



In Focus: SDG11

Inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities require sustainable and inclusive urban design and architecture

3 October 2022, 9.30- 12.30

San Marino and Geneva (Hybrid)

Opening Speech

Ms. Doris Andoni, Chair, Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management



"City" as a notion has evolved since the first urban civilization was labeled as such more than 5,000 years ago. Different labels have been attached to the word 'city' that denote: a problem (such as divided city, informal city) or a trend (such as global city, smart city) or a priority, a political goal or a status (sustainable city, inclusive city, green city, resilient).

SDG 11 is about sustainable cities – Until 1970s it was believed that environmental problems were created locally and should be addressed locally. It was the "Brundtland report", "Our Common Future", that in 1987, emphasized the need for global solutions and joint responsibility for addressing environmental problems, which are also aggravating poverty. The report, therefore, called for global and local strategies for addressing the three dimensions of sustainability: economic and social and the environment.

35 years after the Brundtland report, we are speaking of localizing the Sustainable Development Goals. This is not because cities are in the frontline of the most pressing challenges, including, among others, climate change, natural disasters, Covid-19 pandemic and economic crisis.

According to the UN, Today, 55% of the world's population lives in urban areas, a percentage that is projected to increase to 68% by 2050. Urban growth has always suggested apocalyptic images. For example, we, in Albania, have witnessed the consequences of the radical structural changes that took place after the 90s on urban developments. The territorial balances maintained artificially by hindering the free movement of the population were broken after the 90s, and this resulted in increasing the urban population from 38% in 1990 to 53.7% in 2011. This unplanned urbanization, resulted in the formation of the first informal settlements, which expanded in the following years to create new cities around the capital city of Tirana. All these developments happened without the involvement of planners, architects and local regulators.

Today these organic city models are being replaced by high-rise buildings based more on the architects' vision rather than that of the population .

So, how to establish a balance between the public interests, the needs of the population and business interests so as to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable? What is the role of planners and architects today? According to the Royal Institute of British Architects **RIBA**, the role of an **Architect** is to create an impact via their work that "...extends beyond the physical

structures he or she designs – architects are uniquely placed to influence how places are shaped, how they function and who they engage in the process. They have a tremendous opportunity and responsibility to ensure that this influence is positive.”

To provide a concrete tool for bolstering the role of practitioners in implementing the 2030 Agenda, the Bureau of the UNECE Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management (CUDHLM) has developed, with the support of the secretariat, the draft “San Marino Declaration on principles for sustainable and inclusive urban design and architecture in support of sustainable, safe, healthy, socially inclusive, climate neutral and circular homes, urban infrastructure and cities”.

The draft declaration puts forward several guiding principles to serve as a pledge to sustainability. The principles cover, among others, people-centrality, social responsibility, inclusivity, resource efficiency and circularity, respect for nature, affordability and accessibility and inter-disciplinary cooperation.

The achievement of the Goal 11 has become more relevant and challenging nowadays, when the humanity is testing its abilities to adapt in face of long-term impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, climate changes and, natural and human made disasters.

This afternoon, UNECE member States will be invited to debate and adopt the San Marino draft declaration during the CUDHLM 83rd session. Practitioners present in San Marino, including Lord Norman Foster, will sign the declaration and will invite practitioners in the ECE region and beyond to join them in signing, implementing and promoting it worldwide. You are invited to reflect on the declaration. I also invite practitioners to sign the declaration.
