

United Nations



Fourth Forum of Mayors

Cities Summit of the Future



GUIDING QUESTIONS

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Palais des Nations, Geneva



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Background

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a blueprint for a better and more sustainable future for all. However, our progress towards these goals is not promising. Rising poverty, widening inequality, and a deteriorating climate and environment highlight the urgent need to intensify efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

As urbanization rises, with 70% of the global population expected to live in cities by 2050, cities are crucial for advancing the SDGs. The OECD notes that 65% of the 169 SDG targets require the involvement of subnational governments, especially cities. However, to maximize their impact, cities must align with national strategies and address challenges in utilizing their limited capacities and resources to achieve a sustainable and inclusive future.

Urban projects suffer from chronic underfunding due to a significant shortfall in financial resources allocated for sustainable development. The World Bank estimates that global financing needs for urban infrastructure range from \$4.5 to \$5.4 trillion annually, with an additional 9-27% required to make this infrastructure low-emission and climate-resilient [1].

Moreover, cities encounter institutional, fiscal, and regulatory obstacles that hinder investment mobilization. Many lack the legal authority to borrow or raise taxes effectively, alongside insufficient technical capacity for project development aligned with SDGs and the Paris Agreement [2]. Recognizing cities as pivotal players in global sustainability, efforts are underway to reform financial frameworks to better support urban development. Initiatives include calls for enhanced multilateral development bank (MDB) support, the creation of specialized financial institutions, and mechanisms to attract private sector investment.

[1] <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/overview#2>

[2] <https://sdg-action.org/bridging-the-sdg-funding-gap-in-cities/#:~:text=The%20World%20Bank%20estimates%20that,countries%3A%20he%20International%20Finance%20Corporation>

Segment 1 | Sustainable Development and Financing for Development

Expectations

In this session, mayors/deputy mayors will discuss how their cities localize SDGs and coordinate these efforts at the national level. They will also explore strategies to stimulate financing for sustainable development.

We encourage cities to focus on specific current or future projects, address challenges encountered during implementation, and potential solutions to overcome these challenges.

Representatives are invited to participate in the discussion by requesting the floor from their seats (by raising their city's nameplate). The chairperson will then grant them the opportunity to speak. To ensure that all mayors have the chance to contribute, each intervention should be no more than 2 minutes and should be directly related to the topics discussed, covering the key aspects outlined above.

Guiding Questions

1. What are your city's current or future projects to advance the localization of the SDGs, particularly in areas such as VLR development? How do these projects contribute to broader national SDG action plans?
2. What are the primary financial challenges your city faces in securing funding for sustainable development projects? How do institutional, fiscal, and regulatory obstacles impact your city's ability to mobilize investment for SDG-related initiatives?
3. What improvements or tools could enhance resource mobilization and investment in development initiatives within your city? How can partnerships with multilateral development banks, specialized financial institutions, and the private sector be leveraged to address funding gaps and support urban development initiatives?

Related SDGs



Segment 2 | Peace and Security

Background

Peace and security, sustainable development, and human rights are deeply interconnected. Peace and security serve as the anchor for development and the protection of human rights, while taking root at the local level. However, violence and armed conflicts are increasingly occurring in urban contexts. Cities have a crucial role in fostering social inclusion to mitigate these challenges.

Urbanization, while bringing wealth, creativity and social dynamics, also exacerbates inequalities and unevenly distributes power and resources, contributing to urban violence. Between 1975 and 2015, the global number of cities doubled from 5,000 to 10,000, according to OECD estimates [3]. This rapid urbanization requires the transformation of governance, infrastructure, and other mechanisms to guarantee peace and security, thereby promoting sustainable development. Urban violence significantly impacts people's health, livelihoods, and the economic development of cities. The World Health Organization identifies violence as one of the leading causes of death among people aged 15-44 worldwide [4]. To address this, cities must understand the underlying causes and triggering factors of violence, including structural, economic, social reasons, and spatial reasons.

Urban violence is significantly driven by organized crime, often linked to global activities like drug trafficking. Local criminal groups with connections to international drug networks have the economic and armed resources to threaten community security.

Corruption and collusion between law enforcement and organized crime also exacerbate urban violence.

Additionally, the growth of urban populations has exacerbated tensions over access to resources such as water, land, and housing. Conflicts arising from rural-urban migration and unevenly distributed resources (e.g., climate change-induced migration and the formation of informal settlements) drive people into the illicit economy or gangs involved in activities such as human trafficking.

To address these issues, cities are actively working on social inclusion initiatives. Efforts include affordable housing projects, equitable access to education and healthcare, job creation programs, and community policing strategies. These initiatives aim to integrate marginalized communities, reduce socio-economic disparities, and create safer, more cohesive urban environments.



Photo by UN Photo

[3] https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/cities-in-the-world_d0efcbda-en.html

[4] <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9241545615>

Segment 2 | Peace and Security

Ensuring peace and security in urban contexts requires a holistic approach to address the root causes of violence. By addressing these factors, cities can reduce the likelihood of violence and promote peace and security. Cities are implementing various initiatives to promote equality, ensure equitable access to resources, and engage communities in decision-making processes. For instance, community centers, inclusive public spaces, and participatory governance models are being developed to foster a sense of belonging and collaboration among diverse urban populations.

