-Habitat for consideration and action.

### **Participation**

Participation at the forum is open to representatives of national governments and Habitat agenda partners. They include Local authorities, global parliamentarians on habitat, Non Governmental Organizations, community based organizations, human settlement professionals, research institutions and academies of science, the private, business and non-profit sectors, foundations, relevant United Nations Organizations and international agencies.

### **3. THE URBAN WORLD**

Half of the world's population lives in urban areas and by the middle of this century most regions of the developing world will be predominantly urban. Urban growth is a result of a combination of factors: rural-urban migration, infrastructure development, national policies, corporate strategies, and other major political, social and economic factors, including globalization. Urban growth is most intense in developing countries. It is expected that 95 per cent of the world's urban population growth will occur in cities of the global South in the next 15 years.

Urbanization has been an essential part of most nations' development. There is no doubt that urbanization underpins improvements in living standards for a considerable proportion of the world's population. Urbanization is often dependent on economic growth. Cities that are economically dynamic and vibrant are driving national economies by creating wealth, enhancing social development and providing employment. However, when cities are not well planned or governed properly, when they become exclusive rather than inclusive, and when they generate extreme inequalities, much of their potential to contribute to economic and social development is lost. Such cities can become the repository of society's ills. They can be the breeding grounds for poverty, exclusion, environmental degradation, crime and social unrest.

The 100 years from 1950 to 2060 will be remembered for the greatest social, cultural, economic and environmental transformation in history, that is the urbanization of humanity. With half of the world's population now occupying urban space, the future of the human species is tied to the city."

#### **4. THE PATH TOWARDS HARMONIOUS URBANIZATION**

How can city planners and policymakers harmonize the various interests, diversity and inherent contradictions within cities? What ingredients are needed to create harmony between the physical, social, environmental and cultural aspects of a city and the human beings that inhabit it?.

The fourth session of the world Urban Forum adopted the concept of harmonious urbanization as a theoretical framework in order to understand today's urban world, and also as an operational tool to confront the most important challenges facing the urbanization and development processes. The harmonious urbanization concept addresses national and local concerns by searching for solutions that integrate different levels of government.

A society cannot claim to be harmonious if large sections of its population are deprived of basic needs while other sections live in opulence. A city cannot be harmonious if some groups concentrate resources and opportunities while others remain impoverished and marginalized. Harmony in cities cannot be achieved if the price of urban living is paid by the environment. Reconciling contradictory and complementary element is critical to creating harmony within cities. A harmonious city promotes unity within diversity. Harmony within cities hinges not only on prosperity and its attendant benefits, but on two pillars that make harmony possible: equity and sustainability.

The concept of harmony entails the synchronization and integration of all of the earth's assets, whether physical, environmental, cultural, historical, social or human. In this sense, harmony is a broad concept that relies on distinctly human capabilities, such as mutual support, solidarity, integrity, conscientiousness and happiness. Harmony has now become the theoretical foundation for deepening the social, economic, political and environmental fabric of cities in order to create a more balanced society.

The fourth session of the World Urban Forum was a platform for discussion and exchanges of views about the many opportunities and advantages which cities and towns offer, or could offer, if important policy and strategic changes take place for more harmonious urbanization. The forum focused on five areas comprising the tangible and intangible assets of cities. It is assumed that these areas can inform and stimulate debate on harmonious urbanization and through further discussion and reflection can support the formulation of more informed policies.

## **5. PROMOTING SOCIAL EQUITY AND INCLUSIVENESS**

Slums are a physical manifestation of social exclusion and inequity. Experiences from around the world show that some countries had been more successful than others in reducing both the number and proportion of slum dwellers. The ingredients for success vary, but



usually involve political commitment from the top leadership plus pro-poor reforms aimed at tackling basic shelter deprivations. Many countries tend to ignore the issue of slums as upgrading them is considered a costly investment that does not yield economic gains in the short term. However, evidence suggests that improvement in the lives of slum dwellers is socially and economically beneficial in long-term and can go along way in making cities more inclusive.

The conference noted that:-

- (i) Legislative reforms are required to make slum upgrading and prevention more effective;
- (ii) Slums are an inevitable consequence of urbanization and economic growth;
- (iii) Easy access to land in urban areas was a major factor for slum development.
- (iv) Both the central and local governments were responsible for slum upgrading and prevention;
- (v) Thailand, Tunisia and Sri Lanka had successfully reduced slum proportions and numbers through pro-poor land and social housing programmes; and
- (vi) The private sector; non governmental organizations and community based organizations had what it takes to contribute to slum development prevention.

