

Concept note

Track 7 'Inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities'

1. Background and objectives

In 2016, an estimated 54.5 per cent of the world's population lived in urban settlements. By 2030, urban areas are projected to house 60 per cent of people globally and one in every three people will live in cities which will harbor at least half a million inhabitants. While cities have enabled people to advance socially and economically, there are some common urban challenges including the urban poor, impact of climate change, insufficient funds to provide basic services, healthcare and education, and declining infrastructure, which must be effectively addressed by all relevant stakeholders, including the urban actors, at all levels of governments as well as civil society and the private sector.

Among all the challenges that cities face today, poverty, inequality and the lack of adequate public infrastructure and public services are among the most pressing concerns. 828 million people live in slums, and the numbers keep rising. The levels of urban energy consumption and pollution are also worrying. Cities occupy just 3 per cent of the Earth's land, but account for 60-80 per cent of energy consumption and 75 per cent of carbon emissions. For the same reason, cities are also more vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters.

Taking into account the important role of cities in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the SDG 11 related to urban development specifically calls for making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. The New Urban Agenda, which was adopted during the recent United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, also reiterates the importance of inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities.

Looking forward, in 2018 under the theme of "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies" the United Nations' central platform for follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda – the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) will perform an in-depth review of SDG 11, as well as the closely linked SDGs on clean water and sanitation (SDG6), sustainable energy (SDG7), sustainable consumption and production patterns (SDG12) and conservation and sustainable use of terrestrial and other ecosystems (SDG15).



This track seeks, inter alia, to build the capacities of public institutions and leaders on how to design policies, institutional arrangements, participatory processes and mechanisms to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

2. Related SDGs

Considering that urbanization has a tendency to accelerate and cities are facing multifaceted sustainable development challenges, delivering on the SDG 11 could produce a multiplier effect on other SDGs.

Targets under the SDG 11 address a wide array of urban challenges, including but not limited to the upgrading of slums, provision of affordable housing, public transit systems, planning and governance, cultural heritage, disaster management, air quality, waste management, and public and green spaces.

These challenges are inter-linked with many other SDGs such as SDG1 on poverty eradication which is directly relevant for the upgrading of slums and the provision of basic services to urban dwellers. Other SDGs that show significant linkages with SDG 11 are the Goals on ending hunger and food security (SDG 2), health (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), jobs and economic growth (SDG 8), infrastructure (SDG 9), reducing inequality (SDG 10) as well as the aforementioned Goals that will be under review by HLPF 2018.

3. Public administration policy issues and trends

Order of the themes in which they apply to this track:



Leadership and capacities for innovative government

Local authorities play a critical role in making sustainable cities, given their proximity to people and ability to grasp the needs of the city dwellers. Successful implementation of the Agenda 2030 will depend on local authorities' actions and effective national-local collaboration and coordination. In order to make cities more inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, local authorities and city governments will need to adopt a holistic approach for making policies coherent both horizontally across sectors and vertically across the different levels and layers of government.



Transparent, accountable and participatory institutions

The SDG 16 calls for building effective, transparent, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. This is particularly important for SDG 11. Reducing corruption and entrenching dynamic, open, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making processes in cities are vital as is ensuring public access to information and protecting fundamental freedoms. Local governments have led the way in experimenting with new and innovative forms of participatory decision-making as in participatory budgeting and planning.



Overcoming challenges through technology

ICTs could provide an effective means for sustainable development at the local level. As is stated in the 2030 Agenda, “the spread of information and communication technology and global interconnectedness has great potential to accelerate human progress, to bridge the digital divide and to develop knowledge societies, as do scientific and technological innovation across areas as diverse as medicine and energy¹”. In particular and when adequately deployed, ICTs can help realize the principle of leaving no one behind in SDG implementation. They can help reach marginalized and vulnerable groups and can also make local governments more efficient, transparent, inclusive and participatory. In addition, integration at all levels of governments will increasingly benefit from digitalization and will be facilitated by a shift towards digital era governance as well.



Policy coherence and integration

Multi-stakeholder partnerships are also needed to promote sustainable urbanization, as no stakeholder alone can uphold or execute this ambitious vision. This implies the involvement of local, national and regional governments; large companies and SMEs; financial institutions and philanthropists; civil society actors in the environment, development and social spaces;; trade and labour unions, universities and youth organizations, to name a few. The general public also needs to get engaged more so that people can play a constructive role as consumers, investors and drivers of urban transformation.

4. Key questions for Discussion

What are the key **innovations** in this track/in the best practices? What makes them groundbreaking and future proof? What are the learning points?

What are the **results of the innovative practices** in this track? How and to what extent do the results support the realization of the SDGs? What are things to watch out for?

What is the engagement/involvement/impact of the innovations in the public sector? How do the results and innovations help the public sector **to become more effective and inclusive**?

1 Para. 15 in A/RES/70/1 available at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

