

WUF9 HIGHLIGHTS THURSDAY 8 FEBRUARY 2018

The ninth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF9) continued on Thursday. In the morning, a Ministers' Roundtable and a further two WUF Assemblies convened, representing local and regional governments and grassroots organizations respectively. In the afternoon, Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak officially opened WUF9, accompanied by cultural dances and messages from dignitaries.

MINISTERS' ROUNDTABLE

Moderator Julie Gichuru, Kenyan TV anchor, opened the Ministers' Roundtable and invited speakers to focus on the transformative potential of the New Urban Agenda (NUA).

Noh Omar, Minister of Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government, Malaysia, welcomed the 61 visiting ministers, and described his ministry's efforts to promote inclusive sustainable urban development.

Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director, UN-Habitat, pointed to the increasing recognition of planned urbanization as a tool for sustainable development, and stressed the importance of partnerships in the efforts to localize the NUA and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Erik Solheim, Executive Director, UN Environment, noted that city development is 'a domestic affair', and offered the UN's support to share knowledge and good practice from around the world.

Corina Cretu, European Commission, stressed that multi-level governance is a prerequisite to successful implementation of the NUA.

PANELS: Two consecutive panels discussed critical urban issues and countries' concrete initiatives to implement the NUA domestically.

In the first panel, India spoke about its goal to provide every citizen with housing by 2022. Paraguay highlighted its issues tackling inequality in cities, and the US spoke of the importance of data mining to devise policies against homelessness.

In the second panel, Indonesia described its work to reduce informal settlements. Lesotho highlighted that urbanization is a process that cannot be halted or reversed. Mexico argued in favor of a 'transversal' and long-term vision for sustainable urban development. Palestine said it maintains a policy of partnerships and bottom-up approaches. Algeria described its main urban challenges as being the lack of housing, persistence of informal settlements, and need to reform legal frameworks.

STATEMENTS: China highlighted its commitment to sustainable urbanization, underlining the theme of the Shanghai 2010 World Expo, 'Better City, Better Life.' Germany pointed to the pivotal role of digital transformation in the implementation of the NUA. Japan spoke of the importance of knowledge sharing with stakeholders. Kenya described its municipal and informal settlement programmes and commitment to

integrated development. Mongolia noted challenges specific to post-socialist countries. Myanmar welcomed its collaboration with UN-Habitat. Bahrain spoke of the need for consolidated plans and sizeable budgets. Bangladesh underlined its plans to upgrade slums. Yemen explained the challenges of implementing the NUA in a war-torn country, with cities either suffering destruction, facing the pressures of receiving war refugees, or being unable to obtain financial support due to difficulties in transferring money. Morocco highlighted that the Arab region's perspective on the NUA was articulated in the Rabat Declaration of 2017. Vanuatu noted his country's focus on decentralization. South Africa underlined the need for a multi-stakeholder approach to the NUA. Argentina said it was working on territorial planning and local consensus building with UN-Habitat. Angola described its cooperation with UN-Habitat. Uganda underlined the need for good financing. Switzerland expressed commitment to supporting municipalities towards building strong urban-rural linkages. The Philippines outlined its five-year development plan. Senegal spoke of the importance of growth, human capital and security; and Sudan underlined the need for strong partnerships.

ASSEMBLIES

WORLD ASSEMBLY OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL

GOVERNMENTS: Moderators Emilia Sáiz, Secretary-General, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), and Bernadina Tjandradewi, Secretary-General, UCLG-Asia Pacific, welcomed participants and underscored that local governments need to be agents of change. Mayors and leaders of Surayaba, Soria, Bangangté, Cordoba, and the Iskandar and Rabat-Salé-Kénitra Regions delivered introductory remarks, many urging increased citizen engagement and recognition of local and regional governments in establishing sustainable and inclusive cities. Carlos Martinez of Soria called for 'ethics of action and responsibility', which, he said, could lead to transparent, effective, and fair policies and plans in urban areas.

Governance of proximity at the heart of the NUA:

Leaders from Jakarta, Barcelona, Melaka, Sala, Ksar, Cape Town and partners took part in this discussion. In his opening remarks, Greg Munro, Secretary-General, Commonwealth Local Government Forum, called for global leaders to place their trust in local and regional governments, and allow local residents to be engaged at 'the core' of decision making. Many speakers highlighted the unique position of mayors in relation to social issues, environmental challenges, and the economic realities of their cities. Mercè Conesa, President, Barcelona Provincial Council, called for a governance system that is decentralized, open, and collaborative, adding that such a system would require citizen involvement. Víctor Pineda, President, World ENABLED, called for a global compact for accessible and inclusive cities, and to give individuals with disabilities a 'seat at the table.'

Assessing the implementation of the NUA: Leaders from Fukuoka, Sweden, Buenos Aires, the Basque region, Catbalogan, Mannheim, Nablus, Catalonia and partners shared innovative experiences in implementing the NUA. Peter Kurz, Mayor of Mannheim, called for harmonizing NUA and SDG indicators. He said monitoring would be key to ensuring that Habitat III has more impact than the previous two Habitat conferences. Clare Short, Cities Alliance, called for: increased support to small and medium-sized cities; consultation with the urban poor; and equality of leadership between men and women in government.

