



PANEL ON NATIONAL URBAN POLICY¹
(Policy Unit 3)

HABITAT III OPEN-ENDED INFORMAL CONSULTATIVE MEETINGS
THURSDAY 28 APRIL 2016, CONFERENCE ROOM 3

10 A.M. - 11 A.M.

Introduction

Rüdiger Ahrend, Head of Urban Policy Program, OECD

Moderator

Rafael Tuts, Coordinator, Urban Planning and Design Branch, UN-Habitat

Panelists

- Eugene Birch, Lawrence C. Nussdorf Professor of Urban Research and Education, University of Pennsylvania, USA
- Jago Dodson, Professor of Urban Policy in the School of Global Urban and Social Studies at RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia
- Olenka Ochoa, Council Board Member of Federation of Women and Municipalities - Latin American & Caribbean (FEMUM-ALC), Peru
- Thomas Coggin, Lecturer, School of Law, University of Witwatersrand, South Africa
- Ishtiaque Zahir, Architect, Union of International Architects, Bangladesh
- Taibat Lawanson, Senior Lecturer, Urban and Regional Planning, University of Lagos, Nigeria

A National Urban Policy is able to establish the connection between the dynamics of urbanization, demographic dynamics and the overall process of national development. It can help to harness the benefits of urbanization while responding to its challenges through the development of a much broader, crosscutting vision of an urban landscape.

VISION

In some contexts, policies that foster urbanization fail to find support because urbanization is viewed mainly as a problem rather than as an opportunity to increase quality of life, economic prosperity and wellbeing. This fear of urbanization then often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy: the unwillingness to engage in active preparation usually does not prevent urbanization but does substantially increase the risk of fostering badly functioning cities. In the designing stage of a National Urban Policy, other challenges identified include articulating shared objectives, defining the scope of the policy, keeping flexibility while maintaining predictability, achieving co-ordination across sectorial policies, designing the governance of the process, and balancing top-down and bottom-up approaches. Further, for both planning and monitoring, gathering legitimate and robust data to provide the evidence base is a major constraint.

¹ Information Habitat III Policy Unit 3 and its Policy Paper is available at
www.habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/policy



Finally, it should be recognized that a National Urban Policy represents both a technical and a political process, and that combining technical strength with political commitment and support from stakeholders is necessary to make it transformative.

PRIORITY POLICY OPTIONS/KEY MESSAGES

- **International Agreements.** National Urban Policy has proved to be valuable for implementing the Habitat Agenda and should be further mainstreamed as a critical instrument to implement the New Urban Agenda. The normative base of a National Urban Policy should additionally reflect existing international agreements.
- **Institutional Form:** National Urban Policy is not necessarily solely a government process, however the institutional form of a National Urban Policy must create channels of participation and take into account the need to affect high-level change, including: legal reform, allocation of fiscal resources, generation of information on the overall urban system (including formal and informal), and integrated long-term urban planning and design that extends beyond the political cycle
- **Leadership:** There needs to both formal and informal political leadership from within government and/or from other stakeholders to ensure the legitimacy of the National Urban Policy process and effectiveness of implementation.
- **Inclusive and equitable:** A National Urban Policy needs to be inclusive and enable stakeholders to effectively engage in the process, making sure all voices are heard
- **Sustainability and resilience:** A National Urban Policy has to address social, economic and ecological dynamics and the interplay between them in the territorial context.
- **Priority Issues:** A National Urban Policy should be people-centred and needs to complement and not replicate strong sectorial strategies in areas such as infrastructure, water, energy, health, education, housing, social and economic inclusion policies.
- **Coordination:** A National Urban Policy should emphasize and facilitate institutionalized and informal coordination and collaboration within national governments, between different levels of government, as well as among different actors, sectors and functions across all scales and systems of cities.
- **Capacity:** To be effective, a National Urban Policy process requires preparation, an institutional host, budget, training and opportunities for in-country and transnational peer-to-peer learning within and across governments and other stakeholders.
- **Communication:** The National Urban Policy process should employ a multimedia communications strategy that is comprehensive and transparent as well as targeted to inform all civil servants, residents, media and other stakeholders both within and outside national boundaries.
- **Data:** A National Urban Policy should be grounded in the most current and comprehensive qualitative and quantitative data.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Nations need to own the process of National Urban Policy making and implementation, drawing on and strengthening their own resources. A national government, with inputs from sub-national governments and other stakeholders, will identify its own domestic priorities through a National Urban Policy process.



