

# Berlin Recommendations for the Cities of Tomorrow

Berlin, 2 June 2016

The German Habitat Forum took place in Berlin on 1-2 June 2016 and brought together more than 1000 attendees from 74 countries. The results of the deliberations by this wide range of stakeholders are the “Berlin Recommendations for the Cities of Tomorrow”. These recommendations are suggested as inputs for the ongoing negotiations on the New Urban Agenda, to be adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in Quito, Ecuador in October 2016.

In **our vision**, cities:

- **Will be guarantors of quality of life for all,**
- **Contribute to achieving prosperity for all,**
- **Lead in attaining a sustainable and decarbonized world, and**
- **Strengthen rural-urban linkages and support food security.**

The New Urban Agenda is a unique opportunity for member states and local governments to partner in the creation of an action-oriented roadmap to accomplish the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as the Paris Agreement. The implementation of these global agreements requires manifold actions in and by cities.

The added value of the New Urban Agenda is thus to complement these agreements by instigating the corresponding national and local policies and the necessary enabling conditions for cities. The German Habitat Forum has identified the following **six priority areas for action**:

- 1. Empower cities as actors to achieve the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement**
- 2. Initiate transformative approaches for sustainable urban development**
- 3. Strengthen the enabling institutional, legal and financial frameworks for cities**
- 4. Create opportunities for engagement and initiate partnerships for implementation**
- 5. Focus the follow-up of the New Urban Agenda on policy dialogue and learning**
- 6. Give more voice to cities in global urban governance**

## Our Vision

### ***Cities will be the guarantors of quality of life for all***

- Cities should be socially and spatially just and gender responsive to **leave no person and no space behind**. In addition to balanced land use planning and management, this requires efforts to eradicate poverty and provide access to affordable and decent housing, education, employment opportunities, a healthy environment and basic services such as energy, transport, water and sanitation, health services, and waste disposal for all. It also encompasses respect for existing human rights standards, as contained in the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which calls for an adequate standard of living, including the right to housing. Cities should counteract any form of social and spatial segregation, exclusion and discrimination, especially in but not limited to informal settlements and low-income neighborhoods.
- Cities should be people-centered, **inclusive**, promote and achieve gender equality and allow for cultural diversity, including differences of belief and language. They should also be safe and livable for all, and encourage the integration of all into city life irrespective of their legal and economic status. To achieve this, empowered, inclusive and accountable local authorities that engage all relevant stakeholders in planning and decision-making processes are required. Give people the opportunity to act and drive change, including by providing seed funding and removing legal obstacles.
- Cities should promote a **sense of belonging (“Heimat”)** as well as **cultural diversity**, as these are sources of creativity and identity. Cities should safeguard tangible and intangible cultural assets, including the assets of informal and traditional areas. Public space plays a crucial role in allowing for expressions of cultural specificity and niches for different user groups. The New Urban Agenda must emphasize place-based urban development that is rooted in and shaped by the people and communities that inhabit cities.
- Cities are challenged to accommodate an increasing number of **migrants, internally displaced persons and refugees**. They deserve a dignified reception and decent life in their host communities with a perspective for the future beyond basic needs, including residence-based rights. This requires sustained dialogues and engagement between host communities and newcomers, as well as modular and flexible approaches, for example in zoning plans and scenario planning.
- Local innovators and champions work to address the gender differences present in all urban issues, from climate change to urban planning, from safety to governance and offering strategies and good practices to build upon. Women need to be further empowered as actors for sustainable urban development by fostering their participation in policy, planning and budgeting; government accountability to women and the availability of critical knowledge and information to address women’s needs. The New Urban Agenda has the potential to set new ambitious global standards for **women and girls** - in all their diversity - and promote their active participation in all phases of urban development and governance processes.

### ***Cities will contribute to achieving prosperity for all***

- Well-run cities are the engines of **economic growth and development**. Cities should ensure that economic growth is both socially and ecologically sustainable and benefits all, and support sustainable consumption and production, circular and shared economies and

resource efficiency. This necessitates adequate working conditions and sustainable supply chains, as well as adequate local financial services. Moreover, the informal sector provides indispensable income opportunities for urban inhabitants in many cities. Urban policies and measures that improve conditions for both the formal and informal sector are thus needed to ensure income and social security.