## **6. SOCIAL HARMONY**

Social disparities are becoming a feature of many cities around the world. Slums that lack the most basic of service could be found in even the most prosperous cities in the developing world. The co-existence of extreme wealth and poverty in cities can create social disharmony and unrest and can hinder economic development. Reducing urban inequalities and improving the lives of slum dwellers are critical for promoting social harmony in cities.

## **Slum prevalence in developing countries**

In 2001, one out of every three city dwellers aggregating 924 million people lived in slums. Sub-Saharan Africa had the highest prevalence of slums in the world with 71.8 percent of its urban population living in poor informal settlements. In Asia, 42 percent of the continent's 1.3 billion urban residents lived in slums in 2001. This meant that one out of every two urban slum dwellers in the world were from Asia. In Latin America and the Caribbean, one-third of the total urban population was living in slums.

Despite the fact that globally the number of slum dwellers is still rising, it is important to acknowledge that many countries are taking active steps to improve the lives of slum dwellers, and that some countries have significantly managed to reduce both the proportion and number of slum dwellers in the last two decades. At a practical level, the success of the better-performing countries gives hope to others; it conveys a clear message that is possible to achieve a clear message that is possible to achieve progress on the Millennium Development Goals Slums target of improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.

Slum dwellers in many of the world's poorest cities experience multiple deprivations emanating from poverty. Their houses are unfit for habitation and they often lack adequate food, education, health and basic services. In some cities, slum dwellers constitute the majority of the urban population and slums are the most common type of human settlement, giving rise to "slum cities", while in others, slums are small pockets of deprivation physically isolated from the rest of the city.

The new UN - HABITAT data shows that not all slum dwellers suffer from the same degree or magnitude of deprivation, nor are all slums homogenous. However, the poorest regions of the world tend to host the largest slum populations that suffer from multiple shelter deprivations. For instance, slum dwellers in Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea Bissau, Sudan and Sierra Leone are likely

to experience a combination of shelter deprivations, whereas in countries such as Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Gabon, Kenya, Ghana and Senegal, most slum dwellers tend to suffer from one or two shelter deprivations.

UN-Habitat data also shows that slum dwellers across regions suffer from similar deprivations. Poor informal settlers in Colombia, Turkey and Zimbabwe, for instance, suffer mostly from overcrowding, whereas slum dwellers in Egypt or Mexico suffer most from poor sanitation. In many cities, living in non slum area is no guarantee against poor living conditions. UN-Habitat data shows that slum residents in Cairo can be better off than non-slum dwellers in Lagos, Luanda and many other cities in Sub-Saharan Africa in terms of indicators such as health, education and environmental conditions. These differentiated levels of social inequality and exclusion can adversely affect cities and regions' social and economic development.

By disaggregating the type and level of shelter deprivation in slums, policymakers can be in a better position to devise policy responses that are better focused and targeted. They can focus public resources for the improvement of slums more effectively within cities and even within specific neighbourhoods.

### **Policies and practices that work**

Planning for harmonious cities requires coordination and collaboration between national, provincial and local authorities in order to achieve harmonious regional and urban development, provided they share a common vision and demonstrate sufficient political will.

Political commitment, especially by the top leadership, plays a critical role in reducing urban poverty and slum prevalence. Some of the most successful cities in this regard have benefited from visionary mayors and political leaders who have radically transformed cities by introducing reforms and strengthening institutions that enhance

cities' economic vitality and environmental sustainability while simultaneously reducing poverty levels and slum prevalence.

Policy analysis shows that successful cities in slum prevention and upgrading share similar attributes, namely:

- i. Awareness and political commitment;
- ii. Institutional innovation;
- iii. Policy reforms and institutional strengthening;
- iv. Effective policy implementation;
- v. Setting up monitoring and evaluation mechanisms; and
- vi. Scaling up actions.

## **7. MAKING CITIES ECONOMICALLY PRODUCTIVE AND MORE EQUITABLE**

The combined impact of globalization and rapid urbanization has strengthened the role of cities as the engines of economic growth, the principal market place for value added agricultural production and the interface for global trade and investment. At the same time, many cities in the developing world are faced with an urban paradox. On one hand, they are the driving force of national economic development and on the other hand, they are centers of increasing poverty, inequality and unemployment.

