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WUF11 Highlights: Wednesday, 29 June 2022

Best practices in urban infrastructure, planning, and financing were at the forefront of discussions on WUF11's second last day. In the morning, two Dialogues focused on, respectively, Future Urban Economy and Finance and Integrated Governance in Spatial Planning. The afternoon featured four Special Sessions on themes such as Prerequisites for Productive Investment in Infrastructure and six Roundtables.

Dialogues

Future Urban Economy and Finance: Majeta Jager, EU Commission, described the link between urbanization and structural transformation, noting the urgent need for infrastructure investments. In the first panel on the potential of urbanization as an economic development vehicle, speakers highlighted: connections between trade, industry, and urban priorities; housing construction as a pathway out of poverty; and the reconstruction of liberated territories under a "green economic zones" concept.

Responding to questions on climate action and green building materials, panelists discussed the need to: improve local governments' capacities to mobilize funding and develop green industries; invest in both tangible and intangible infrastructure; and include the informal economy.

In the second panel on investment coordination, speakers described: the importance of closing the loop between local investments and capturing returns through fiscal mechanisms; the need to build capacities of diverse local governments; and lessons



A WUF11 sign in the streets of Katowice

learned from a financing initiative in Cabo Verde that includes social community bonds.

Responding to questions, speakers highlighted: how national governments can support local governments' access to financing, including securing debt; the need to consider broader economic impacts of urban development investment; and the importance of bringing diverse decision-makers to the table to solve our cross-cutting urban challenges.

Integrated Governance in Spatial Planning for a More Just, Green, and Healthy Urban Future: Keynote speaker Collen Vixen Kelapile, ECOSOC President, highlighted the release of the World Cities Report 2022, which invites cities to: acknowledge the poorest residents as "true urban partners";



Panel speakers in the Special Session on Future Urban Economy and Finance



Marcela Villareal, FAO

enhance coordination through effective governance; and plan for sustainable urban growth.

Marylin Pintor highlighted how her new agency, the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development, the Philippines, coordinates across agencies to address the fragmentation of the housing sector and promote civil society voices in planning. Ana Marina Ramos Jiménez, National Institute of Territorial Planning and Urbanism, Cuba, said her country drew on the New Urban Agenda (NUA) to align housing policies and land use with the 2030 Agenda.

Marcela Villareal, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), said transparent and participatory local governance is essential to address malnutrition and food waste in cities, noting FAO's willingness to support cities to integrate food systems into their agenda. Sertac Erten, Arup, said that to improve urban infrastructure, it is necessary to understand how segments of a city's population, such as nightshift workers, use it differently.

Bachir Kanoute, International Observatory for Participatory Democracy, underscored the absence of citizens in urban planning, suggesting that trust and solidarity are essential for encouraging participation. In an ensuing discussion, panelists emphasized: connecting housing development to the provision of basic services; gender-based perspectives on policymaking; and democratizing specialist knowledge so it is understandable by all.

Special Sessions

Localizing the SDGs: Anna-Leena Seppälä, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Finland, described Finland's multi-level approach to enabling SDG localization and co-creation. Emilia Sáiz, Secretary-General, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), observed an increase in political will to drive localization, understanding of SDGs, and local service provision.

In a first panel on planning for the SDGs, speakers highlighted the need for, *inter alia*: technical support and financial resources to implement local SDG priorities; collaboration across all sectors and levels of government; and a whole-of-society, all-of-government approach. In a second panel focusing on partnerships and financing, speakers highlighted:

- How the COVID-19 pandemic became a catalyst for action in Saint Lucia;
- How multiple types of engagement processes initiated a citizen-led articulation of a 2030 vision for Mannheim, Germany; and
- That youth engagement must be institutionalized to tap into their capacity for communication and co-creation.

Participants also discussed new localization initiatives, including UN-Habitat's Local 2030 Coalition and the G20 Platform on SDGs Localisation and Intermediary Cities.

