



OPEN LETTER WAKE UP CALL FOR URBAN HEALTH

On Monday, governments and international bodies will meet for Habitat III in Quito, Ecuador – a historic summit that will define the big priorities for urbanization in the ‘New Urban Agenda’. On the eve of the summit, we, the mayors, city and health leaders of six major cities, feel compelled to speak out about an urban crisis the world is only just starting to wake up to.

Half the world’s population now live in cities. As urban populations explode, lifestyles are increasing people’s vulnerability to non-communicable diseases (NCDs) – a phenomenon which the World Health Organization recently called the “new urban epidemic”. Take diabetes: 415 million people live with diabetes worldwide; two-thirds of them live in cities, a figure projected to rise to three-quarters by 2040.

Current action does not reflect the scale of the crisis. First-hand experience has shown we need to look afresh at what’s driving the epidemic. If we don’t find new approaches, the threat of NCDs will overwhelm the health systems we depend on, compromise the quality of life we enjoy and seriously constrain the future economic prosperity that cities have the power to drive.

We call on national leaders, mayors and citizens worldwide to make health central to the ‘New Urban Agenda’. In doing so, we must find new ways to design, build and run cities that help people live healthy lives. To achieve this, we need:

- 1. Greater focus on prevention of NCDs. We must recognize the risks presented by urban lifestyles and build health systems that not only deliver treatment but seek to prevent NCDs more effectively.
- 2. Urban policies that prioritize health. Health must be built into every aspect of urban strategy where there are mutual benefits – from transport, housing and food to tackling climate change and inequalities.
- 3. New models for collaboration. We must form new partnerships involving public and private organizations – bringing together national and city administrations, urban planners, health departments, businesses and communities.

We need to get this right. If not, the health of billions of urban citizens is at stake. Please help us support the urban health agenda at Habitat III.

#UrbanDiabetes

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ABOUT HABITAT III
On 17-20 October 2016, national governments and city leaders will convene in Quito, Ecuador, for the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development – known as Habitat III. This will be the first time in 20 years that the international community will have collectively taken the pulse of fast-changing urban trends, and the challenges they pose to people worldwide. The summit will produce The New Urban Agenda – a set of priorities, pledges and obligations that will shape a new global strategy for urbanization over the next two decades.

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