Chair's Summary
Special Side Event at the 7th Open Working Group on
Sustainable Development Goals
Sustainable Future Cities We Want

6th January, 2014 13:15 – 14:30
UNHQ, Conference Room A, New York

On 6th January, 2014, the Permanent Mission of Japan and France to the United Nations, and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in collaboration with OECD, UNCRD, UNDESA, UNDP, UNEP, UNHABITAT, UNIDO and UN Sustainable Development Solution Network (UNSDSN) hosted a roundtable meeting on the occasion of the 7th Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The objective of the event was to seek a practical and realistic vision for "Sustainable Future Cities", which can enrich the discussions on SDGs/Post-2015 Development Agenda through gathering practical views from various stakeholders in developing and developed countries and international agencies, and identifying practical challenges and opportunities to achieve this vision. The following summary highlights key messages that emerged over the round table discussion.

1) **"Sustainable Future Cities" should be places where all residents, through inclusive and equitable opportunities, feel satisfied with their level of well-being.** To achieve the goal of "Sustainable Future Cities", it is crucial to integrate the three dimensions of sustainability—social development, economic development and environmental management—based on the foundation of urban governance.

2) **Achieving an adequate provision—both in terms of scope and quality—of all the services that urban areas must offer requires a well-balanced interplay of the three dimensions of sustainability.** In this context, the economic, social and environmental management systems should work in a mutually-reinforcing fashion:

   - **The Economic System** should guarantee a favorable business environment in order to facilitate the creation of decent jobs. It should also foster equitable and competitive market opportunities and stimulate investments in stable and reliable economic infrastructure to spur further economic development. All members of society should share the benefits generated by the economic system.

   - **The Social System** should at the very least provide services that fulfill basic human needs, such as access to a safe water supply and sanitation, health services and education. In addition, the social system should ensure people's prosperity and security, and should also offer ample opportunities for citizens to fully participate in society.

   - **The Environmental Management System** should provide clean air and water to all. It should also provide sufficient amenities and leisure opportunities so that people can enjoy a good quality of life. In addition, through the promotion of reducing, reusing and recycling and other programs, "Sustainable Future Cities" should be low-carbon, limited-waste producers. Moreover, they should be places where efforts to build resilience to climate change and natural disasters are constantly promoted at all levels.

3) **Well-designed master plans are a powerful tool that can effectively guide integrated and innovative urban planning systems. They help urban planners achieve better land use, spatial concentration and infrastructure design. In addition, master plans can help officials visualize the outcomes of mid-term and long-term development strategies**. Master plans should be comprehensive, and they should be updated regularly to adequately reflect the changing needs of people, as well as variations in the prevailing conditions of urban cities.

4) **Urban planners should recognize the benefits of using standardized approaches.** Standardized, low-carbon buildings and urban systems, in particular, can be used to effectively limit GHG emissions, thus positively impacting economic and social development in context-appropriate ways.

5) **Climate change resilience and disaster risk reduction measures must be incorporated into urban planning**. When coastal cities vulnerable to climate change have a high-population density, the inherent risks associated with natural disasters significantly increase.

6) **The linkages between cities, suburban, peri-urban, and rural areas should be carefully considered** since the interactions among these regions oftentimes yield mutual benefits.

7) **The challenges of urbanization are complex and vary depending on the specific characteristics of each city.** Properly addressing issues such as urban poverty due to excessive population density and lack of proper urban planning is a vital step to realize inclusive, sustainable cities.

8) **Addressing complex urban issues requires the involvement of multiple stakeholders.** These include municipal councils, mayors, community organizations, civil society organizations, universities, businesses, and national authorities. Local governments, in particular, are in the best position to listen to the voices of the people. They should incorporate these voices into their policies and practices, thereby achieving sustainable cities through a participatory approach.

9) **Resource mobilization is vital for achieving "Sustainable Future Cities".** Proactive participation in decision-making processes by private sector actors and citizens in general can exert a significant influence on the willingness of local governments to take action. Knowledge sharing and mutual learning among local governments should be encouraged. Meanwhile, the international community should play a catalytic role, supporting both national and local governments.

10) **Setting targets and goals for sustainable urban development as part of the global common agenda under the Post-2015 development agenda and/or Sustainable Development Goals is both appropriate and advisable.** Assessment of progress toward these targets and goals should be conducted through an open, inclusive and participatory review process. However, considering that cities across the globe have diverse characteristics, these targets and goals would need to be flexible, and they should ultimately be managed by the local governments. A stand-alone Urban Sustainable Development Goal is essential to mobilize stakeholders, promote integrated, city-level approaches, and accelerate progress toward sustainable development, including the end of extreme poverty.