



# **Land for Sustainable Urbanization**

*“There is no Sustainable development without Sustainable Urbanization”*

**Side event at the UN Commission on Sustainable Development,  
16th Session, New York**

**9 May 2008, 13:15-14:45, Conference Room B**

**Jointly organized by WEP and GLTN**

## **Concept Note**



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### 1. Rationale

The world's population has reached 6.7 billions in 2007 with the majority now living in cities and towns. While the urban population is rapidly increasing, especially in Africa and Asia, land and its resources are static, immovable and scarce. More than ¾ of population in developed countries already live in urban centers and the rural population continues to decline. Developing regions, especially Africa and Asia are fast urbanizing and the irreversible trend of reduction of rural population continues. Whereas urbanization in developed regions has been informed by spatial planning, new urbanization patterns in developing countries are generally taking the form of chaotic, unplanned and informal settlements.

It is projected that by 2050, the World will be 70% urban with Africa expecting to reach 50% (from the current 39%) urbanization between 2045 and 2050. These perspectives constitute a real and serious challenge for sustainable development, which is a forward-looking concept. It is critical that while planning for the future generation, we fully account for the rapid urbanization. UN-HABITAT, therefore, believes that “there is no sustainable development without sustainable urbanization”.

**Rapid urbanization** trend in cities and towns in most developing countries amounts to the increasing number and size of slums constitutes and will pose a serious challenge for sustainable urbanization and development. If poorly managed, rapid urbanization will have profound impacts on developing countries communities, land resources, food security, sustainable land management, peace and social stability, economies and policies. These impacts will have far-reaching implications for the whole humanity.

The challenge of urban growth can only be mitigated when urbanization is fully incorporated into the sustainable development debate and agenda. Achieving sustainable urban land use is more complex and requires substantial financial investment than in rural areas. Given the critical role of cities and towns in the economic progress of the region as well as their fair share in the GDP, livelihoods, markets, etc. it is clear that sustaining future development in developing countries will not be achieved without **sustainable urbanization**.



## 2 Background and recent events

(1) UN-HABITAT took an active part in the African Commission on Sustainable Development Regional Implementation Meeting (ACSD/RIM) organized in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 22-25 October 2007. During the ACSD/RIM, UN-HABITAT organized a **side-event on “land for sustainable urbanization in Africa”** which highlighted the critical role urban land plays in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development in Africa.

Participants at the event exchanged on urban and land issues in Africa, critical to achieve sustainable development and progress knowledge in the fastest urbanizing continent Meeting delegates noted that several African countries are taking positive steps in improving their land management practices. However, participants observed that urban issues were skewed in the sustainable development debate and agenda. It was further noted that African governments need more support in implementing progressive land policies in the context of rapid urbanization. Interest generated during and after ACSD/RIM on issues related to urban land supported the need to further discuss the challenges and opportunities of land in supporting the achievement of sustainable development. Following the success and renewed interest on the topic, UN-HABITAT convened a meeting in February 2008 to further address the issue and come up with clear message fro CSD-16

(2). UN-HABITAT, through the Global Land Tool Network, funded and organized a two-day **Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on “Land for Sustainable Urbanization in Africa”**. The EGM took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 21-22 February 2008. The main objective of the meeting was to highlight and debate on urban land issues and messages to inform decision making and policies in the African context. African participants will take the key messages to the sixteenth session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-16) scheduled for New York 5-16 May 2008. Participants adopted key messages and recommendations in the following areas: sustainable urbanization, continuum of land rights, urban rural continuum, land governance, gender equity, capacity development, land information and management, and harmonization of the regulatory framework. More than 30 participants from various African countries attended the EGM along with other UN agencies (FAO and ECA). More information on the event is available at [www.gltn.net](http://www.gltn.net) <http://www.iisd.ca/africa/vol12/arc1201e.html>

The side-event at CSD-16 in NY will reinforce the messages from the past events and draw lessons to fit into the CSD land policy processes.

