



UN-HABITAT



**REPORT OF THE THIRD SESSION OF THE
WORLD URBAN FORUM**

**VANCOUVER, CANADA
JUNE 19-23, 2006**

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OVERVIEW

With some 10,000 participants from over 100 countries, the Third Session of the World Urban Forum paved the way for a new drive forward on the international urban agenda in a world of rapidly growing cities. Just as the Habitat I Conference in Vancouver in 1976 placed local community concerns on the international agenda and highlighted the critical importance of inclusiveness, the Forum in Vancouver, 30 years later, lived up to its promise of moving ideas to action. It symbolized inclusiveness, with balanced participation from public, private and civil society sectors. Compared to previous sessions of the Forum, there was a notable increase in private sector participation.

The quest for innovative ideas and practical solutions – rare for a meeting convened by the United Nations – was underscored in the six Dialogues, 13 Roundtables and more than 160 Networking Events. Ministers, mayors, academics, community-based organizations, federations of non-governmental organizations, and the private sector shared their insights and experiences on what would improve the quality of life in the world's growing cities. The inclusive approach followed at the Forum is a model for cities. Some are already following this model while others would benefit from doing so.

It was promising that participants, in such large numbers and from all walks of society, began to converge towards an outline for the way forward:

- They agreed on the need for all urban players – citizens, local governments, state and provincial governments, national governments, the private sector and civil society organizations – to work harder to solve urban problems and challenges. There was widespread agreement that they all must do their part, rather than simply transfer responsibility to others.
- They agreed that risk-taking and the pursuit of innovation must characterize municipal leadership if cities are to achieve sustainable development. Vancouver's example in taking the lead in such areas as air and water quality, public transit and planning was mentioned often in this context.
- They agreed that appropriate engagements, partnerships and relationships need to be built in an inclusive manner to better understand challenges and develop practical solutions. Participants from many parts of the world presented examples that can serve as guideposts for these strategies.
- They agreed on the importance of transparency and accountability. Citizens need to be informed of challenges and steps taken by governments to address them. Transparency goes hand-in-hand with accountability, which speeds up the process of enhancing actions that work and curtailing those that do not work.

Highlights and emerging issues are summarized below.

- **Coming to terms with the Urban Age:** A new message resonated from Vancouver: urban issues have become a major challenge of our time. The urban population of developing countries is set to double from 2 to 4 billion in the next 30 years. Ensuring that these people do not end up in slums requires the planning, financing and servicing of the equivalent of a new city of 1 million people every week during the

same period. The investment required to plan for and provide decent shelter and basic services should be viewed as a major impetus for socio-economic development.

- **From exclusion to engagement: All partners showed a willingness to build effective coalitions to address the needs of the urban poor.** The Forum witnessed a dramatic and fundamental shift in the willingness of governments and local authorities to engage with all urban actors to improve the quality of life of people, their communities and cities. In several keynote addresses and in various dialogues, government representatives showed a keen interest in being actively engaged with civil society organizations and their representatives, and in supporting initiatives that improved their housing and access to basic services. Most governments represented in Vancouver 2006 cited the need to engage with and support community initiatives to improve the living conditions of the poorest and most vulnerable groups, and to improve the urban environment. This willingness to be engaged with all urban actors and to drive the process of urban renewal and poverty alleviation reflects a change in government attitudes towards the need to move beyond participation to concepts such as inclusiveness, empowerment and active engagement with urban citizens.

- **Meeting the financing challenge of slum upgrading and sustainable infrastructure development.** The Forum recognised the critical need for increased financial resources to attain the slum upgrading target of the Millennium Declaration. It further recognised that the challenge is to shift from relying on international development finance to tapping local capital markets. In this context, the Forum acknowledged the need for international donors to play a catalytic role in building the capacity and improving the credit-worthiness of cities, and to package such assistance with seed capital, as piloted by UN-HABITAT's Slum Upgrading Facility, in line with paragraph 56(m) of the 2005 Millennium Summit Outcome which calls for investments in pro-poor housing and urban infrastructure.

