



The United Nations successfully holds Habitat III in Quito to pass a New Urban Agenda

From October 17-20, thousands of urban thinkers from the public, private and civic sectors gathered in Ecuador's capital city of Quito [for Habitat III, the UN conference](#) held every twenty years to discuss the opportunities and challenges facing cities. This year, member states ratified what is called [the New Urban Agenda](#), which lays out the main issues facing cities and how Member States plan to address them. Key themes in the New Urban Agenda include: acknowledging the need for adequate housing, mitigating the effects of climate change on cities, the importance of social inclusion in cities to end poverty, the necessity of spatial planning for the sustainable development of cities and the growing need for resilient cities. A key focus of the conference was assuring the agreement will be implemented effectively.

The New Urban Agenda affirms the importance of legislation and upholds the significance of governance and good laws as a pathway for sustainable cities. Its implementation will come from “inclusive, implementable, and participatory urban policies,” that are supported by all levels of government where local governments, in particular, will be catalysts for creating well-planned cities. Member States will support these governments to create laws that are both sensitive to local needs and that bring together actors from public, private and civic sectors together to have “concise goals, responsibilities and accountability mechanisms [that] are clearly defined.” The passage of the New Urban Agenda marks a paradigm shift for cities to be more inclusive through legislation. Data driven policy mechanisms for urban governance like municipal finance tools, a land cadaster, and valuation maps will drive these changes.

In the lead up to the conference, UN-Habitat launched a report titled “The Fundamentals of Urbanization: Evidence base for Policy Making.” This report outlines specific policy tools Member States can use to put the New Urban Agenda into action. As the report was launched, Executive Director Joan Clos said that a commitment to ensuring the fundamental processes of urban planning will “indicate the well-being of a city. [These processes] suggest there is a viable framework in place, a clear business plan, strong planning institutions, and a sound regulatory regime.” Strong urban planning fundamentals should include regulation of such areas as public space, block size, development rights, building codes, and of the complexity of the overall planning regimes. Additionally, an emphasis on making quality housing affordable and increasing the presence of spatial plans globally are key goals outlined in the report critical to the success of cities. Finally, the report addresses the challenges and solutions for municipal finance in executing the other tools identified in the report.

Moving forward, Dr. Clos believes a strong commitment to these fundamentals: urban planning, legislation and finance, is critical to the success of cities.

More information about our Global Forum Partner, United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat), Kenya, can be found on their [website](#).