



United Nations Office for
Sustainable Development
Incheon - ROK

UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
Incheon, Republic of Korea

Draft Concept Note

International Mayors Forum, Lilongwe, Malawi — 16-18 May 2018

1. Background

Cities are essential to sustainable development. Besides, being incubators for innovation, art and culture, cities can play a leading role in economic development of countries, whose global gross domestic product (GDP) is created, for a large part, in cities. However, the current trend of urbanization is also often accompanied by significant social and environmental challenges, such as the lack of access to adequate, affordable urban land and housing options, urban infrastructure and basic services for a growing number of citizens, who suffer from rising inequality and exclusion. This is particularly true in developing countries, where about one third of urban dwellers —or more than 860 million people— live in slums, their number increasing rapidly as in many cases urbanization is taking place mostly informally, i.e., through uncontrolled urban expansion, poor land use planning and management, lack of environmental degradation, and failures in the design, construction and maintenance of buildings and infrastructure. Besides lacking environmental services, including drainage, waste-water collection and treatment, garbage collection and adequate access to safe water, those settlements are particularly susceptible to hazards with natural or human cause.

While accommodating more than half of the world's population on only 2 per cent of the earth's land, world's cities nonetheless account for 60-80 per cent of global energy consumption and generate as much as 75 per cent of the energy-related greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Cities are also rapidly getting more vulnerable to weather- and climate-related extreme events, which are increasing in frequency and severity with climate variability and climate change.

Cities and urban settlements are at the core of major global frameworks, starting with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals adopted in September 2015, where SDG 11 is specifically aiming at making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, followed by the Paris Agreement on Climate Change adopted in December of the same year. Nearly a year later, the New Urban Agenda adopted in Quito placed even more emphasis on the role of cities in achieving the SDGs well beyond SDG 11. As a matter of fact, there is a growing recognition by experts and leaders that more than two thirds of the 169 SDG targets can only be achieved through the substantial involvement of local actors, particularly those in urban areas, hence the need for localizing the SDGs, where local governments and local stakeholders play an essential role in adapting and implementing those SDG targets in cities and human settlements.

Established in 2011, the United Nations Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD) is part of the Division for Sustainable Development (DSD) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). UNOSD supports U.N. Member States in planning and undertaking integrated sustainability transformation, notably through knowledge sharing, research, training and partnership building.

Ove the recent years, UNOSD has organized various capacity building activities and events in support of the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs, including preparatory meetings for international meetings such as the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF),

for national and subnational authorities, including Mayors and senior city management officials and carried out a series of initiatives supporting localization of the SDGs.

For instance, a first international mayors' forum co-organized with the United Nations Office for Regional Development (UNCRD, Nagoya, Japan) was held in Vientiane, Lao PDR in March 2017, where about 70 mayors, leaders and representatives of local governments from around the world presented experiences of their cities and discussed key questions and issues related to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11, focusing on Making Cities and Human Settlements Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable.

Since then, UNOSD has held a few other events on the role of local governments global challenges such as the SDGs during the 2017 Asia Pacific Cities Summit & Mayors Forum, in Daejeon (in South Korea), last September and more recently, on "Implementing SDG 11 and the New Urban Agenda: Key Issues in the Transformation Towards Sustainable and Resilient Societies" at the Ninth Session of the World Urban Forum (WUF90 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, which was preceded by a side event organized by DSD UNDESA entitled "The Role of Cities in the 2018 High-Level Political Forum: Transformation Towards Sustainable and Resilient Societies."

It is with this background and in a spirit of continuity that UNOSD is organizing an International Mayors Forum in Lilongwe, Malawi, on 16-18 May 2018.

2. Co-organizers and partners

Teaming up with UNOSD in the organization of the International Mayors' Forum in Lilongwe is the United Nations Project Office on Governance (UNPOG), which was established in 2006 as a subsidiary organization of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). Since its inception, UNPOG has conducted innovative research and capacity-building activities and disseminated global and local best practices on participatory, transparent and effective democratic governance.

At the local level, in addition to the Honourable Mayor of the Capital City Lilongwe, Counsellor Desmond W. Bikoko, who participated in the Mayors Forum in Vientiane and proposed his city as a venue for the next Mayors Forum, UNOSD has been fortunate to count on the United Nations Development Programme - Malawi (UNDP Malawi) as a major co-organiser of the International Mayors' Forum in Lilongwe from the initial stages. Besides their valuable inputs in the discussions on the development of the programme, and for identifying potential consultants, hotels, venues and service providers, UNDP is being key in making linkages with partners in Africa, particularly in Malawi, including the Ministry of Local Government (and Rural Development) – Malawi. UNDP will chair and co-chair some of the sessions and our sister UN Agency is providing support staff to help before, during and after the Mayors Forum.

