



Vientiane International Mayors Forum 2017

Making inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities:
Exchange of experiences on city and local government programmes
for implementing Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG 11)

15 March 2017

**Vientiane, Lao PDR
Don Chan Palace Hotel & Convention (14th floor)**

Information note for Mayors

Introduction

The *Vientiane International Mayors Forum* will be organized on 15 March 2017 as an integral part of the *10th Regional Environmentally Sustainable Transport (EST) Forum in Asia, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 14-16 March 2017*. The programme of the Mayors Forum will be composed of policy dialogue and technical sessions on key aspects of the seven targets that the UN General Assembly has identified in relation to Sustainable Development Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements – Make Cities and Human Settlements Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable.

Mayors and leaders of local governments attending the Mayors Forum will be invited to present experiences (successes and challenges) of their cities in relation with the themes of the Mayors Forum and/or share their vision on local actions to achieve sustainable cities by 2030.

Global urbanization and development trends

Cities and other urban centers are contributing to sustainable development through economic growth, innovation, education and culture. Some eighty percent of global gross domestic product (GDP) is created in cities. Cities have great potential, and making the most of this potential is critical for implementing the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and for achieving the global sustainable development goals (SDGs).

At the Rio+20—the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development—, U.N. Member States emphasized the importance of cities and metropolitan areas implementing sustainable urban planning, policies and designs. In September 2015, the world leaders adopted a new development agenda, entitled *Transforming our world: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, outlining 17 universal Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at its core. SDG 11 calls for “making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.” Enhancing the achievement of SDG 11 poses many challenges and thus forms the main theme of the Forum.

Continuing and emerging challenges to sustainable urbanization

In 2008, a major demographic shift occurred when the urban population surpassed the rural population. The world's urban population is now expected to reach 60 per cent by 2030. Compared to the most urbanized regions of the world, such as North America (82 per cent) Latin America and the Caribbean (80 per cent), and Europe (73 per cent), Africa and Asia are far less urbanized, with 40 and 48 per cent of their respective population living in urban areas (2014). However, these two latter regions are urbanizing more rapidly than the other regions of the world, and both are projected to become 56 and 64 per cent urban, respectively, by 2050.

Today, large cities are mainly found in the global South. While 28 mega-cities with more than 10 million inhabitants are concentrating 12.5 per cent of the total urban population, particular attention should also be paid to smaller urban agglomerations, where more than 50 per cent of the urban population resides. Most of the world's fastest urban growth is taking place in medium-sized cities and cities with less than 1 million inhabitants located in Asia and Africa.

As the world continues to urbanize, achieving sustainable development of cities will depend heavily on the competence, leadership and accountability of urban governments, and on their leadership and capacity to address the pressing social, economic, environmental issues outlined in the SDGs, and SDG 11 in particular, including the following challenges:

- About one third of urban dwellers in the developing world, i.e., more than 860 million people, live in slums, and the number of those marginalized and vulnerable citizens is increasing rapidly as in many cases, urban development is taking place informally, without appropriate urban planning and management.
- Many cities face great challenges to ensure equal access to an adequate supply of urban land, basic infrastructure and adequate housing for the urban poor, whose substandard living conditions contribute to increase their vulnerability to natural disasters and adverse impacts of climate change.
- Cities occupy only 2-4 per cent of the world's total land, yet, they account for more than 70 per cent of world energy consumption and energy-related CO₂ emissions.
- Rapid urbanization is exerting growing pressure on fresh water supplies, sewage, the living environment, waste and wastewater management, and public health.
- Rapid and uncontrolled development of cities is transforming urban areas and their settings, causing a fragmentation and deterioration of the surrounding natural and cultural environments or landscapes part of the urban heritage, which is having a deep impact on community values and even on physical and psychological health of urban dwellers in many cities and human settlements all over the world.
- Cities of low- and middle income nations may be especially susceptible to climate change as their economic prospects and the wellbeing of their citizens can easily be undermined due to the fragility and vulnerability of their infrastructure and certain segments of their population to weather- and climate-related disasters.

Strengthening local-level leadership and actions, including empowerment of communities and local governments, and to formulate strategies and policies in an integrated manner, and to implement those strategies and policies towards achieving SDGs is urgently required in moving forward with the new Sustainable Development Agenda.

Co-organizers

The Vientiane International Mayors' Forum is co-organized by the United Nations Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD) and the United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD).

Established in 2011, UNOSD has been supporting U.N. Member States in planning and implementing sustainable development strategies, notably through knowledge sharing, research, training and partnership building. Over the past three years, UNOSD has organized various capacity building events for the benefit of Mayors' and senior city management officials.

UNCRD has been conducting research and training in the area of integrated regional development since its establishment in 1971. UNCRD also have been engaging in focused sectoral activities, including 3Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle) and waste management, EST (Environmentally Sustainable Transport), as well as disaster management planning.

Objectives

The main objective of the Vientiane International Mayors Forum is to provide an international platform for an exchange of experiences among Mayors and other Leaders of Local Governments on the implementation of local level policies and projects to enhance the achievement of Sustainable Cities, as envisaged for implementing the Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG 11) and other related Goals, as well as in line with the New Urban Agenda adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in Quito, Ecuador, in October last year.

Participants

It is expected that the Mayors Forum will be attended by some 80 or so participants from around the world. This will include, mayors, and other senior decision makers from cities of developing countries and countries with economies in transition, as well as representatives of developed countries, leading international experts, representatives from UN agencies, Major Groups and other stakeholders.

Programme

Please refer to the programme of the Intergovernmental 10th Regional Environmentally Sustainable Transport (EST) Forum in Asia.

Field visit

A technical field trip is planned on 16 March 2017, from 16:30 to 18:30. Please refer to the programme of Intergovernmental 10th Regional EST Forum in Asia.

Languages

The languages at the Mayors Forum will be English.

Outputs and expected results

The co-organizers will produce a report of the Mayors Forum, documenting the presentations and discussions including profiles of selected best practice policy examples to facilitate information exchange and to encourage potential replication in other countries and cities. The outcome of the Mayors Forum will also be included in the Chair's Summary of the 10th Regional EST Forum in Asia.

The Forum is expected to contribute to the following long-term results:

- improved urban governance, institution, policy and capacity towards integrated planning and development relevant to SDGs' context;
- improved science-policy interface for low-carbon cities, conservation of cultural heritage and urban resilience;
- avenues for City-City (North-South, South-South) technical cooperation between interested mega cities, medium-sized cities and smaller urban agglomerations (cities of 500,000 to 1 million inhabitants) from developed and developing countries;
- improved quality of life of urban dwellers in developing countries.

Contacts for further information

UNOSD: Please contact Ms. Shelley Choi at choi9@un.org or visit UNOSD Website at www.unosd.org where information on the *Vientiane International Mayors Forum* can be found.

UNCRD: Please contact Ms. Zakya Naseri at est@uncrd.or.jp or visit UNCRD Website at <http://www.uncrd.or.jp/index.php?page=view&nr=984&type=13&menu=376> where the combined programme for both the *Vientiane International Mayors Forum* and the *10th Regional Forum on Environmentally Sustainable Transport (EST) Forum in Asia* is updated regularly.