But while fast urbanization poses an unprecedented challenge for development, urban economics of scale and agglomeration benefits can lead to accelerated growth and higher productivity. The challenge is to promote development strategies that simultaneously increase urban economic productivity and ensure more equitable development paths.

The good news is that an increasing number of national and municipal authorities have begun to implement innovative policies to mobilize financial resources and increase urban productivity. At the same time, it is now generally agreed that the provision of basic infrastructure, better housing, urban services and employment

opportunities for the urban services and employment opportunities for the urban poor are critical for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's).

The conference noted that:-

- (i) Urban development policies are essential in achieving balance between the need to accelerate economic growth and ensure a more equitable distribution of resources;
- (ii) Resource mobilization strategies are required to meet the increasing gap between the demand for municipal services and the insufficient financial resources available to municipal authorities to fund those services; and
- (iii) An enabling urban environment is crucial for increased private sector investment.
- (iv) Policy makers must identify the most effective economic policies to generate productive urban employment, particularly among the poor and youth.

## **8. ECONOMIC HARMONY**

New empirical evidence shows that over the past few decades, the world has witnessed an increase in income inequalities in all regions of both developed and developing countries. However, income distribution varies considerably among regions with Africa and Latin America exhibiting extremely high levels of urban inequality compared to Europe and Asia, where urban inequality levels are relatively low.

Latin American and Caribbean cities are among the most unequal in the world, with Brazilian and Colombian cities topping the list, closely followed by some cities in Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala and Mexico. Urban inequalities in this highly unequal region are not only increasing, but are becoming more entrenched, which suggests that failures in wealth distribution are largely the result of structural or systematic flaws.

In Africa, urban income inequalities are highest in South African and Namibian cities exhibiting levels of urban inequality that rival even those of Latin American cities. Cities in Sub Saharan Africa that have recently emerged from apartheid systems of governance tend to be the most unequal. Unfortunately, rising economic growth rates in several African countries have not reduced income or consumption disparities; on the contrary, urban inequalities in many African cities including Maputo, Nairobi and Abidjan, remain high as wealth becomes more concentrated.

Asian cities, on the other hand, tend to be more equal than cities in other parts of the developing world. Although, levels of urban inequality have risen or remain high in some cities including Hong Kong and Ho Chi Minh City. High levels of urban inequality have also been reported in cities in Thailand and Philippines. Cities in China tend to be more equal than other Asian cities, with Beijing being among the most equal city in the region, although some Chinese cities, such as Shenzhen, are experiencing relatively high inequality levels similar to those of Bangkok and Manila. In Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Indonesia, levels of urban inequality are generally low and are comparable to many cities in Europe, Canada and Australia. However, recent analysis shows that India will experience rising levels of urban inequality in the future as a result of liberalization and industrialization policies coupled with lack of adequate investment in provision of public goods to the most vulnerable populations.

High levels of inequality in cities can lead to negative social, economic and political consequences that have a destabilizing impact on societies. Inequalities create social and political fractures within society that can develop into social unrest. This is particularly true in places experiencing both high levels of inequality and endemic poverty, which increase the risk of political tension and social divisions that can threaten national security and economic development. Social unrest and insecurity in turn reduce incentives for investments and force governments to increase the amount of public resources devoted to internal security instead of spending on

more productive sectors of the economy or on social services and infrastructure.

Empirical evidence shows that the benefits of economic growth are not realized in societies experiencing extremely high levels of inequality and poverty. Indeed societies that have low levels of inequality are more effective in reducing poverty levels than those that are highly unequal. Economic growth benefits larger groups of people and is “absorbed” better by egalitarian societies than by those where disparities between the rich and the poor are very wide, as the former tend to concentrate the benefits of wealth creation, leaving the majority behind. Inequalities also have a dampening effect on economic efficiency as they raise the cost of redistribution and affect the allocation of resources for investment.

## **9. HARMONIZING THE BUILT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

While the modern urban area provides many conveniences, it also generates significant environmental impact, the scale and magnitude of which stir irreversible changes to the natural environment, impacting on the urban way of life. Global urbanization has contributed to habitat loss, resulting in food and water insecurity. Lack of sanitation infrastructure, poor waste management, contaminated rivers, urban air pollution and an overall deteriorated environment make slum dwellers especially vulnerable. Cities are also significant consumers of energy and emit excessive amounts of greenhouse gases from production, heating and transportation. Correspondingly, cities impact but are also impacted by climate change.