- **Re-inventing planning: applying new paradigms for sustainable urban development.** The Forum placed a strong emphasis on planning as a tool for urban development and environmental management, and as a means of preventing future slum growth. This view was accepted not just by government officials and urban planners themselves but also by civil society groups that wanted planning to be more inclusive, transparent and ethical. The Forum stressed the important role of planners as agents of change and underlined the importance of sustainability as the backbone of new forms of planning.

A number of observations were made at the Forum, some of which are described below:

- **“Beautiful speeches, awful reality” – The Millennium Development Goals are not having an impact on the ground in many countries.** The commitments made by governments at the Millennium Summit in 2000 and the adoption of national poverty reduction strategies in several countries have not necessarily resulted in improved living conditions among the urban poor. For instance, the increasing incidence of forced evictions goes against the Millennium Development Goals aimed at reducing poverty. Participants felt that there was still a wide discrepancy between what governments said

and what they did, and this discrepancy needed to be addressed if the Millennium Development Goals are to be met in cities.

- **Converging approaches to sustainable urban development policies between developed and developing nations.** The traditional North-South divide was not evident at this Forum, as countries from both developed and developing countries seemed united in the view that sustainability – and its link to poverty – was a major challenge facing all cities. There was, however, recognition that each region faced particular challenges that were best addressed by a more systematic exchange of best practices and good urban policies among all stakeholders at the local, national and international levels.
- **Particular emphasis was placed on the needs of women, youth and people with disabilities.** The Forum was marked by a strong participation of women and youth. It was recognised that youth represented a large proportion of people living in cities and their participation in large numbers infused a welcome energy in the deliberations. Youth representatives encouraged participants of the Forum to adopt strategies bearing the specific needs of youth in mind and to engage youth in decisions affecting their lives. The Forum further recognised the ongoing investment and resource contribution of grassroots women to the sustainability of cities and communities.
- **The emerging reality of public-private partnerships.** The Forum recognised that cities are largely the product of private investment. The strong presence of the private sector and its active participation in the Forum underscored their interest in engaging in the quest for sustainable cities.
- **The success of the Third Session of the World Urban Forum lay not just in what was discussed but in what was learned.** Participants were keen to share ideas, network and forge new alliances through both formal and informal meetings with partners, and viewed the Forum not as a place where declarations and plans of action were endorsed but where experiences were shared.

The Way Forward

The spirit and enthusiasm evinced at the Forum in formal sessions and in the interstices are difficult to capture in words. But it was very clear that every participant was committed to the basic theme of the Forum on turning Ideas into Action. Hundreds of actionable ideas were proposed, described and exchanged. No doubt they will provide the basis for renewed vigour and commitment to a sustainable urban development that is inclusive.

Guidelines and policies for decentralisation and the empowerment of local authorities are required to enable them to engage civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders in transforming their respective cities, as Vancouver did in the follow-up to the first Habitat Conference in 1976.

All spheres of government need to prioritize the urban agenda in their respective plans and policies. UN-HABITAT will take the WUF III outcomes to its Governing Council

and, through it, to the UN General Assembly, with a call for a strengthened role of the United Nation system and international agencies in meeting the urban sustainability challenge.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The World Urban Forum was organized and convened by the Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) pursuant to paragraph 10 of resolution 18/5 of the Commission on Human Settlements in which the Commission requested the Executive Director “to promote a merger of the Urban Environment Forum and the International Forum on Urban Poverty into a new urban forum, with a view to strengthening the co-ordination of international support to the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.” Subsequently, the United Nations General Assembly decided, in its resolution 56/206, that the Forum would be a “non-legislative technical forum in which experts can exchange views in the years when the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme does not meet.” At the same session, the General Assembly, in paragraph 7 of its resolution 56/205, encouraged local authorities and other Habitat Agenda partners to participate, as appropriate, in the World Urban Forum in its role as an advisory body to the Executive Director of UN-HABITAT.