Key priorities of local and regional governments in the NUA: Joan Clos, former Executive Director of UN-Habitat, opened discussions. He invited participants to consider whether urbanization is essential to development. Panelists and local leaders from various cities including Sante Fe, Yakutsk, Chefchaouen, Malmö and Hebron, as well as representatives of Morocco and other partners, called for increased capacity at the local level and discussed: cities with extreme climates; the implementation of the NUA in cities facing crisis; addressing the needs of urban migrants; and the need to understand the health, biodiversity and other concerns of their citizens.

Closing: Frédéric Vallier, Secretary-General, Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), presented the text of a declaration from the Assembly, which highlights: the inclusion of the Right to the City in the NUA; a commitment to strengthen a partnership approach with all levels of government; and a commitment to women's participation. Other speakers emphasized renewing the relationship between the UN and regional and local governments, and addressing rural-urban migration at its points of origin. UN-Habitat Executive Director Maimunah concluded the Assembly, inviting local and regional governments to work with the UN to advise on implementation and monitoring of the NUA for safe, resilient and sustainable cities.

GRASSROOTS ASSEMBLY: Opening the Assembly, Joan Clos, former Executive Director of UN-Habitat, said grassroots representation is fundamental to creating a legitimate process in urbanization, which has become politicized due to competing interests.

Rose Molokoane, Slum Dwellers International (SDI), outlined SDI's study of 103 cities since Habitat III, and called on the UN system to create a platform for the participation of grassroots organizations, saying they deserve a recognized platform and prefer not to be absorbed into Major Groups.

Relinda Sosa, President, National Confederation of Women Organized for Life and Integrated Development, Peru, speaking on behalf of Latin American grassroots organizations, emphasized the importance of alliances among grassroots organizations and strengthening these in order to be effective in the decision-making processes.

Rene Hohmann, Cities Alliance, emphasized that grassroots organizations act as agents of change and are the only constituency already implementing the SDGs, while others are 'still stuck in their comfort zones.'

Two consecutive plenary discussions took place, first on the impact of grassroots partnerships and tools in NUA implementation, and second on facilitating leadership and the groundwork necessary to realize the commitments of inclusivity, partnership and 'leaving no one behind.'

Grassroots partnerships and tools: Grassroots representatives Violet Shivutse and Sekai Chiremba reported on progress in NUA implementation in Kenya and Zimbabwe respectively, highlighting the key role of women and local communities in urbanization, and the importance of partnerships among grassroots organizations, particularly in information collection.

UN-Habitat Executive Director Maimunah stressed the importance of having grassroots organizations as partners, and applauded WUF9 for providing the space for critical reflection among diverse stakeholders.

Facilitating leadership and groundwork: Grassroots representatives Janet Adu and Fides Bagasao shared their perspectives from Ghana and the Philippines, noting challenges for: government changeover; political mobilization; and disaster response and recovery, including from climate-induced disasters.

Breakout discussions and report-backs: Participants then broke into regional groups for discussion. African, Asian, Latin American and 'Other' regional groups considered their contributions to the UN-Habitat agenda, the role of partnerships and how they can become more effective, and strategies that would ensure grassroots constituencies are successful.

Moderator Beth Chitekwe-Biti, SDI, then invited the four regional groups to report back.

Groups from 'Other' regions noted the role of partnerships in giving women a voice, particularly in the informal economy and in farming. Asia reported on mapping and community profiling, promoting community savings and basic services, and making common spaces safe for women, among other activities. They urged giving greater prominence to grassroots activities and sharing the practices and work on the ground. All groups urged that grassroots organizations are given a place at the policy table. Africa outlined informal community data collection and mapping as important tools in reporting and monitoring implementation of the SDGs. Latin America highlighted opportunities that had been provided during drafting of the NUA, when they provided important information on education, housing, urban and rural basic services, land and water issues, thus linking the SDGs to the lives of grassroots communities.

OFFICIAL OPENING

In the afternoon, the opening ceremony began with a cultural presentation including Malaysian dances of various ethnic traditions, and a video of WUF9 highlights.

This was followed by a video message from HRH The Prince of Wales, who called for decisive action to achieve the SDGs, which, he said, would require effective implementation of the NUA. Failure to do so, he cautioned, would have catastrophic consequences for the planet. He added that there was an unprecedented opportunity to redefine urban development, and integration between urban and rural areas was key.

Rosario Robles, Secretary of Agricultural, Territorial and Urban Development, Mexico, emphasized the importance of urban development as a tool for reaching the SDG targets. She called for rethinking urban governance, and committing to 'paradigm changes' that provide citizens with higher standards of living.

Corina Cretu, European Commission, drew parallels between the NUA and the EU's own vision for sustainable urban development, and noted the EU's commitment to developing partnerships to that effect.

Najib Razak, Prime Minister, Malaysia, welcomed participants from 193 countries to WUF9. He noted that Asia faces challenges to successfully managing the urban transformation, and that his country established an economic transformation plan in 2010 that has kept economic development strong and unemployment rates at a minimum. He explained that this, along with other innovative strategies, help to ensure that Malaysians enjoy a high quality of life. He concluded by wishing all a productive and memorable stay in Kuala Lumpur.

WUF9 was officially launched when Prime Minister Najib and Executive Director Maimunah, accompanied by Minister Noh Omar, placed the WUF9 letters and number on the Forum's backdrop. The event closed with a song on leadership by the students of Limkokwing University.