Despite environmental challenges, cities play an important role in establishing a harmonious relationship between the built and natural environments. It follows that cities should be a central, if not the principal, focus regarding efforts to mitigate and adapt to the consequences of climate change and adapt to the consequences of climate change and biodiversity loss. The challenge is to preserve and

eventually expand environmental functions without obstructing the growth potential of urban areas.

Smart planning can mitigate contributions to climate change, whilst creating more attractive urban biodiversity and local adaptation strategies through metropolitan greening schemes as well as ecologically sound and energy efficient buildings and settlement patterns. Cities with sustainable land, air and water management policies have managed to reduce soil erosion, improve air and water quality and protect urban biodiversity. Of central importance is to identify and strengthen the inter-linkages of urban environment concerns: addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, transport policy, energy provision, waste management, and to incorporate the urban poor as a critical elements in urban development.

## **10. ENVIRONMENTAL HARMONY**

Harmonious urbanization presents a real opportunity to minimize environmental impacts through economies of scale and concentration of environmental sectoral solutions. Climate change is one of the most challenging global issues of our time. Yet it is also profoundly local. What affects the earth has a direct impact on where and how people live. Some of the global changes particularly average temperature rise, precipitation and wind patterns will take human beings into other territories thereby transforming the physical geography of the world.

Cities that are not properly planned or managed can be a burden on natural resources and can easily threaten the quality of the air and water, thereby negatively impacting on the natural and living environment. Because of their compact form and economies of scale, cities offer major opportunities to reduce energy demand and to minimize pressures on surrounding land and natural resources. Well-planned and well-regulated cities hold the key not only to minimizing environment losses, but also to generating creative solutions to enhance the quality of the environment and to mitigate the negative consequences of climate change.



Although cities and urban based activities are usually blamed for the increase in greenhouse gas emissions globally, evidence shows that these emissions are more related to consumption patterns and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) than they are to urbanization levels per se. For instance, the mega city of Sao Paulo in Brazil produces one-tenth the emissions of San Diego in the United States, even though the latter is one quarter the size of the former. Evidence shows that compact and well regulated cities with environmentally friendly public transport systems have a positive environmental impact.

### **Regional variations in per capita energy consumption**

- (i) European cities that tend to be compact and encourage use of public transport use energy more efficiently than cities in North America, where urban sprawling, high dependence on motorized private transport is the norm.
- (ii) Heating and lighting of residential and commercial buildings consume more than 50 per cent of energy in cities such as New York, London and Tokyo, while transport accounts for more than half of the energy consumed in Hong Kong, Bangkok, Cape Town and Mexico city.
- (iii) In some Chinese cities, such as Beijing and Shanghai, industries are the main consumers of energy.

### **Regional variation on energy consumption at household level**

Most energy consumed in developing countries is for cooking, whereas space heating and lighting account for the most energy used in rich countries.

### **Impact of sea level rise on coastal cities**

Global projections indicate that climate change could lead to a rise in sea levels in the coming decade. Sea level rise brought about by climate change could have a devastating impact on coastal cities and

urban populations. Some regions, in Asia and Africa, are particularly vulnerable as many coastal cities in these regions do not have the infrastructure to withstand extreme weather conditions. Because the urban poor tend to live in hazardous locations such as flood plains, they are vulnerable in the event of sea level rise as their housing is often of a non-durable nature and their settlements often lack adequate drainage, embankments and other features. These cities need to urgently adopt mitigation and adoption strategies in order to avert catastrophic consequences in the future.

### **11.PRESERVING THE HISTORICAL ROOTS AND SOUL OF CITIES**

Cities have always been places of social exchange and innovation. As cities continue to constantly evolve, preservation and change are not easy to reconcile. The pressure to conform to international standards of urban form has led to the neglect of cities' cultural and historical heritage. This has implications for a cities' sense of place, social cohesion and esthetics. Old historic neighbourhoods are giving way to skyscrapers and highways that have destroyed "the soul of the city". Cities that forcefully drive change or seek to modernize may destroy the architectural artifacts and cultural heritage reinforces identity and generates cultural capital.

The conference noted it was important that:-

- (i) The reservation of the built environment with change and innovation in cities be reconciled;
- (ii) Cities foster economic innovation ; and
- (iii) Cities improve infrastructure and reduce poverty without destroying their traditional urban fabric.