## 3 Objective of the side event

The main objective of the proposed side-event at CSD-16 is to highlight key sustainable urbanization messages and recommendations to inform and complement statements on the status and future land and sustainable development policies. Participants will refine the statements and recommendations derived from the EGM in Addis Ababa, 21-22 February 2008.



#### 4 Upcoming event

UN- HABITAT is planning the **Fourth Urban Forum** in Nanjing, China, 3-7 November 2008 on the theme “Harmonious Urbanization: The Challenge of Balanced Territorial Development”. This will be another opportunity to highlight how governments and land stakeholders can achieve sustainable development and harmonious urbanization in the context of rapid urbanization and population growth, particularly in developing countries. GLTN and its partners will organise a series of events at WUF4. For more information, please visit <http://www.unhabitat.org/categories.asp?catid=535>

#### 5 Organizers' profile

The side event is jointly organized by the Women Environmental Programme and the Global Land Tool Network based with its Secretariat at UN-HABITAT

**Women Environmental Programme (WEP)** is a non-governmental, non-profit, non-political, non-religious and voluntary organization formed in April 1997 by a group of women in Kaduna State. The organization emerged in response to the environmental pollution by industries in Kaduna state in particular and Nigeria in general, but its founders have always viewed the Nigerian environmental crisis only as an entry point for the deepening of engagement with the various stakeholders and enlightenment of Nigerians on other socio-economic and political issues within and internationally. To facilitate this process, the organization creates and sustains interest in socio-economic and political issues especially among women and youth in the country and across the globe. WEP has United Nations ECOSOC special status and currently one of the key partners for the coordination and facilitation of the Women's Major Groups for the 16th Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). More information on WEP is available here <http://www.wepnigeria.net/index.html>

The **Global Land Tool Network (GLTN)** with its Secretariat at UN-HABITAT, is an international network that aims to establish a continuum of land rights and develop pro-poor land management and land tenure tools that are gendered and at scale. GLTN has identified land rights, records and registration together with land administration/information as two of the key thematic focuses for attention in terms of pro poor land tool development (more information is available at [www.glt.net](http://www.glt.net)). As an international network, GLTN developed joint-partnerships with a range of organizations including FAO, World Bank, IFAD and FIG. To know more about the Network, visit [www.glt.net](http://www.glt.net)

#### 6 Further information

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## 7. Draft agenda

### Side event at the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, 16th Session, New York

9 May 2008, 13:15-14:45, Conference Room B

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- 13:15        **Welcome statement**  
*WEP (Ms Priscilla Achakpa, Nigeria)*  
*GLTN (Ms. Clarissa Augustinus, GLTN Secretariat)*
- 13:20        **Panel discussion:** Land for sustainable urbanization (*Chair: Mr. Ali Mohamed*)  
*UN-HABITAT (Mr. Alioune Badiane, Mr. Mohamed El-Sioufi, TBC)*  
*FAO (Mr. Chipeta FAO Sub-regional Office for Eastern Africa, TBC)*  
*WEP (Ms. Rita Omono Afejuku-Egbe / Ms Priscilla Achakpa, Nigeria TBC)*  
*Land Expert (Hon Patricia Hon. Patricia Hajabakiga , Rwanda)*  
*UNECA (Dr. Josué Dioné TBC)*  
*World Bank (Mr. Klaus Deneiger/Robin Rajack, TBC)*

Potential themes for panelists: Secure land rights for all; land productivity and urban-rural continuum; land for sustainable urban communities; land and population growth; land and governance (transparency in land governance); land in the context of natural disaster, post conflict and migration.

Each panelist may opt to address one or several themes above and then outline key policy messages to achieve land for sustainable urbanization.

Each participant will be prepared and available to take questions from the floor.

- 14:00        **Open plenary discussion**
- 14:40        **Concluding remarks**  
*Mr. Clarissa Augustinus, UN-HABITAT*  
*Ms. Priscilla Achakpa, WEP (Executive Director, Women Environmental Programme, TBC)*

*Moderator/Chair:        Mr. Ali Mohamed, Chair ACSD (TBC)*