2. The theme of the Third Session of World Urban Forum was ‘Our Future: Sustainable Cities – Turning Ideas into Action’. Six dialogues on the three sub-themes of ‘Social Inclusion and Cohesion’, ‘Partnership and Finance’, and ‘Urban Growth and the Environment’ were held. In addition, 13 roundtables brought Habitat Agenda partner in peer group sessions to share experiences and views on the Forum theme. Over 160 networking events, training events were also held.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

A. Attendance

3. The Third Session of the World Urban Forum was held in Vancouver, Canada, from 19 to 23 June 2006. A total of 11,418 people registered for the Forum, including 9,689 participants and 1,847 support staff and volunteers. The gender ratio of participants was 46.7 per cent female and 52.1 per cent male (the remaining 1.1 per cent did not specify their gender). The table below outlines the type of participants based on the affiliation indicated at the time of registration on site.

Participants by partner category	Attendance at the Third Session of the World Urban Forum		Attendance at the Second Session of the World Urban Forum	
	Number	%	Number	%
Governments	1,497	15.5	446	17.8
Parliamentarians	63	0.7	27	1.1
Local Authorities	1,534	15.7	414	16.4
Non-Governmental Organizations	2,289	23.5	535	21.2
Private Sector	1,187	12.3	203	8.0
Professional and Research Institutions	1,442	14.8	201	8.0
Foundations	95	1.0	33	1.3
Media	346	3.6	51	2.0

Inter-Governmental Organizations	31	0.3		
United Nations	379	4.0	196	7.7
Other Participants	753	7.8	416	16.5
Canada Secretariat	73	0.8		
No Affiliation Indicated			1,867	
Total number of participants	9,689	100.0	4,389	100.0

4. The list of participants is contained in document HSP/WUF/3/INF/7.

B. Opening Ceremony

5. The Third Session of the World Urban Forum opened with a welcoming ceremony followed by statements by dignitaries and key partners. The Keynote Address was delivered by The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister, Government of Canada. The message of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, was read, on his behalf, by Ms. Inga Björk-Klevby, UN Assistant Secretary General and Deputy Executive Director of UN-HABITAT. Statements were also delivered at the opening ceremony by the following dignitaries and partners. A summary of these statements is provided in **Annex I**.

- (a) Mr. Charles Kelly, Commissioner General, World Urban Forum III, Government of Canada
- (b) Mr. Sam Sullivan, Mayor, City of Vancouver, Canada
- (c) Hon. Gordon Campbell, Premier, Province of British Columbia, Canada
- (d) Mrs. Anna Tibajuka, Under Secretary-General, United Nations, and Executive Director, UN-HABITAT
- (e) Hon. Noli de Castro, Vice President, Government of the Philippines
- (f) Hon. Ali Mohamed Shein, Vice President, Government of Tanzania

C. Opening Plenary Session

6. The session was chaired jointly by the Hon. Ms. María Antonia Trujillo, Minister of Housing, Government of Spain; Chair, Second Session of the World Urban Forum and Hon. Ms. Diane Finley, Minister, Human Resources and Social Development, Government of Canada; Chair of the Third Session of the World Urban Forum.

7. Statements were delivered by the following dignitaries:

- (a) Hon. Alphonso Jackson, Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Government of the United States of America
- (b) Hon. Ms. Kumari Selja, Minister of State for Urban Employment and Poverty Alleviation, Government of India
- (c) Hon. Naokazu Takemoto, Senior Vice Minister of Finance, Government of Japan
- (d) Mr. Smangaliso Mkhathshwa, Co-President, United Cities and Local Governments
- (e) Mr. Enrique Ortiz, President, Habitat International Coalition

Summaries of the above-mentioned statements are provided in **Annex II**

8. At its first plenary session, the Forum adopted the following provisional agenda for its Third Session:

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Establishment of an Advisory Group for the Third Session of the World Urban Forum
3. Organization of work
4. Government and Partner Roundtable Sessions
5. The Dialogues on “Sustainable cities – Turning ideas into action”

Session I: SOCIAL INCLUSION AND COHESION

- (a) Achieving the Millennium Development Goals: Slum Upgrading and Affordable Housing
- (b) Public Engagement: The Inclusive Approach