### **12. A CITY FOR ALL GENERATIONS**

Cities are made up of young, middle-aged and ageing people who live together sharing the same urban space. How can their various interests be harmonized and synthesized?. Different age groups have

a strategic role to play in the planning, governance and management of cities. Today the elderly, the youth, the disabled and women face exclusion as their needs are not being fully met by cities as they cater mostly for those who are advantaged or who have the means to benefit from urban living.

The goal of intergenerational harmony will remain a challenge unless these key issues are addressed. Tools such as ICT education and health care as well as sports and music are increasingly being recognized for their role in promoting harmony. Efforts should be made to show the inter-relationship between these components. Issues of concern include, ageing populations and health care, youth and education as well as youth and sports. Similarly, art and culture have a strong relationship with those components. Intergenerational harmony also promotes social cohesion in cities.

Particular emphasis should be given to what can be learnt from the past and how the future can be shaped to that end. In this regard, it will be important to bring out the interrogational perceptions and goals for their envisaged future and make them compatible and reinforce each other.

### **13. CULTURAL AND GENERATIONAL HARMONY**

Cities are not just brick and mortar; they symbolize the dreams, aspirations and hopes of societies. The management of cities' human, social, cultural and intellectual assets is therefore important for the harmonious development of cities' physical assets. Urban planning has to go beyond being just a technical exercise to one that is cognizant of a city's various tangible and intangible assets. Innovative approaches to urban planning have to respond to emerging priorities and concerns such as regional or spatial disparities, urban inequalities and metropolitan expansion.

### **Preserving the intangible assets**

The concept of “having” in the sense of owning a house, material resources and money has to be combined with social networks, emotional support and social integration. The need to integrate into society, participation in public life and sense of belonging is also imperative. A city that preserves intangible assets, such as symbolic and historical neighborhoods, cultural life, intergenerational relationships and different forms of societal relations and resources, is a more harmonious city than the one that neglects the very assets that gives it a “soul”.

### **Searching for the “ soul of the city”**

Cities with soul are cities with an identity. Their spirit resides in the collective memories of their people, their cultural heritage and common vision. Their streets and neighborhoods are heterogeneous and multifunctional. Their unique and distinctive nature is an expression of their soul.

However, western-style modernity is threatening the historic and cultural heritage of cities in other continents. The emphasis on new things, clean lines and modern design is intense and put to risk old buildings in need of repair and rehabilitation, particularly those in the inner core or central business districts of cities. It is not only development and the demand for progress that, threatens to erase a great deal of a city’s historical and cultural assets. Poverty, neglect, decay and intense over-use cause rapid deterioration of many historic buildings and old neighbourhoods.

The challenge facing many cities is how to improve infrastructure, reduce poverty and create a healthy living environment without destroying the cultural fabric of society. New urban renewal programmes utilize revitalization as a way to improve not only the physical, but also the non-physical elements of urban space through creative means that advance the “quality of place” concept or promote what has been termed as “cultural infrastructure”. The

preservation of the built heritage through the conservation, renewal or revitalization of historic centers, traditional urban cores and buildings has the potential of providing cities with a distinctive physiognomy that can be marketed to promote economic development and tourism.

#### **14. TERRITORIAL BALANCE IN URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

Approaches to urban planning and development have changed in recent years with the decentralization of government decision making and the adoption of more participatory democratic processes in most countries around the world. As local governments have taken on more responsibility for the success of their cities, it has become increasingly important to engage citizens directly in planning for the future by learning from the present and past realities of underserved or excluded communities.

Urban planning practices that aim to improve residents' quality of life and engage them in their own well being are highly context sensitive, varying from city to city based, political climate, social networks and the aspirations of cities and their citizens. The essential elements of inclusive urban planning are however transferable. They evolved as a positive response to disengaged, top-down planning practices of the past exclusive urban planning designed to assert the power of the state and the priorities of government over everyday life.

The forum noted that:-

- (i) There was need for change in the planning profession particularly in urban planning in order to pursue sustainable development;
- (ii) There was need to integrate urban planning with emerging concerns, such as climate change, inequality, exclusion, migration, city-region development and cities in decline;

- (iii) There was need for urban planning go beyond the managing of urban growth and contribute to re-engineering of existing cities;
- (iv) It was important that new sub regional and regional development approaches and practices be integrated into urban planning;
- (v) Time had come where innovative experiences were to be incorporated into mainstream planning; and
- (vi) It was possible to have more cost effective, simpler and more implementation oriented urban planning practices.

