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CITIES

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CONFERENCE

Transformative actions by cities
to accelerate SDG impacts

SDG Cities Global Conference

Transformative Actions by Cities to Accelerate SDG Impact

29 October 2021 – 31 October 2021

Background

With 55 percent of the world's population living in urban areas, an additional 2.5 billion urban residents expected in the next 30 years, in combination with 65 percent of SDG targets being relevant to cities, it's no surprise the battle for sustainable development will be won or lost in cities. A renewed vigour and global joint action towards accelerating the achievement of the SDGs in cities is required to mitigate climate change, adapt and build resilience, to recover from the pandemic in a way that is just and green, and to address increasing social inequality.

Cities worldwide are demonstrating their commitment to implementing the SDGs and are reporting progress through Voluntary Local Review (VLR). The New Urban Agenda provides a blueprint on how cities can drive sustainable development, and in line with this, there is demand to strengthen local institutions. The global flagship programme, *SDG Cities* complements and supports the efforts of cities worldwide to advance the achievement of SDGs by providing digital tools and expert backstopping to support an interconnected value chain of data and analysis, strategic planning, institutional capacity strengthening and investment in SDG impact projects. It aims to promote collaborative action across a diverse range of actors and recognises exemplary efforts of cities through SDG Cities certification.

The conference, jointly hosted by UN-Habitat and the Municipality of Shanghai, with the Global Sustainability Index Institute, aligns with World Cities Day (WCD) and brings together diverse actors to explore how through collaborative action cities can be supported to accelerate the achievement of SDGs at scale.

Formal Sessions

Friday 29 October (Time zone: GMT)

[10:30-11:45] **1. *Opening and Setting the Scene – Climate, COVID 19, SDGs and Cities***

Following opening statements from the hosts, this session relates the urgency for climate action and facilitating a just, green pandemic recovery in cities, with the need for renewed vigour and global joint action towards accelerating the achievement of the SDGs in cities. It calls for systematic approaches to support cities across a value chain of data to impact, including strengthening local institutions and improving financing mechanisms to deliver SDG impact.

Speakers. Maimunah Moh'd Sharif, Executive Director, UN-Habitat; Gong Zheng, Mayor of Shanghai; Prof Ed Glaeser, Harvard University; Marcos Troyjos, President, New Development Bank; Emilia Saiz, Secretary General, United Cities and Local Government; Greg Munro, Director, Cities Alliance; Eduardo Lopez, Director, UN-Habitat.

[12:00-13:30] **2. *Global Urban Monitoring Framework, its local application***

The Global Urban Monitoring Framework (UMF), developed through a collaboration of UN entities, governments and diverse partners responds to UN Statistical Commission's request to UN-Habitat to harmonise existing urban indexes and tools. It provides a universal framework to efficiently and effectively track the progress of cities in their efforts to achieve the SDGs, as well deliver on the New Urban Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement. Through its adoption by both cities and the UN System, it aims to strengthen the engagement of UN country operations at local levels. Building on the UMF, the city of Shanghai is developing a "Shanghai Adapted Index," to measure the city's performance and will avail the index globally. The session shares experiences of cities in generating action-oriented data and introduces the UMF and Shanghai Adapted Index.

Speakers: Kevin Johnson, Geografia, Australia; Ed Steane, Executive Director, Greater Sydney Region; Shanghai city; Bernardo Del Castillo, UN-Habitat Bolivia; Brennan Kenny, Manager of Economic Development, Collingwood, ON Canada; Angela Kim-city of Los Angeles; Abdelhakeem, Qassim urban Observatory, Saudi Arabia; Amutshilani Setoboli, Ministry of Infrastructure and Housing Development, Botswana

[13:45-15:15] **3. *Voluntary Local Reviews and their role in accelerating SDG implementation locally***

The session seeks to go beyond the presentation of VLR experiences, and explores how VLRs can contribute to wider processes of SDG localisation through its linkage with the UMF and programmes to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs, including the SDG Cities Initiative. Panellist's will

respond to the question of how their cities are using the VLR to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs and will explore the potential role of VLR in city development planning.

