

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**MR WU HONGBO
UNDER-SECRETARY GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SMALL
ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES**

**Introduction of the Secretary General's report on
"Effective governance, policy making and planning for sustainable urbanization"**

Delivered by Mr. Navid Hanif, Director, Office for ECOSOC Support & Coordination, DESA

New York, 29 May 2014

Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to be here at this first session of the Integration Segment of ECOSOC, with its focus on sustainable urbanization. It is my great pleasure to introduce the report of the Secretary General on the theme of the ECOSOC thematic discussion.

Earlier this year, Member States decided that this discussion will focus on "Effective governance, policy making and planning for sustainable urbanization". Indeed, these are key components of sustainable urbanization and sustainable development.

Urban management has become a crucial issue in the context of current urbanization trends. Half of the global population already lives in urban centres. This is expected to reach 73 percent in 2050. Meeting the needs of fast growing urban populations, without imposing unsustainable demands on natural resources, poses enormous challenges to many cities and governments, especially in developing countries.

Municipal governments around the world – regardless of their economic and political contexts - are increasingly tasked to balance the many economic and social opportunities of modern urban living with the need to ensure adequate infrastructure, housing, social services, job opportunities, security and environmental protection to all urban dwellers.

Rapid urbanization and globalization are also increasing the role of cities in the economy at the national and global level. New challenges to the ability of local governments to effectively manage urban areas are emerging. Urban management increasingly requires coordination with higher tiers of government, as well as the engagement of a wide range of urban stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society organizations.

The concept of urban governance has emerged as an important response to the growing complexity of the urban environment, whose impact goes well beyond the capacities, responsibilities, and formal authority of municipal governments. Effective governance, regardless of each city's specific circumstances and priorities, has indeed become central to the objective of promoting sustainable cities.

Distinguished Delegates,

Countries and cities around the world have been experimenting with a variety of governance models and policy and planning approaches. One common aim is to address the growing demographic, socio-spatial, economic and institutional challenges of urban transformation in a balanced way which would ensure that the priorities and needs of present and future generations are protected.

Despite some degree of success, current experiences highlight a number of structural barriers to more integrated management of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of urban transformation. Indeed, many cities continue to struggle with fragmented decision-making, competing policy objectives, limited coordination with higher tiers of government and inadequate resources.

The report of the Secretary General concludes that effective governance models and planning tools need to recognize the increasing scope and impact of urban activities across policy areas and spatial boundaries. It will be necessary, therefore, to translate this recognition into innovative strategies and instruments to mobilize, manage and coordinate the capacities and resources of a wide range of urban stakeholders to achieve sustainable urbanization.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

While there is no universal template for good urban governance, a number of critical features and policy approaches are emerging from current practices. I would like to highlight some of these:

First, a whole-of-government approach is needed to help address complex urban challenges more holistically. This will facilitate the identification of synergies and trade-offs within different policies and activities.

Second, inclusive and participatory mechanisms for decision-making are critical to ensure that the needs of all social groups are taken into account in setting urban priorities. Inclusive mechanisms would also help monitor the implementation of such priorities and hold leaders accountable for results.

Third, strong partnerships with the private sector and civil society organizations - together with a clear definition of their roles in implementing urban strategies and delivering services - are important mechanisms to harness the strengths and capacities of these stakeholders.

Fourth, effective coordination between national and local interventions is essential to ensure greater policy coherence and more efficient use of resources.

Fifth, a clear division of responsibilities among local authorities, and between local and national authorities can be vital to promote strong leadership and accountability in the delivery of public services.

Sixth, effective consultative mechanisms are necessary to engage a broad range of urban stakeholders and actors involved in service delivery to ensure that the economic, social and environmental dimensions are fully integrated.

Finally, innovative procedures and approaches, including through information and communication technologies (ICTs), can help address capacity gaps and promote more effective decision-making and delivery of services.

I trust that the analysis and policy recommendations contained in this report will inspire a productive debate. My Department stands ready to support Governments in transitioning from policy dialogue to policy action in addressing sustainable urbanization.

Thank you.
