

# **Habitat III**

## **A High-level event on**

### **"Urban resilience and Sustainable urban development in Small Island Developing States"**

**8.30 am - 10:00am on Tuesday 18 October 2016**  
**Room B, One UN Pavilion**  
**Quito, Ecuador, at the occasion of Habitat III,**  
**Organized by Maldives (Chair of AOSIS), UN-DESA, UN-OHRLS, and UN-Habitat**

## **CONCEPT NOTE**

### **Background**

Urbanization is evident in Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The population of SIDS is approximately 65 million out of which 38 million (59%) live in urban areas<sup>1</sup>, and trend of urbanization is increasing. Although more than half of the population lives in cities, SIDS are not traditionally part of global discussions in the area of urbanization. It is important to ensure the principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development "leaving no one behind" and to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 11 "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable" that calls for sustainable urban planning and management in all countries. Sustainable urban development is equally important to SIDS as many other countries, in order to make cities, towns, and villages of all sizes more functional, resilient, accessible, and sustainable.

Rapid urbanization represents a significant challenge for national and local governments in SIDS. Growing populations in the limited land space puts pressure on already fragile coastal ecosystems and agricultural areas, which are also affected by the adverse impact of climate change. Increased mobility of people and goods pose specific challenges to governments in providing basic infrastructures and services for human settlements. However, there is a wide spectrum of potential solutions. Sustainable urbanization and sustainable urban management could provide opportunities for governments to enhance resilience through sustainable water and waste management, and to build robust infrastructure including public transportation. Compactness of human settlements can help reducing pressure on land (urban sprawling), congestion, and facilitate economies of scale. Mainstreaming climate change issues into urban planning is crucial.

The importance of promoting sustainable land and coastal planning, and enhancing resilience of the urban and rural areas in SIDS cannot be over emphasized. The SAMOA Pathway calls for effective, inclusive and sustainable implementation of the integrated management of water resources as well as facilities and infrastructure for safe drinking water, sanitation, hygiene and waste management systems including the exploration of desalination technology where economically and environmentally feasible (paragraph 65). Above all, it calls to support SIDS for risk assessment and data, land use and planning (paragraph 52(a)). The document also recognizes the potential of sustainable transportation to improve social equity, health, the resilience of cities, urban-rural linkages and the productivity of rural areas of SIDS, and calls for gaining access to environmentally sound, safe, affordable and well-maintained transportation (paragraph 66, 67(a)).

Although SIDS face many shared challenges, urbanization within SIDS is diverse. Scattered around the world, SIDS are often economically, culturally and geographically distinct from one another - especially when it comes to styles of "urban" governance and topography and demographics. "Urban" in SIDS, besides cities and towns, can include small towns or villages stretching along a coastal area and/or a series of islets. Therefore, it is

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<sup>1</sup> UN-Habitat, 2015. *Urbanization and Climate Change in Small Island Developing States*

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important to understand the variety of regional and sub-regional challenges that SIDS face on human settlements and which mechanisms can best provide opportunities to support local definitions of urbanization and enable national ownership for the New Urban Agenda.

#### **Objective**

This high-level side event is intended to address the diversity of urban issues faced by SIDS and to provide guidance on the best ways SIDS can enhance their resilience and sustainability of their human settlements. The event will provide an opportunity for participants to share best practices to improve urban planning, governance, and institutional mechanisms. The event will also discuss how enhancing urban resilience and promoting sustainable urban development could contribute to the implementation of the global agendas and frameworks including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the SAMOA Pathway, the New Urban Agenda, and Sendai Framework.

Possible guiding questions could be:

- How are “cities” and smaller settlement issues addressed in different SIDS and how are they managed? How is the resiliency component being specifically applied to cities?
- What are examples of good (and innovative) practices and policies of sustainable urban development and what are some challenges for the implementation?
- How can the United Nations and member states partners assist SIDS in their sustainable urban development, to achieve SDG11, the SAMOA Pathway, the New Urban Agenda, and Sendai Framework?

#### **Expected outcome**

- Address diverse urban and settlements issues in SIDS and their linkages to the global context – the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the SAMOA Pathway, the New Urban Agenda, and Sendai Framework.
- Provide recommendations for sustainable development of human settlements in SIDS through policy, planning and design, and regulatory instruments.
- Promote partnerships for the coordinated implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the SAMOA Pathway, and the New Urban Agenda.

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**Programme (tentative)**

*Refreshment will be served*

**Introduction**

8:30-8:40am (10 min)

Mr. Wu Hongbo, Under-Secretary-General, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (tbc)

Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (tbc)

**Interactive Discussions**

8:40-8:45am (5 min)

Introduction by the Moderator, H.E. Mr. Ahmed Sareer, Ambassador/Permanent Representative of the Republic of Maldives to the United Nations

**Topic: Urban resilience and urban sustainable development in SIDS in achieving SDG11, SAMOA Pathway, and New Urban Agenda**

Presentations by Lead discussants (5 min each):

8:45-9:10am (25 min)

***Challenges and opportunities of urbanizations in SIDS***

- H.E. Mr. Denis St. Elmo Kellman, Minister of Housing, Lands and Rural Development of Barbados
- H.E. Mrs. Eunice da Silva, Minister of Infrastructure, Land Management and Housing, Cabo Verde
- SIDS representative from the Pacific region

***Urban resilience and urban sustainable development in SIDS - the way forward to overcome the challenges and to achieve SDG11, New Urban Agenda, the SAMOA Pathway, and Sendai Framework***

- Mr. Raf Tuts, Director, Programme Division, UN-Habitat
- Mr. Jean D'Aragon, Senior Sustainable Development Expert, UN Office for Sustainable Development

***Open Discussion (47 min)***

9:10-9:57am

**Closing/wrap up**

9:57-10:00am (3 min)

Closing by the moderator

*\*The discussion will be conducted in **English only***