Speakers: Professor Deng Zhituan, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences; Nicolas Gharbi, Principal Advisor for City Diplomacy and International affairs, Madrid (Spain); Sami Serkan Nebioğlu, Foreign Affairs Specialist, İzmir (Turkey); Mariana Cammisa, Strategic coordination and monitoring manager, Buenos Aires (Argentina); Ville Taajamaa, Focal point for Agenda 2030, Espoo (Finland); Edlam Abera, Chief, Urbanization Section, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

Saturday 30 October (Time zone: GMT)

[11:00-13:00] **4. SDG Cities: Collaborative action to unleash the potential of cities to accelerate the global achievement of SDGs**

This session joins the dots from city data to impact. Building on foundations of effective data and evidence-based development strategies, SDG implementation requires updated local legislation, spatial plans and infrastructure investment to drive tangible impact. This in turn requires effective local governance and local institutions, and increased access to finance. The session shares the experience of cities in implementing SDGs and discusses how local impacts can be amplified at scale through national, regional and global networks of like-minded cities working together. Given the role of business in shaping the world's cities, the session further elaborates the importance of mainstreaming SDGs within the business community as agents of transformation. The session then outlines how the SDG Cities Initiative can support end-to-end processes of SDG implementation at the city level, and engage a diversity of actors in this process.

Speakers: Roland Schatz CEO Global Sustainability Index Institute; Hernán Iván Arias Durán, Mayor, Autonomous Municipal Government of La Paz; Pudence Rubingisa, Mayor of Kigali (tbc);; Cities of Penang Malaysia; Representatives of the cities of Vitoria Gasteiz, Brasov, Sikin, Santiago de Chile; Dr. Dayor Dieudonné Musibono, Presidential Advisor, SDG Office, DRC; Lucy Slack, Secretary General, Commonwealth Local Government Forum; Carol Lopez Board Member of Sister Cities International; Salim Korkmaz General Coordinator, United Cities and Local Government MEWA; James Donovan, CEO ADEC Innovation and Founder/CEO of Global CEO Alliance; Dyfed Aubrey, UN-Habitat Inter-Regional Advisor.

[13:15-15:15] **5. Investing in Urban Impact**

The annual financing gap to achieve SDGs in cities worldwide is in its trillions. Momentum is

building in financial sector to increase investment in SDG impact and studies show that the potential finance available for SDG impact outweighs the financing gap. Crucial investment is needed in small and intermediary cities, that must accommodate the lions' share of expected urban growth in coming decades, to achieve the transformative impacts of urbanisation. The session emphasises that attracting alternative sources of investment, must go hand-in-hand with optimising local revenue systems and ensuring accountable financial management systems. By sharing the experience of major funds, development banks and project preparation facilities, the session explores mechanisms to effectively channel finance into cities in emerging and developing economies. It also highlights systemic bottlenecks that need to be addressed, including the need for greater support in upstream project preparation as needed to unlock finance. The session thus identifies priority work streams that could be advanced in the lead to World Urban Forum 11 (June 2022) and introduces the Cities Investment Facility and Feasibility Fund, that aim to facilitate the flow of capital towards local impact.

