



UN HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE



VITAL PUBLIC SPACES:

Designing and managing public spaces for inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities

24 February 2015, Palais des Nations, Room VIII, Geneva, Switzerland

Unplanned and unregulated growth of cities may result in increased social inequality and segregation, and degradation of environmental quality in cities. Promoting inclusive and safe urban development is one of the focus areas of the post-2015 development agenda. The Open Working Group established by the United Nations General Assembly developed proposals for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which include Goal 11 on cities and human settlements. According to objective 11.7 of this goal, *governments should, by 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, particularly for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.*

High-quality public spaces can have a positive impact and play a major role in the economic and social vitality of urban areas. Sustainable public spaces can promote democracy, inclusiveness and openness. The Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III Conference), Dr. Joan Clos, in his speech at the first session of the HABITAT III Preparatory Committee, underlined that: *"The backbone of a city is good public space where citizens interact and economic activities are mixed and multiply. This public space needs to be legally protected to remain intact over generations. From successful experiences, we have learned at least four important lessons. First, planning is essential if we are to avoid social segregation. Second, between 45% and 50% of land in urban areas must be allocated to public space. Third, public spaces should be designed properly to ensure that communities operate efficiently. Finally, the city should guarantee adequate population density and mixed use, with the aim of ensuring the necessary proximity of the factors of production."*

The importance of public spaces is highlighted in many policy documents of the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management: including in the [Strategy on Sustainable Housing and Land Management 2014-2020](#) and the [Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing](#). These two important documents aim to promote green and socially inclusive human settlements and the long-term sustainability of housing and land management in the region.

This workshop will discuss measures that governments and stakeholders in the UNECE region undertake to develop and promote access to safe, inclusive and accessible green and public spaces. The workshop focuses on the planning, design and management of public spaces*. The workshop is a contribution from the UNECE region to HABITAT III on the topic of public and green spaces.

Acknowledgements

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* The Committee is also currently working on the preparation of a regional report to the HABITAT III Conference, which will contribute to the development of the Global Urban Agenda, which is expected to be adopted by the HABITAT III Conference.

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Languages of the workshop: English, French, Russian

10:00-10:40	Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none">Elena Szolgayova, Chair of the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management Welcome addresses <ul style="list-style-type: none">Frederic Saliez, United Nations Human Settlements Programme - UN-HABITAT, Brussels Liaison OfficeTigran Haas, Associate Professor, Director of Civitas Athenaeum Laboratory (CAL), KTH - Royal Institute of Technology, SwedenPaola Deda, Acting Director of the Forests, Land and Housing Division
10:40-11:10	Keynote speech “The Rebirth of public spaces: how a symbol can stimulate human interaction” - <i>Maestro Michelangelo Pistoletto, Artist and art theorist, Italy</i>
11:10-11:30	Break (coffee served outside of the conference room)
11:30-13:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Charter of Public Space, Biennale of Public Spaces – <i>Pietro Garau, INU Italy</i>Public spaces, resilience and urban prosperity: an evolutionary approach to urban development – <i>Sergio Porta, Director of Urban Design Studies Unit, UK</i>Mapping Green Spaces – <i>Matina Halkia, Scientific and Technical officer, Joint Research Center, the European Commission</i> Questions and comments
13:00-15:00	Lunch break
15:00-16:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Places in the Making: How placemaking builds places and communities – <i>Susan Silberberg, Department of Urban Studies and Planning at MIT, USA</i><i>Sandra Piriz, Deputy Chief, Department of Urban Planning and Mobility, City of Geneva, Switzerland</i>Video presentation by <i>Olafur Eliasson, artist, Studio Olafur Eliasson, Berlin, Germany</i>Green Open Space in the Historic Built Environment – <i>Jurjen van der Tas, Deputy Director Historic Cities Programme, Aga Khan Trust for Culture, Geneva</i> Questions and comments
16:30-16:40	Break (coffee served outside of the conference room)
16:40-17:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none">People-oriented City Planning - <i>Jan Gehl, Architect, Founding Partner and Principal, Gehl Architects, Denmark</i>
17:00-18:20	“The Human Scale” screening Thinkers, architects and urban planners discuss ways to increase human interaction in cities.
18:20 – 18:30	Wrap-up <ul style="list-style-type: none">Frederic Saliez, United Nations Human Settlements Programme - UN-HABITAT, Brussels Liaison OfficeTigran Haas, Associate Professor, KTH - Royal Institute of Technology, SwedenGulnara Roll, Head, Housing and Land Management Unit, UNECEDaniel Hogan, Project Director of the Strategic Heritage PlanElena Szolgayova, Chair of the Committee on Housing and Land Management
18:30-19:30	Reception

