



## Side Event of the HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Under the auspices of ECOSOC

10-19 July 2023, New York

# Building urban resilience and responding to crises through SDGs localization: Regional Approaches

Friday, 14 July 2023, Conference Room 11, United Nations Headquarters

18:30-20:00

## Introduction

Multiple and interlinked crises are impeding efforts to realize the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement, and the New Urban Agenda (NUA). As the world emerges from the global COVID-19 pandemic, the triple planetary crisis of climate change, environmental pollution and biodiversity loss is affecting all regions of the world, with rapid and unplanned urbanization driving many of the adverse impacts. These crises coincide with the struggle of cities to recover from the dire impacts of the pandemic, with limited capacities within local governments and their fiscal space continuing to be constrained. As a result, longstanding challenges such as urban inequalities and infrastructure gaps are continuing to increase, highlighting the need to strengthen institutional capacities to overcome these challenges and to lead on implementing sustainable urban solutions that generate social, economic, and environmental co-benefits.

In this context, building urban resilience is critical for cities facing the aftermath of the pandemic and as they confront future shocks and stresses from climate, pollution, and biodiversity loss. As population centres and drivers of economic growth, strong cities and urban centres are essential for countries not only to advance national development strategies, but also to contribute to achievement of their climate targets, SDG implementation, and to broadly ensure that urbanization aligns with visions in the New Urban Agenda.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda provide clear frameworks to guide such efforts. The NUA links sustainable urbanization with growth, livelihoods, and quality of life across all sectors, in particular acts as an accelerator of the SDGs. Ensuring sustainable urbanization is important not only for cities to realize the targets in SDG 11 on Sustainable Cities and Communities, but play a significant role in all SDGs, with nearly 70 per cent of all targets requiring local action or engagement. Thus, realizing the SDGs necessitates coherence in local and national policies, and alignment of mechanisms such as Voluntary National Reviews and Voluntary Local Reviews to ensure progress and reporting are robust.

The UN Regional Economic Commissions, in partnership with UN-Habitat and other agencies, have been supporting cities and national governments to implement the NUA, including adequate housing and land policies and to accelerate robust localization efforts, considering regional contexts and conditions. The agencies have also jointly implemented initiatives to building capacities to

strengthen urban resilience and provide guidance on the development of Voluntary Local Reviews.

<sup>1</sup>

Frontrunner cities across the world are developing good practices and urban solutions that seek to contribute to achievement of SDG targets, while reducing their vulnerabilities to multiple crises. Priorities being identified by cities through urban planning processes, including recovery and resilience strategies and VLRs, reflect the interlinkages across all SDGs, especially those under review at HLPF in 2023 (SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11, 17) and highlight the needs for multi-level governance. From better solid waste management to urban mobility to deployment of low-carbon and smart city technologies, to urban services and infrastructure improvements, to land-based financing instruments, local and national governments in all regions, with support from Regional Commissions and UN-Habitat are strengthening their capacities for the design and implementation of coherent urban policies and strategies.

With the cluster of SDGs, in particular SDG 11, under review at HLPF of extreme relevance to cities, an interregional exchange and dialogue focused on accelerating local actions and ensuring coherence in national-local policies, including through implementation of the New Urban Agenda, is both timely and useful. The needs for regional capacity building and for development of clear guidance for subnational and local authorities in their regional contexts are important elements to highlight and to prioritize in the Decade of Action.

## Objectives

- Highlight good practices to build urban resilience and coherent urban policies in the aftermath of the pandemic across all regions
- Identify how localization and building urban resilience contribute to addressing the triple planetary crisis and the scope of the opportunity provided by local action for the achievement of the global goals.
- Highlight the centrality of local-national policy coherence and alignment
- Highlight the importance of VNR-VLR alignment to inform overall reporting on progress of the SDGs.
- Foster interregional dialogue and exchange of learnings from cities/local authorities on the implementation of SDG11 and the urban-related Sustainable Development Goals

The side event is proposed to highlight how regional efforts to localize SDGs and design coherent urban policies can help build resilience and position cities to lead recoveries from the global pandemic while contributing to national strategies to achieve the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda.

The event will include representatives of national governments and national authorities being supported by Regional Commissions and UN-Habitat to implement the New Urban Agenda, as well as cities undertaking localization or Voluntary Local Reviews utilizing regional guidelines developed by the UN Regional Commissions.

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<sup>1</sup> ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA and UN-Habitat are jointly implementing the DA12 project, [Interregional cooperation for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda](#), and co-implemented the DA13 project, Building Urban Economic Resilience during and after COVID-19 (<https://urbaneconomicresilience.org/>). ECE and ESCAP have developed Regional Guidelines for Voluntary Local Reviews. (<https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/VLR%20guidelines%20en.pdf> and <https://www.unescap.org/resources/asia-pacific-regional-guidelines-voluntary-local-reviews>). ESCWA provided guidance on first VLR in Arab region in Amman (<https://www.unescwa.org/events/launching-voluntary-local-review-city-amman>)

The side event will be opened by the Executive Secretary of UN-ESCAP, followed by Perspectives from the Regional Commissions. Representatives from Urbanice Malaysia and UN-Habitat will then set the scene for dialogue and discuss the importance of localization efforts and city leadership.

A moderated panel discussion including representatives from regions represented by the UN Regional Economic Commissions will focus on how localization efforts and urban policies are being enhanced to respond to crises, and to share lessons learned from each region. Each panellist will provide insights on the challenges and opportunities to implement the NUA and SDGs, and on progress specifically of SDG 11 in respective regions.

A moderated Q&A will follow panellists’ interventions. The session will close with a summary from the moderator and closing remarks from a representative of the Regional Commissions.

Time	PROGRAMME
18:30-18:35	<p><b>Welcoming remarks</b></p> <p>Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP</p>
18:35-18:45	<p><b>Perspectives from the Regional Commissions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ms. Rola Dashti, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCWA</li> <li>• Mr. Dmitry Mariyasin, Deputy Executive Secretary, UNECE</li> </ul>
18:45-19:00	<p><b>Assessing the impacts of crisis on urban areas (Setting the scene)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ms. Norliza Hashim, Chief Executive, Urbanice Malaysia</li> <li>▪ Ms. Shipra Narang Suri, Chief, Urban Practices Branch, UN-Habitat</li> </ul>
19:00-19:40	<p><b>Panel Discussion “How the New Urban Agenda and localization of the SDGs, along with public policies can help cities build resilience and respond to crises”</b></p> <p><b>Speakers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ms. Rita Agyen Takyi, Head of International Relations, Accra Metropolitan City, Ghana</li> <li>▪ Ms. Pia Imbs, Presidente of the Eurometropole of Strasbourg, France</li> <li>▪ Mr. Nelson Legacion, Mayor of City of Naga, The Philippines (Local Govt)</li> <li>▪ Ms. Racha Dabbouri, Head of Sustainable Development Department at the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC), Jordan</li> </ul>
19:40-19:55	<p><b>Moderated Q&amp;A</b></p> <p><i>Additional stakeholder interventions from the audience</i></p>
19:55-20:00	<p><b>Summary by Moderator</b></p> <p><b>Closing by Representative of the UN Regional Commissions</b></p>