Speakers: Mafalda Duarte, CEO, Climate Investment Funds (tbc) Leslie Maasdorp VP for investments, CFO New Development Bank; Vinicio Stort, Executive Director, Banco de Desenvolvimento de Minas Gerais; Carole Crist, Former First Lady of Florida; Christophe Dossarps CEO, Sustainable Infrastructure Foundation – SOURCE Platform; David Jackson, Director, Local Development Finance, UN Capital Investment Fund; Matt Benson, Think City,

Sunday 31 October (Time zone: GMT)

[10:30-12:00] 6. Digital Transformation accelerating SDG impact in cities (Global CEO Alliance)

The session, organised by the Global CEO Alliance elaborates on the role of digital transformation in local governments in the areas of planning, monitoring and evaluation of policies and projects that have both direct and indirect impact on the SDGs. The session will provide a perspective on the state of SDG integration in city development from Global Covenant of Mayors, it will explore the importance of integrating SDGs in local planning. Drawing on the experience of Philippines and USA it will share successes and challenges of adopting digital solutions in advancing SDGs, including improving local economic development. The United Nations Innovation Technology Accelerator for Cities will then be introduced, and will underline the importance of bottom-up, demand-driven innovation to accelerate the achievement of SDGs in cities.

Speakers: Andy Deacon, Acting Managing Director Global Covenant of Mayors; Mayor Vico Sotto, Pasig City, Philippines (tbc); Stacey Duncan, Executive Director, Broome County LDA, NY USA; Carley Pennink Assistant Professor, Institute of Housing and Urban Studies, Rotterdam (tbc); James

Donovan, CEO ADEC Innovation and Founder/CEO of Global CEO Alliance;

[12:00-13:30] **7. *Health, wellbeing and resilience to pandemic in Cities***

COVID-19 has significantly disrupted the global advancement of SDGs. The pandemic has exposed the fragility of local health systems, where increased demand by expanding urban populations, staff shortages and higher incidence of chronic and multiple conditions have made existing health systems unable to cope. It is often noted that had the principle of Leaving No-one Behind been better progressed in cities, they may have been more resilient to the pandemic. In reference to the recent Cities and Pandemics report, the session explores how SDG acceleration in cities can promote a just, green recovery from the pandemic and further explores new models of health and wellbeing in cities that create value based on prevention, early intervention and the use of digital empowerment. The aim is to enable people and communities to thrive and improve their health and wellbeing, support existing health services, create new and meaningful jobs while supporting the implementation of the 17 sustainable development goals in cities around the world.

Speakers: Moderator - Gareth Presch, World Health Innovation Summit; Isabelle Wachsmuth, World Health Organization, Switzerland; Jiwu Zhang, Sun Health, China; Manuela Boyle, James Sanderson, Director Personalised Care, NHS England, CEO National Academy Social Prescribing, UK; Dr Roberto Ciavatta, Minister of Health, San Marino; Claudiu Preda, SDG Hub Brasov, Romania.

[13:30-14:30] **8. *SDG Cities Way Forward***

The Session concludes the first edition of the Global SDG Cities Conference with a round of feedback and commitments of partner cities and organizations, to participate in the SDG Cities Initiative, beginning with the Mayor of Shanghai. The session will also launch a call for cities to host SDG Cities Pavilions as technical support centres for national and global promotion of SDG Cities, following the example of the World Urban Pavilion in Toronto, Canada and will introduce a resource mobilisation approach to support the participation of cities in least developed and developing countries.

Speakers: Li Qiang Party Secretary of Shanghai, China; Maimounah Moh'd Sharif, Executive Director UN-Habitat; Carole Crist, Former First Lady of Florida; Reza Pourvaziry, chair Urban Economy Forum; Roland Schatz CEO Global Sustainability Index Institute; announcements by SDG Cities Partners.

Side Event

Friday 29 October (Time zone: GMT)

[12:00-13:45] ***SDG-oriented urban project design: an opportunity for sustainable growth and investment [Global Future Cities Programme]***

This session will introduce UN-Habitat's SDG Tool and its application in project development within the Global Future Cities Programme (GFCP), while gathering insights from participants on their needs and preferences for tools that support the alignment of transformative urban development projects with the SDGs. It will be future-focused, looking at how to leverage private ESG project financing to ensure the realisation of SDG-aligned urban projects. The results will form a part of the recommendations of the GFCPs Expert Group Meeting.