Session II: PARTNERSHIP AND FINANCE

- (a) Municipal Finance: Innovation and Collaboration
- (b) Urban Safety and Security: Taking Responsibility

Session III: URBAN GROWTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- (a) The Shape of Cities: Urban Planning and Management
- (b) Energy: Local Action, Global Impact

6. Provisional agenda and other arrangements for the fourth session of the World Urban Forum.
7. Presentation of the summary report of the session

D. Establishment of an Advisory Group

9. The Chair of the Third Session of the World Urban Forum, the Hon. Ms. Diane Finley, Minister, Human Resources and Social Development, Government of Canada, at the request of the Executive Director, announced the names of the members of the Advisory Group for the Third Session of the World Urban Forum. The terms of reference of the Advisory Group were to advise and assist the Executive Director with the organization, management and conduct of all the meetings and events which took place during the Third Session of the Forum. The members of the Advisory Group were:

- (a) Hon. Ms. Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, Government of Canada, who will serve as the Chair of both the Third Session of the World Urban Forum and of the Advisory Group. Minister Finley requested her Deputy Minister, Mr. Munir Sheikh, to replace her as the Chair.
- (b) Hon. John P. Magufuli, Minister of Lands, Housing and Human Settlements Development, Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, who will serve as the Co-Chair of both the Third Session of the Forum and of the Advisory Group.
- (c) Hon. Wang Guangtao, Minister of Construction, Government of China and host for the Fourth Session of the World Urban Forum.

- (d) Hon. M. Shannon H. Sorzano, Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Affairs, Department of Housing and Urban Development, United States of America.
- (e) Hon. Senator Ernesto Gil Elorduy, President of the Global Parliamentarians on Habitat (GPH), Mexico.
- (f) Mr. Allan Lloyd, Founding President of United Cities and Local Governments, (UCLG)
- (g) Mr. Alejandro Florian Borbon, representative from the Habitat International Coalition (HIC), Colombia
- (h) Ms. Esther Mwaura-Muiru, Groots Kenya, representing the Huairou Commission and Women at WUF.
- (i) Architect Alexander P. Farvorsky, Chief, Design Department, ARCHITEK, (Moscow), Russian Federation.
- (j) Ms. Rachel Wariko, Kenya National Council for Youth for Habitat, Kenya.

E. Organization of Work

10. The Forum adopted its organization of work as proposed by the Executive Director in document HSP/WUF/3/Add.1 entitled “Adoption of the Agenda and Organization of Work” which contained logistical arrangements for the dialogues, and documents HSP/WUF/3/INF/1 and HSP/WUF/3/INF/2, which contained, respectively, the conference programme and the schedule of training and networking events.

F. Plenary Session 20 June 2006

11. The plenary session on Social Inclusion and Cohesion was moderated by Ms. Margaret Cately-Carlson, Chair of Global Water Partnership, Canada. The session discussed key challenges related to marginalization, social exclusion and urban poverty facing cities. Speakers at this plenary session were:

- (a) Hon. Alphonso Jackson, Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Government of the United States of America
- (b) Mr. Jockin Arputham, founder and President, National Slum Dwellers Federation of India
- (c) Hon. Ms. Lindiwe Sisulu, Minister of Housing, Government of South Africa

A Summary report of this session is provided in **Annex III**.

G. Special UN-Habitat Lecture

12. The United Nations Human Settlements Lecture Series seeks to recognize outstanding and sustained contributions to research, thinking and practice in the field of human settlements. The first UN-HABITAT lecture on “Wealth of Cities: Towards an Assets-Based Development of Urbanising Regions” was delivered by Professor John Friedmann, Honorary Professor, School of Community and Regional Planning, University of British Columbia, Canada. A Summary report of this lecture is provided in **Annex IV**.

H. Plenary Session 21 June 2006

13. The Plenary session on Partnership and Finance was moderated by Ms. Katherine Sierra, Vice-President and Network Head, Infrastructure, World Bank. The speakers at this plenary session were:

- (a) Mr. Mohammad Yousaf Pashtun, Minister of Urban Development, Government of Afghanistan
- (b) Mr. Pat Jacobsen, Chief Executive Officer, TransLink, Canada
- (c) Mr. Robert Williams, Deputy Mayor of Georgetown, Guyana

A summary report of this session is provided in **Annex V**.