- **Technology and innovation** should be made critical drivers of urban transformation in sectors such as energy, water and sanitation, transport, and buildings. Innovation in these fields includes, but goes beyond information and communications technology and the use of renewable energy. Cities should cooperate with researchers, the private sector and citizens to foster and harness technological and social innovation and behavioral change. They should also promote green technologies through green public procurement and improved conditions, especially for small and medium-sized companies. “Smart City” is not a goal in itself, but an instrument towards sustainable and inclusive urban development. Thus, digital solutions should benefit public interests.

### ***Cities will lead in attaining a sustainable and decarbonized world***

- **Climate change** represents a particularly pressing threat to cities in developed and developing countries, especially in vulnerable and risk-prone informal and low-income settlements and in coastal areas. Low-carbon and resilient urban development, including anticipatory disaster risk management is critical for sustainable development. Both climate change adaptation and mitigation must be addressed and mainstreamed in planning processes and policies. This includes transport and mobility, water, waste, energy, building and housing, industry, and land-use policies.
- It is essential to preserve, strengthen and recover **urban ecosystems**, water bodies and green areas in and around cities, which function as natural carbon sinks and help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Satisfying the housing and infrastructure requirements of the coming decades using existing **construction materials and technologies** would surpass planetary boundaries. A fundamental change in architecture, construction and the development and (re)use of building materials is needed. In particular, energy and resource efficiency needs to be fostered and CO<sub>2</sub> intensive building materials replaced.
- Cities and national governments should develop sustainable urban mobility policies that provide for universal, gender responsive access to safe, clean and affordable **transport** for all. The transformation and decarbonization of urban transport systems will be achieved through optimized modal mixes in urban mobility networks and compact and mixed-use urban patterns that encourage eco-mobility, including biking, walking, shared and e-mobility and public transport. Eco-mobility is essential for the quality of life, mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, achieving social equality, improving air quality and public health, and strengthening the local economy.

### ***Cities will strengthen rural-urban linkages and support food security***

- Cities face complex challenges and are increasingly linked with **peri-urban and rural areas**. This necessitates an integrated urban and territorial development approach that reflects the multiple reciprocal flows between rural and urban areas, and fosters cross-sectorial

coordination and cooperation among cities and towns within and across territories. That also means fostering development in cities and rural areas alike.

- Strengthening rural-urban linkages is crucial to support **food security**, rural development and the equitable distribution of resources. Food and agriculture, especially smallholder farming, have to be included as key elements in integrated territorial development strategies. Land speculation processes should be regulated to avoid detrimental impacts on agricultural production, ecosystems and recreational areas. Efficient and reliable supply and value chains must be reinforced and food losses and waste minimized.

### Six Priority Areas for Action

#### **1. Empower cities as actors to achieve the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement**

- Global transformation towards sustainability will succeed or fail in cities. The New Urban Agenda should recognize their threefold role in sustainable development. **Cities are spaces** where a wide range of actors jointly shape, co-create and negotiate the cities of tomorrow. **Cities are places** where actions for – or against - sustainable and inclusive development materialize. **Cities are actors**, critical for local, national and global governance for sustainable development and global partnerships.
- Cities are not only local but also **global actors**. They are fundamental for sustainable development and the safeguarding of global common goods, such as ecosystems, climate, economic prosperity, social integration, democratization and political stability. This understanding of the role of cities calls for a redesign of policy responses and for truly transformative actions that change the way we use, build and govern our cities.

#### **2. Initiate transformative approaches for sustainable urban development**

- The choices cities make today will create path dependencies for decades to come. Sustainable urban development thus requires **transformative action** that promotes fundamental structural, organizational and behavioral changes. Thus, the New Urban Agenda needs to motivate local and national governments to engage in a deliberative process that leads to ambitious, locally appropriate, coherent and long-term policies and actions. The New Urban Agenda must further **encourage bottom-up initiatives** and capitalize on the innovation potential of civil society.
- Priority has to be given to policy options and programmatic approaches with the strongest **leverage on local, national and global urban systems**. Such transformative actions should
  - leave no person and no space behind,
  - achieve social cohesion,
  - be low carbon and resilient,
  - engage with informality,
  - promote equitable economic growth,
  - promote sustainable production and consumption,
  - support healthy environments and lifestyles.
- Transformative urban governance requires **evidence-based policies**. The capacities of local governments to collect, analyse, evaluate and use local data therefore need to be

strengthened and embedded in open data and open government policies. Such evidence-based policymaking should build on collaboration between local authorities and urban practitioners and researchers. We need to move beyond participation to co-production.

