



Sustainable development of towns and cities critical for world's poorest countries

Press Release

Quito, 17 October 2016 – Ensuring sustainable urbanisation in the world's 48 Least Developed Countries (LDCs) is key to reducing poverty and achieving the global sustainable development goals according to an event held on the margins of the HABITAT III Conference in Quito today.

With the percentage of urban dwellers in LDCs projected to grow substantially from 32 per cent in 2015 to 50 per cent by 2050, the event highlighted how sustainable urbanisation is vital for future generations and stressed that carefully considered urban planning and good governance with effective regulatory frameworks will be imperative.

“Urbanisation has the potential to be a driver for structural transformation in LDCs but if not well managed, urbanisation will carry many risks, and threaten the progress made thus far. Ultimately, the consequences are critically dependent upon policy choices,” said Gyan Chandra Acharya, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. “No amount of efforts by LDCs alone will be sufficient to make these investments. There is an urgent need to scale-up support in areas such as development finance, transfer of technologies, capacity building of urban authorities and institutions to strengthen the role of urbanization in long-term national development.”

The event, co-organised by the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) focused on best practices and lessons learned. Speakers at the event included the World Bank, OECD, UNOPS and civil society from the National Slum Dwellers Federation of Uganda. Participants discussed the enhancement of support to governments and local authorities in LDCs to increase capacity in meeting the growing challenges of achieving sustainable urban development in this group of countries.

Carefully considered urban planning and good governance with effective regulatory frameworks and systems-based planning approaches were highlighted as an imperative. Participants stressed that effective governance linked with financial mechanisms and investment frameworks in infrastructure, affordable housing, renewable energy and transport can result in economic, social and environmental benefits for urban centers in LDCs.

The event emphasised that the capacity of governments and local authorities in LDCs be better supported to adjust and meet the growing challenges of sustainable urban development. This includes policy formulation to strengthen urban resilience of LDCs to climate change and addressing disasters risks. A need was highlighted to strengthen coherence and synergy in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs.

The New Urban Agenda to be adopted in Quito provides a renewed opportunity for LDCs to revitalise their urban capacity, tap into the full potential of urbanisation and use it as a vehicle for structural transformation, economic growth and shared prosperity.

Organisations attending the event included the Global Development Institute, the National Slum Dwellers Federation of Uganda, OECD and the World Bank.

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