Prerequisites for Productive Investment in Infrastructure and Sustainable Urban Development: Keynote speaker Paulius Kulikauskas, UN-Habitat, stated that even if all the capital necessary for projects was available, revenue is required to support operations and maintain investments. This revenue is difficult to capture through inefficient taxation and a consumer base unable to pay for services. Panelists expanded on challenges facing productive investments, citing: the rate of urbanization and the inability for complex projects to be financed in a timely manner; the disconnect between local, regional, and national governments; limited capacity of local governments; channeling investments towards green and social projects; and private sector confidence in emerging economies as key issues.

To increase the productivity of investments, panelists suggested: a shift away from ideological investment toward context-specific development; strengthening the financial capacity of local governments; and implementing pilot projects to demonstrate market opportunities to the private sector.

Shaping Equitable Urban Futures: In this session, local government officials shared experiences with innovative projects, including systems and partnerships that improve the well-being of women and provide affordable housing. Diana Rodriguez, Secretary for Women's Affairs, Bogotá, described the city's establishment of a care system that addresses women's "time poverty." By creating infrastructures linking basic services in close physical proximity, the city has enabled women to have more time for their own education and care.

Javier Burón, Housing Manager, Barcelona, detailed the city's approach to establishing affordable housing through



Diana Rodriguez, Secretary for Women's Affairs, Bogotá

public, private, and community collaborations. Lessons include the importance of continuity in financial and political support and the value of using a human rights-based approach to holding governments accountable. Rodríguez also emphasized “flexibility as a criterion for designing and redesigning the urban space” in uncertain times.

Accelerating Post Covid-19 Recovery, Social Inclusion, and Urban Inequality Reduction in Communities: Major themes for accelerating recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic included a strong emphasis on solidarity and unity among all actors. Stakeholders identified included: all levels of government; local grassroots organizations; individuals; and the international community. Several panelists highlighted the need to fully implement and institutionalize a human rights-based approach to development and social protection systems to mitigate the impacts of future crises. Accessibility, equity, and our collective responsibility for one another were also raised as important considerations in the recovery and development processes.

The panel concluded with Vixen Kelapile calling for countries presenting their Voluntary National Reviews at the upcoming High-level Political Forum to highlight how they have strengthened their social protection systems in response to COVID-19.

Roundtables

One UN Roundtable: Participants voiced support for improving coordination across agencies and developing joint programmes to achieve sustainable urbanization. Inclusivity and participation emerged as key themes. Vixen Kelapile noted that 70% of the next generation will live in cities and urged that “as we look at the NUA, we look at the issue of inequalities.” Celstine Ketcha Courtès, Minister of Urban Development and Housing, Cameroon, emphasized the need to include residents alongside public authorities and private-sector partners in urban planning and development: “You can’t treat your patient if you don’t know where the pain is.”

Violet Shivutse, Huariou Commision, urged treating grassroots constituencies as partners. UN resident coordinators cited promising approaches to sustainable urbanization,

including: territorial approaches that create synergies; private-sector partnerships; and people-centered perspectives on reducing inequalities. Core challenges include: mobilizing finance; disaggregating data; and responding to environmental crises and population displacements.

Women’s Roundtable: Featuring women from civil society and the public and private sectors, presenters highlighted success stories from their respective contexts. Underlining the importance of solidarity, they called for continued advancement of the women’s agenda, highlighting the persistent threat of moving backwards. As leaders in their communities, participants spoke of their experiences introducing gender-responsive services to support women and communities on themes of:

- Family, including supporting parents and especially mothers by providing care for young children;
- Health, by providing cancer screening capacity to underserved areas;
- Safety, including how to design cities with quality housing and public spaces;
- Education, by providing women and girls with necessary competencies and skills needed to succeed;
- Politics, and how to get involved in local legal systems to uplift gender-based development principles; and
- Finance, including how to spend, save, and participate in economic systems.