### 3. Strengthen the enabling institutional, legal and financial frameworks for cities

- The diversity of political arrangements in countries requires **enabling frameworks that are tailored to local contexts**. They should support effective mechanisms based on the principle of subsidiarity, which involves the allocation of responsibilities to the level that is closest to citizens and the empowerment of local actors. It simultaneously calls upon local actors to assume responsibility and act for the common local, national and global good.
- The implementation of the New Urban Agenda necessitates **sufficient capacities at all levels** of government, especially local governments. The New Urban Agenda should therefore encourage domestically designed capacity development programs, supported by international peer learning networks and development agencies where appropriate.
- Cities need **reliable revenues from various sources** along with **adequate financial management capacities** to access and spend funds from public and private sources (including debt financing) in an effective, efficient, sustainable, development- and citizen-oriented way. Adequate and predictable revenues need to be generated through domestic resource mobilization and fiscal decentralization including national transfers that match the functions and mandates of local governments. Direct access to global financing mechanisms needs to be improved. The New Urban Agenda should also encourage multilateral and national development banks to establish strong urban investment programs.
- As city boundaries become increasingly blurred, governance structures and urban development strategies need to reflect the **functional urban territory**. The New Urban Agenda has to recognize **cities as complex actors**, not just as municipalities or demarcated urban zones.

### 4. Create opportunities for engagement and initiate partnerships for implementation

- **Multi-stakeholder partnerships** are critical drivers of urban transformation and are necessary to implement all elements of the New Urban Agenda. They can harness the expertise, technology and financial resources of a wide range of actors for sustainable urban development. A new partnership paradigm is a prerequisite for exploring and finding innovative, disruptive and unusual urban solutions.
- The New Urban Agenda should motivate voluntary commitments to support implementation and provide criteria to ensure their transparency and accountability. Interested parties should be invited to design and launch “**global urban partnership initiatives**”. Such global urban partnerships should address those issues that are most critical to the successful implementation of the New Urban Agenda, such as national urban policies, urban finance, integrated urban management, and capacity development.
- Sustainable urban development necessitates a **multi-level, participatory and collaborative approach** during all phases of the planning and decision-making processes. We need a new understanding of stakeholder engagement that recognizes all urban inhabitants, both formal and informal, as co-planners and co-creators to achieve

sustainable development. The New Urban Agenda should outline guidelines to promote, strengthen and institutionalize active citizenship, participatory planning and decision-making, as well as responsive and accountable urban management as the backbone of good governance.

## **5. Focus the follow-up of the New Urban Agenda on policy dialogue and learning**

- A strong **follow-up and review process** for the New Urban Agenda is essential to maintain commitment and engagement over time and to take corrective actions. The follow-up and review process has a threefold purpose. Firstly, to monitor the implementation of the urban dimension of the SDGs based on the existing SDG indicators. Secondly, to assess progress towards transformative change, using qualitative and quantitative information from multiple sources. Qualitative information should integrate the voices and information generated by city dwellers. Thirdly, it should assess the improvement of enabling conditions for cities. This requires consideration of assessments and feedback by local governments.
- The follow-up and review process should create opportunities for **inclusive dialogues** that facilitate **rapid learning** by decision-makers and urban practitioners. It should build on existing platforms and fora where they exist, and establish new ones where necessary.

## **6. Give more voice to cities in global urban governance**

- The transformative potential of cities for safeguarding global public goods should be harnessed through an **enhanced involvement of local governments and urban stakeholders in global urban governance**. They should have a specific role in the design, implementation and follow-up of international policies on sustainable urban development.
- Habitat III will be the starting point for **constructive discussions on the institutional architecture for global urban governance** to support the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Enhanced engagement by and interagency coordination within the UN system will also be essential to support the coordinated and coherent implementation of the New Urban Agenda. This is a longer-term discussion that must also reflect on the future role of UN-Habitat.