I. Plenary Session 22 June 2006

14. The Plenary session on urban growth and environment was moderated by Mr. Chris Leach, President of the Canadian Institute of Planners. The speakers at this plenary session were:

- (a) Ms. Evelyn Herfkens, Executive Coordinator of the United Nations Millennium Campaign
- (b) Mr. Enrique Peñalosa, former Mayor of Bogotá, Colombia, now serving as Visiting Scholar at New York University, USA

A Summary report of this session is provided in **Annex VI**.

J. Dialogues

15. The report on the results and conclusions of the dialogues which were held on the six sub-themes of the Third Session of the World Urban Forum is contained in **Annex VII**.

K. Roundtables

16. The report on the roundtables which were held at the Third Session of the World Urban Forum is contained in **Annex VIII**.

L. Special Sessions

17. A number of special sessions on specific subjects relevant to the Forum theme were organized. A report on these special sessions is contained in **Annex IX**.

M. Networking Events

18. A series of over 160 networking events were organized on theme relevant to the Forum. These events provided an opportunity to the participants to build knowledge,

strengthen partnerships and share ideas and best practices. In addition, training events were organized to impart professional skills to urban practitioners.

III. PROVISIONAL AGENDA AND OTHER ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE WORLD URBAN FORUM

19. According to paragraph 11 of the “Objectives of and Working Arrangements for the World Urban Forum” which were adopted by the First Session of the World Urban Forum, the provisional agenda for each session of the Forum is to be prepared by the Secretariat in consultation with national governments, local authorities and other Habitat Agenda partners, at least six months in advance of the session. Accordingly, and in accordance with the provisions of this paragraph, the Secretariat will consult, prepare and circulate the provisional agenda for the Fourth Session at least six months in advance of the session.

20. At the invitation of the Government of China, the Fourth Session of the World Urban Forum will be held in Nanjing, China in 2008. The precise dates will be confirmed after consultations with the United Nations Committee on Conferences to avoid conflicts or overlap with other United Nations meetings and events.

IV. ENDORSEMENT OF THE REPORT OF THE SESSION

21. The Advisory Group endorsed in its entirety the present report on its work at the Third Session for submission by the Chair to the Executive Director of UN-HABITAT.

V. CLOSURE OF THE SESSION

22. The session opened with the tabling and presentation of the report by the Advisory Group of the Third Session of the World Urban Forum. Thereafter statements were made by the following speakers:

- (a) Hon. John Pombe Magufuli, Minister for Lands, Housing and Human Settlements Development, Government of Tanzania; Co-chair, WUF III
- (b) Mr. Pierre Sané, Assistant Director-General, UNESCO
- (c) Mr. John Kaputin, Secretary General, African Caribbean and Pacific Group Secretariat, Belgium
- (d) Ms. Mariama Sow, ENDA Dakar, Senegal, representing civil society
- (e) Ms. Ana Lucy Bengochea, Coordinator, Garifuna Emergency Committee of Honduras, representing women groups
- (f) Ms. Kim Jawanda, Terra Housing, South Africa, representing the private sector
- (g) Ms. Mernosh Tajhizadeh, ENJEU (ENvironnement JEUnesse), Quebec, Canada, representing youth
- (h) Hon. Wang Guangtao, Minister of Construction, China
- (i) Mr. Lu Bing, Deputy Mayor of Nanjing, China
- (j) Mrs. Anna Tibajuka, Under Secretary-General, United Nations; Executive Director, UN-HABITAT
- (k) Ms. Lois Jackson, Chair, Greater Vancouver Regional District, Canada

- (1) Mr. James Moore, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works; Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, Government of Canada (TBC)
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ALL ANNEXES TO THIS REPORT WILL BE AVAILABLE AT
WWW.UNHABITAT.ORG/WUF