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Report on the outcomes of the Third Forum of Mayors and related recommendations

Draft Recommendations on urban regeneration from the third Forum of Mayors

Note by the Bureau of the Forum of Mayors

Summary

This document contains the recommendations and associated Principles of Urban Regeneration developed by the 2023 Forum of Mayors, as well as additional recommendations for the consideration of the 84th session of the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management (CUDHLM).

Delegates to the Committee are expected to take note of the recommendations of the Forum; and to adopt those addressed to the CUDHLM.

I. Introduction

1. Urban regeneration is a holistic vision and an effective tool to achieve more inclusive, resilient, safe and sustainable cities. It aims to bring about long-term improvements of the economic, physical, social and environmental conditions in deteriorating urban areas, transforming them into vibrant, diversified and active communities that cherish and preserve their built and natural heritage.
2. Sustainable urban regeneration is a strategy to reorganize, improve and restore underused resources and assets and to redistribute possibilities by boosting urban prosperity, improving quality of life as well as the city's environmental condition.
3. The New Urban Agenda of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) addresses urban regeneration in paragraph 52, where member States “encourage spatial development strategies that take into account, as appropriate, the need to guide urban extension, prioritizing urban renewal by planning for the provision of accessible and well-connected infrastructure and services, sustainable population densities and compact design and integration of new neighbourhoods into the urban fabric, preventing urban sprawl and marginalization.”
4. Sustainable Development Goal 11 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, on Sustainable Cities and Communities, calls for policy makers to "make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable". This includes ensuring universal access to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services; enhancing inclusive and sustainable urbanization and the capacity for participatory, integrated human settlement planning and management; providing universal access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems; adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change and resilience to natural disasters. Urban regeneration is a holistic means through which this can all be achieved.
5. The report of the United Nations Secretary-General “Our Common Agenda” calls for governance innovations that create more meaningful spaces for participation, including for groups that have been traditionally excluded from global governance. These principles reflect a commitment to networked and inclusive multilateralism. The United Nations High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism (HLAB)¹ notes that cities and regional governments are at the core of the social contract and will continue to grow in importance as the world urbanizes.
6. Moreover, as affirmed in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030), appropriate and up-to-date urban planning and land use sectoral laws and regulations, as well as building codes, environmental and resource management laws and health and safety standards are essential to decrease disaster risks and losses in terms of lives and livelihoods in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of people, enterprises, communities and nations.

II. Recommendations to the Mayors

7. To accelerate progress towards the implementation of all relevant SDGs by 2030 in cities, the mayors present at the Forum of Mayors 2023 agree to:
8. *Take action and invite* all mayors to regenerate deteriorating areas and improve the related socioeconomic and environmental conditions in their cities and, to that end, encourage cities to identify relevant financing tools and instruments.

¹ The High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism was established by the Secretary-General in March 2022 to build on the ideas in Our Common Agenda, with the aim of materializing the call for stronger governance of key issues of global concern. See <https://www.global-taskforce.org/un-high-level-advisory-board-effective-multilateralism-recommends-special-status-cities-and-regions>.

9. *Invite* mayors to establish city-to-city partnerships to cooperate towards urban regeneration, in particular to assist cities undergoing major crisis in their renewal efforts.

10. *Reiterate* the importance of implementing the 2020 Geneva Declaration, including in any urban regeneration project, and *encourage* the mayors to implement the principles contained in the Geneva Declaration of Mayors.

11. *Adopt* the following integrated and indivisible “Principles of Urban Regeneration” (contained in section III) and *proceed* to implement them to make urban regeneration projects sustainable and successful.

III. Principles of Urban Regeneration

1. Follow an evidence-based planning approach

Urban regeneration initiatives must be based on high-quality and comparable data and information. Quantitative and qualitative data collection and distribution are key to identify priority areas and assess the effectiveness of investments/projects. Data should be used not only to monitor and to assess the current condition but also to forecast future trends and impacts. There should also be the continued development of tools used to measure all of the wider impacts of urban regeneration in different spheres of life.

2. Apply an integrated approach

Urban regeneration projects should: apply an integrated approach that considers the environmental, social, physical, economic and cultural aspects and impacts on citizens and the city as a whole; such factors should be integrated into existing urban planning and redevelopment projects as well. Projects should also leverage the benefits of public-private sector partnerships.

3. Plan for the long term to build resilient communities

Decision makers must operate strategically to handle both short- and long-term goals. They must develop a vision that responds to current needs while also accounting for future aspirations. This involves supporting solutions that make urban spaces and communities more resilient to natural and human-made disasters, especially those induced by climate change, as well as by conflicts, cyberattacks and other threats. Infrastructure should be made more robust and adaptable as part of urban regeneration efforts, with spatial flexibility to handle changing circumstances and usages throughout time.