UNOSD is also engaged in discussions with the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLS), the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG Africa) as well as with the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) amongst others, who have expressed their interest in joining this initiative.

3. Objectives

The main objective of the International Mayors' Forum in Lilongwe is to provide an international platform for policy dialogue and knowledge sharing through presentations and discussions on key aspects related to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 11, at local level as a means to achieve a better understanding of successes, lessons and specific mechanisms and accelerate the in-depth transformation needed to make our societies sustainable and resilient.

Mayors and other leaders of local governments from developing countries, including LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, and countries with economies in transition, representatives of developed countries and UN agencies, international experts and other stakeholders will discuss successes and challenges, policy options, programmes, practices, initiatives as well as actions undertaken at local level helping in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, with a focus on SDG 11 and its interlinkages and complementarities with recently adopted international agreements, such as the Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda.

More specifically, the objectives of the International Mayors' Forum in Lilongwe are:

- Knowledge and skills acquisition for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs at local level;
- Enhancing participants' understanding of the interlinkages between SDG 11 and other SDGs, and other international agendas, such as the Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda;
- Expanding the network of mayors and other leaders of local governments working towards achievement of the SDGs at local level;
- Sharing experiences and peer-to-peer collaboration amongst mayors, local government leaders, experts and other stakeholders involved in the implementation of SDG 11 and other related SDGs at local level;
- Learning from best practices and pitfalls in implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in cities and human settlements.

UNOSD and its partners are also hoping that the International Mayors Forum in Lilongwe will contribute to bringing the voice of the local authorities up to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) next July in New York, where UNOSD is also planning to have a side event to present the outcome of the discussions and subsequent recommendations emerging from the Lilongwe Mayors' Forum.

4. Structure

The International Mayors Forum in Lilongwe is structured around the SDG 11 and selected targets (11.1, 11.3, 11.5 and 11.6) whilst trying to maintain a balance between the three pillars of sustainable development.

The Mayors' Forum will also address other SDGs related to SDG 11. While there is no distinct target on urban and local governance under SDG 11, some important aspects of governance are particularly made in Target 11.3. The governance goal (SDG 16), on the other hand, refers to institutions at all levels, without further expressing what may constitute such responsibilities at the local and urban level. The Forum will thus strive to create an interface between SDG 11 and SDG 16 and address them in a complementary way.

As well, as the analysis of the submitted Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) towards the Paris Agreement on Climate Change the Paris Agreement on Climate Change revealed a strong relationship between sustainable urbanization and climate action, SDG 13 on Climate Action, which will also be addressed during the Mayors Forum.

Similarly, the Mayors Forum will explore the strong relationship between sustainable urbanization and Goal 6 on Clean Water and Sanitation, Goal 7 on Energy Access, Goal 12 on Responsible Consumption and Production, Goal 15 on Life on Land, and SDG 17 on Partnerships for the Goals which are, together with Goal 11, to go under in-depth review during the 2018 HLPF with the overarching theme "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies."

5. Methodology

The Forum will consist of several interrelated modules, each covering concepts and issues of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, SDG 11 in particular, and its interlinkages with other related SDGs and other

internationally agreed agendas such as the Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda. It will consist of formal presentations followed by Q&A and discussions, group work/breakout sessions on specific thematic areas, and plenary seminar sessions. Group work will involve concrete exercises to apply the issues reviewed and assignments undertaken. The group work may also involve some role-playing simulation as well as structured debates. A half-day field trip to visit projects that reflect the Malawian experience in implementing Agenda 2030 and the SDGs is foreseen.

6. Schedule and venue

The Mayors Forum is scheduled to take place on 16-18 May 2018 in Lilongwe, Malawi at a venue suitable for the number of participants and cost-effective from the perspective of working efficiency and convenience of subsistence.

7. Language

The Forum will be conducted in English. Please note that no interpretation will be provided.

8. Registration

Participation in the Forum is by invitation only. Local authorities and other experts interested are invited to contact any of the co-organizers at the addresses provided here below.

Participation in the Forum is free of charge. However, participants are expected to cover their own travel costs. Some travel cost support is available from the UNOSD office for travel cost support for eligible senior officials and participants from developing countries.

9. Contacts for further information

UNOSD: Ms. Shelley (Hye Kyung) Choi

Email: choi9@un.org

Tel: +82 (32) 822 9088

UNDP: Ms. Yamikani Matemvu <

Email: yamikani.matemvu@undp.org

Tel: +265 1 773 500

UNPOG: Ms. Yeh Jin Suh

Email: suh@un.org

Tel: +82 2 717-4263