## **15. SPATIAL HARMONY**

Urban change in the world does not follow identical patterns or trends. Some regions are urbanizing rapidly while others are experiencing stagnation in urban growth rates. In many countries, some regions and territories are more urbanized than others and therefore benefit more from public and private resources and investments. This has resulted in social and economic disparities between regions and territories. Regional harmony can be achieved through more equitable distribution of resources and should therefore be an essential component of national development policies.

### **Global urbanization trends**

Urbanization rates in the development world had stabilized. it is expected that the urban population in the global North will remain largely unchanged, rising only slightly from just over 900 million in 2005 to 1.1 billion in 2050. Many cities in this region were experiencing population loss, largely due to low rates of natural population increase and declining fertility rates.

Urbanization in Africa is characterized by disproportionately high concentration of people and investments in the largest city (in most cases, the capital) and by very high annual slum growth rates of more than 4 percent. Urbanization in the region, especially in Sub Saharan Africa, is therefore characterized by urban primacy and slum formation.

In Asia, an emerging trend is that of metropolitan expansion, which is becoming a prominent feature of large cities. Urban populations are shifting or relocating to suburban locations or satellite towns linked to the main city through commuter networks. Urbanization is also producing "city regions", which are responsible for much of the economic growth experienced by various countries, including China. In other nations where urban primacy is still the rule, such as the Philippines and Indonesia, the trend has been to promote the growth of intermediate cities in order to direct migrants away from the largest city.

Urban development in Latin America and the Caribbean is also characterized by a high degree of urban primacy. However, one of the most distinctive features of urbanization in the region is the rapid growth of small cities, which are home to nearly 40 per cent of the region's urban population. Another distinctive feature of the region is that urban growth is often the result of people moving from one city to another, and not from rural areas to urban areas.

Geography clearly matters when explaining the economic dynamism and growth of cities and regions. However, geography alone does not determine which cities will grow or prosper. National policies, corporate strategies and the comparative advantages that cities offer in global, regional and local markets to a large extent determine which cities will grow and thrive and which will decline in size or economic or political significance.

## Central government's role in determining the prosperity and growth of cities

In many cities, national economic policies and investments are mostly the result of central government decisions and budget allocations. The state, in its various institutional forms, exerts a critical influence on determining which cities and regions will benefit most from public resources. Governments also promote and or regulate private or public investments for the development of infrastructure and other investments that contribute to urban development. Central governments in many countries are concentrating more attention and resources on particular city regions to redirect regional or national development. They are also using cities to connect to the global space of business and financial flows, while concurrently using such cities to propel social change in particular directions.

In many countries, urban growth is initially driven by national governments, and then further propelled by local authorities and other actors, such as the private sector. This has led to cities competing with each other for resources and for inclusion in regional and national development plans and strategies. The growth of cities through local initiatives reflects a rising trend towards greater urban entrepreneurship and more intense city competition.

Cities can no longer be treated as distinct spaces unconnected to the regions surrounding them. Linkages between rural and urban areas and between cities have created new opportunities that rely on connectivity to enable the flow of people and resources from one area to another. Investments in urban, inter-urban and rural urban transport and communications infrastructure are therefore critical for balanced regional development and for enhancing the economic potential of cities and the regions surrounding them.

Central governments play a pivotal role in allocating and mobilizing financial resources either to support urban economic development or to redress regional territorial disparities. Targeted investments in transport and communications infrastructure, in particular, are the



most significant drivers of urban growth and economic development in the developing world.

A preliminary UN-HABITAT analysis of the fastest growing cities in the developing world shows that more than 4000 percent benefited from the diversification, expansion or improvement of regional or national transport systems, including roads, airports, urban and inter-urban railway lines and ports. Investment in transport and communications infrastructure not only increases the overall productivity of cities, nations and regional development, but sound policies to promote economic development as well.

### **Metropolitan governance structures**

Metropolitan Governance structures can respond better to some of the fundamental challenges that cities are facing to achieve more harmonious urban development. This is through:-

- (i) Addressing spatial disparities and ensuring that government policies promote convergence of leading and lagging regions and cities
- (ii) Reducing the gap of an increasingly divided urban society and ensuring that governments adopt pro-poor growth policies and reforms;
- (iii) Mitigating environmental costs and ensuring that governments adopt policies to enhance energy efficiency related to the functionality of the city;
- (iv) Protecting intangible assets such as cultural heritage, and create social spaces that contribute to “humanizing” cities.

xx