Equally important issues that make cities pathways of global environmental change, and which therefore have national, regional, and global impacts that should be considered by local, national, and global urban policy makers, include the following:

- Reducing urban poverty and promoting equitable opportunity in cities.
- Urban safety and security in cities with particular reference to urban governance, local economic development and impacts on vulnerable populations, such as women, children, youth and the elderly.
- Structuring the urban systems (from large to medium to small cities) and the connectivity among cities to support sustainable development of the country.
- Facilitating urban policies and governance at a metropolitan scale.
- Promoting urban–rural linkages.
- Adequate financing of the National Urban Policy process, particularly the implementation. Managing and modernizing existing funding instruments and adopting new instruments for supra–municipal funding.
- Migration and remittances.
- Protected public space and cultural/heritage.
- Transparency and reducing corruption.
- Gender equality.
- Promoting inclusive economic growth.
- Health and well-being.
- Robust and comparable urban scale data (qualitative and quantitative, formal and informal).
- Urban planning, design, infrastructure and building materials.
- Promoting a territorial and differentiated approach by considering key urban and territorial principles, such as those in the International Guidelines for Urban and Territorial Planning.
- Supporting cities' actions for environmental sustainability, particularly controlling air pollution and climate mitigation or adaptation.
- Urban resilience - preparing for disaster risks including adaptation to climate change.
- Relevant legal and regulatory frameworks.
- Cross sector/cross actor engagement: every country will have to prioritize vertical and horizontal collaboration and harmonization.

In addition, the following qualifiers for a National Urban Policy will help setting key priorities:

- responds to population dynamics;
- ensures balanced territorial development;
- prepares for infrastructure and services development;
- promotes urban land-use efficiency;
- enhances resilience to climate change;
- protects public space and;
- develops effective urban governance systems;
- promotes effective municipal finances systems;
- supports partnership and cooperation between urban actors;
- safeguards inclusiveness and participation in the process and outcomes.



IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

- ***Understanding the Context***
 - Building support for and considering the vision/purpose of a National Urban Policy
 - Mapping of existing legal and institutional frameworks
 - Understanding the political economy and institutional settings
 - Empowering stakeholders

- ***Designing for Implementation***
 - Ownership of policy by local governments and other stakeholders
 - Assessment and building of capacity
 - Reviewing and/or adjusting existing national legal, institutional and fiscal frameworks and policies/guidelines of all sectors to ensure the integration and implementation of the National Urban Policy.
 - Monitoring and Evaluation

- ***Means of Implementation***
 - a. *Promoting Systems Change:* The process of designing and implementing a National Urban Policy should keep in mind that the value of the policy lies in both the process and the product. Throughout the design of the policy, therefore, certain mechanisms, such as participation and capacity development, can be institutionalized in order to foster more sustainable long-term change, as opposed to isolated policy interventions.

 - b. *Implementing a National Urban Policy: Iterative policy design and continuous policy review:* Regular tracking of the implementation of a National Urban Policy in the form of a continuous policy review is recommended to foster an iterative policy design. Implementing a complex policy therefore can happen in stages. While a forward-thinking policy will have defined long-term goals, lessons learned from interim monitoring can be used to reflect on strengths and weaknesses of the policy to date and adjustments made accordingly.

 - c. *Possible Financing Options:* An effective policy will require clear ownership by national governments, which can be indicated through financial commitment. Alternative sources that can supplement financial commitments made by national governments:
 - Sharing of burdens and benefits between levels of government could be a viable option.
 - Innovative financing mechanisms, such as land value capture and sharing, subsidies and broadening local tax bases and strengthening tax collection, can be considered to enhance municipal financing.
 - Accessing and expanding private investment and finances can be an option for successfully co-financing a National Urban Policy.
 - When building funding options for a National Urban Policy and if resources are limited, the policy could start with developing some principles, coordination and consultation measures to leverage awareness about the policy.



GUIDING QUESTIONS

FOR PANEL ON NATIONAL URBAN POLICIES

1. Effective implementation of a New Urban Agenda will require a framework for policy co-ordination across national, regional and local levels of government. Drawing from your expertise, discuss 2 or 3 ways in which a National Urban Policy can support the development of this framework.
2. The policy paper on National Urban Policy proposes several targets (# countries reviewing, formulating, monitoring NUP) to be achieved by 2030. What enabling factors are required in order to achieve these targets?
3. An ultimate objective of urban policy is to enhance well-being of urban residents. What impact can a national urban policy makes on people's lives and how can we measure that impact?
4. One of the unique and powerful aspects of National Urban Policy is that it represents both a technical and a political process. Comment on this statement and how the technical and political aspects of the process can be developed in tandem.