4. Promote inclusive people-centred design and governance

Urban regeneration initiatives must sustainably promote accessibility, easy navigation, and connectivity to places of interest, incorporating diversity and equality by considering the needs of people of all ages, genders, cultures, ethnic origins, faith and religions, socioeconomic conditions and abilities. Projects should adopt community-participatory approaches as well as consider different frameworks for land ownership and managing public spaces.

5. Enhance affordability and accessibility of urban life and homes

Urban regeneration projects should promote affordability and accessibility; urban spaces, buildings and homes need to be accessible and affordable to all citizens. Urban regeneration should aim to overcome existing disparities in access to housing, promoting equitable solutions and strengthening communities.

6. Preserve, reuse and revive tangible and intangible cultural heritage

Urban regeneration initiatives should respect the cultural identity and values of places and communities by preserving existing cultural, historic and aesthetic structures whenever possible. Projects should consider heritage-led regeneration by prioritizing reusing, improving and reviving existing facilities. Special consideration should be paid to the urban regeneration of historical centres to avoid any possible negative impact; pursuing sustainable tourism policies can also aid preservation of cultural heritage.

7. Optimize land use and pursue mixed-used and compact development

Urban regeneration projects should adopt the compact city model through efficient land use and mixed-use developments, thereby reducing urban sprawl, efficiently distributing economic activities and improving technical and social infrastructure to create green, walkable and energy-efficient neighbourhoods.

8. Design keeping the health of citizens in mind

Urban regeneration projects should focus on developing safer, more healthy, comfortable and liveable urban spaces to improve health outcomes of all citizens and specifically reduce health disparities between the economically advantaged and disadvantaged. Adopting a multisectoral approach, urban design should act on the broader determinants of health, including but not limited to increasing access to tangible and intangible assets, increasing opportunities for active mobility and fostering resilient communities.

9. Promote smartness

Urban regeneration projects should promote the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) solutions to improve connectivity, responsiveness and liveability for all. Digital technologies should be promoted at all stages of the project, from scenario testing and drone mapping to smart solutions regarding transport, water and energy efficiency, and pollution reduction.

10. Pursue circularity

Urban regeneration projects should promote the use of green materials such as those recycled (e.g., resource utilization of construction waste), locally obtained, and/or manufactured in energy efficient processes. Projects should also promote more efficient consumption and production of energy, the reuse of water and limiting the use of natural resources. In addition, urban regeneration initiatives should promote the reduction of waste generation (from food waste to hazardous waste) through prevention, recycling and reuse.

11. Privilege nature-based solutions and climate neutrality

Urban regeneration projects should aim to minimize the physical environment's climate footprint as well as, where possible, to retain the original natural features of sites such as gradients, water courses and biodiversity. Construction should be as least intrusive as possible. Nature-sensitive urban regeneration plans should aim to boost biodiversity, absorb CO₂ emissions, and improve public health and well-being by promoting the use of permeable ground surfaces and sustainable drainage systems across the city. Projects should also foster the development of urban forests, green roofs, community gardens, food forests and urban agriculture.

12. Prioritize sustainable and healthy transport options

Urban regeneration projects should focus on promoting green transport activities such as cycling, walking and electrified public transport to reduce air and noise pollution and support active lifestyles. Transport planning should also consider accessibility as well as different mobility patterns to ensure that the transport system is equitable.

To facilitate the implementation of the recommendations to the Mayors and the Principles of Urban Regeneration, the Forum of Mayors *hereby forwards* them to the CUDHLM

IV. Recommendations to the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management

12. The Forum of Mayors *also recommends* that the Committee adopt the following recommendations related to the work of the Committee:

Recommendation 1

13. Invites member States to endorse the Principles of Urban Regeneration and develop relevant national legislation and regional, national and international policies on urban regeneration to support the principles. In particular, to support the commitment to regenerate deteriorating areas, infrastructure or facilities in cities with relevant financial and legal tools, including national tax exemptions and dedicated financial packages.

Recommendation 2

14. Invites member States to support the establishment of city-to-city as well as multidisciplinary partnerships to cooperate in urban regeneration projects, in particular assisting cities undergoing major crises in their renewal efforts.

Recommendation 3

15. Invites member States to involve cities and facilitate their participation in all the relevant United Nations processes, to foster a renewed and inclusive multilateralism.

Recommendation 4

16. Requests the secretariat to promote the application of the principles in any relevant activity and project.