Academia Roundtable: In the first panel on innovation in research, Robert Pyka, University of Katowice, pointed to cooperation between universities and municipalities in the Katowice area. Anna Hurlimann, University of Melbourne, said what facilitates climate adaptation in Australia’s built environment varies across sectors. Montaser Hiyari, Applied Science University, described the development of service provision benchmarks at various governance levels. Peter Elias, University of Lagos, called for participatory research methods to assess SDG implementation. Antonella Contin, Politecnico di Milano, described a cartographic tool for metropolitan decision-making. Héctor García Curiel, University of Guadalajara, said culture and education can transform urban life.



Celstine Ketcha Courtès, Minister of Urban Development and Housing, Cameroon



Montaser Hiyari, Applied Science University

In the second panel on innovation and education, Svava Grönfeldt, Massachusetts Institute for Technology, said design innovation was “a connector” between science and user needs. Hassan Yakubu, Mohammed VI University, outlined digital divides in education across three African cities. Mennatullah Hendawy, Cairo Urban AI, called for increased interdisciplinarity in urban planning. Rita Padawangi, Singapore University of Social Sciences, presented an interdisciplinary Southeast Asian network to re-conceptualize cities. Enrique Silva, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, said professional development courses support practitioners in fiscally managing cities.

Professionals Roundtable: Panelists discussed the roles and responsibilities of professionals in accelerating the SDGs and incorporating them into their services. Rafael Tuts, UN-Habitat, called interprofessional knowledge exchanges key to sustainable urbanization, while also highlighting the role of the Habitat Professionals Forum (HPF) to strengthen relationships between private and public partners. A representative of the HPF shared a presentation on their recently released framework for development professions to advance the NUA, entitled The HPF 2022 Roadmap Recovery. Acknowledging the report, Jean Pierre Elong Mbassi, UCLG Africa, questioned the universal applicability of such documents, citing Africa’s 7% annual urbanization rate as a situation unique to the rest of the world. Noraida Saludin, Malaysia Planning Institute, emphasized the need for capacity building across all sectors to achieve the SDGs. The roundtable then broke into working groups to discuss themes relating to: accelerating the SDGs, building local partnerships, ethics and capacity building, and crises and reconstruction.

Foundations and Philanthropies Roundtable: Moderator Stefan Germann, CEO, Fondation Botnar, noted that, contrary to the public sector, foundations can invest in the “upside of risk,” and explore new approaches to impact. Author Gemma Bull described values of grant making, including humility, equity, evidence, service, and diligence, that are driving reform in many foundations. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director of UN-Habitat, reiterated that closing the funding gap is essential to accelerate SDG implementation.



Moderator Stefan Germann, CEO, Fondation Botnar

Panelists presented foundations’ experiences in supporting housing development, and discussed, among other issues:

- The challenges of providing support in complex systems of urban development;
- The need for data to better understand the needs for and impacts of sustainable housing supported by foundations; and
- The tension between supporting bottom-up, co-created solutions and the need to scale successful models.

Participants then discussed:

- How young organizations can build relationships with foundations;
- Whether democratizing grant-making decisions will increase effectiveness; and
- How foundations can become more effective through collaboration and reduced reporting burdens.

Children and Youth Roundtable: Mohd Sharif said children and youth are the motors of change. Via video, the First Lady of Serbia, Tamara Vučić, called for more exchanges of knowledge about early childhood.

In a first intergenerational panel, speakers noted: best practices in the establishment of youth councils; that youth do not need to be taught but rather equipped with data and knowledge; the lack of attention to climate disasters affecting youth in the global South; and the need to keep governments accountable.

A second panel of youth leaders debated the need to: train youth leaders to take climate action; help localize the SDGs by co-creating public spaces with youth; and address the unique set of mental health issues youth face. Representatives of Polish and Ukrainian youth councils reflected on how local governments can improve youth engagement in cities. A third panel comprised of practitioners discussed youth-led work on localizing the SDGs and the need to replace the tokenization of youth with meaningful engagement in areas in which they have high stakes, such as environmental stewardship.

IISD’s Summary: The IISD summary report of WUF11 will be available on Sunday, 3 July 2022 at: enb.iisd.org/world-urban-forum-wuf11



The dais during the video message made by Tamara Vučić, First Lady of Serbia