With a strong emphasis on social inclusion, cities can harness the benefits of urbanization to build resilient, equitable, and peaceful communities.

Expectations

In this session, mayors/deputy mayors will discuss violence and security issues within their cities and effective measures to address them. The session aims to facilitate the exchange of experiences in violence prevention and learning from similar environments and situations.

Representatives are invited to participate in the discussion by requesting the floor from their seats (by raising their city's nameplate). The chairperson will then grant them the opportunity to speak. To ensure that all mayors have the chance to contribute, each intervention should be no more than 2 minutes and should be directly related to the topics discussed, covering the key aspects outlined above.

Guiding Questions

1. What are the primary forms of violence and security challenges faced in your city?
2. What programs or initiatives have been or will be implemented to address these issues?
3. What strategies or instruments could be employed to tackle longstanding violence issues effectively?
4. What role do community engagement and local governance play in your city's violence prevention efforts?

Related SDGs



Segment 3 | Science, Technology and Innovation and Digital Cooperation



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Background

Science, technology and innovation, along with digital cooperation, offer immense opportunities for the benefit of both people and the planet. These advancements are particularly transformative for cities, leveraging Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence, and other means to improve quality of life, efficiency of urban operation and services, and competitiveness. A smart sustainable city is an innovative city that uses ICTs and other means to improve quality of life, efficiency of urban operation and services, and competitiveness, while ensuring that it meets the needs of present and future generations with respect to economic, social, environmental as well as cultural aspects. Such initiatives in smart sustainable cities are critical in meeting the needs of present and future generations [5].

[5] <https://unece.org/housing/smart-sustainable-cities>

However, the rapid evolution also brings significant challenges. Issues such as uneven access, digital illiteracy, human rights violations in technology development, cybersecurity threats, intellectual property issues, and tech-related crime must not be overlooked.

Ensuring the protection of individual and business data within urban technological frameworks emerges as a critical concern given their growing reliance on digital systems. Furthermore, bridging the digital divide is essential to ensuring technology serves as an inclusive tool rather than a barrier, particularly for vulnerable groups like the elderly. Systems such as smart payment solutions must be designed with accessibility in mind to accommodate those who may face adaptation challenges or technological barriers.

Additionally, urban areas with inadequate network infrastructure risk exclusion from the benefits of the smart city paradigm. Therefore, related infrastructure becomes pivotal in facilitating equitable access to technological advancements across all demographic segments within urban environments.

Cities must focus on leveraging technical capabilities to bring positive transformations while ensuring these innovations remain people-friendly and avoid infringements on privacy and rights.

Segment 3 | Science, Technology and Innovation and Digital Cooperation

Expectations

In this session, mayors/deputy mayors will discuss how their cities have leveraged advancements in science, technology, innovation, and digital cooperation for urban development and community welfare. They will also examine the inherent risks of these developments and share strategies to address them. This collaborative dialogue aims to foster an inclusive and secure intelligent world for all, benefiting both people and the environment.

Representatives are invited to participate in the discussion by requesting the floor from their seats (by raising their city's nameplate). The chairperson will then grant them the opportunity to speak. To ensure that all mayors have the chance to contribute, each intervention should be no more than 2 minutes and should be directly related to the topics discussed, covering the key aspects outlined above.

Guiding Questions

1. What projects does your city have to boost innovation and digital cooperation? In which specific areas are these projects implemented and what successes and challenges have you encountered? (You may wish to elaborate on examples like digital monitoring of development progress, clean electricity initiatives, etc.)
2. How do these projects impact different communities, particularly the vulnerable, women, youth, the elderly, and the environment?
3. What strategies can enhance the inclusive use of science and technology, for example, artificial intelligence, for all?
4. What risks and opportunities have you identified in the application of technology, for example, artificial intelligence, in your city? What future steps or regulations do you propose to mitigate these risks? (You are encouraged to consider risks such as human rights violations, privacy breaches, intellectual property infringements, environmental damage, and tech-related crime.)

Related SDGs



Segment 4 | Youth and Future Generations

Background

Youth are the future and hold the key to positive transformation. Many young leaders are emerging with innovative ideas in promoting sustainable development. However, extreme poverty, inadequate education, and poor health hinder their potential. To enable them to lead global change, these constraints must be removed.

Access to quality education is fundamental for youth empowerment and future success. Globally, around 258 million children and adolescents are out of school, with disparities more pronounced in urban areas where infrastructure and resources may be unevenly distributed [6].

Gender equality is a critical factor in empowering young women and girls as leaders and agents of change. Despite advancements, significant gaps persist, particularly concerning issues like early marriage [7] and pregnancy, which often force girls to abandon their education [8].

Health is another key factor for youth development, yet many encounter obstacles in accessing basic health services due to economic constraints or geographic isolation, as well as negative attitudes from healthcare providers [9].

Youth unemployment remains a pressing global concern exacerbated by economic hardships and mismatches in skills and job opportunities [10], [11]. Global youth unemployment rates were projected to reach 13.8% in 2023 [12], with urban youth facing higher rates of unemployment than their rural counterparts [13], underscoring the need for targeted interventions to enhance economic prospects.

To fully unleash youth's potential, cities must remove the aforementioned barriers. Infrastructure, mechanism, investment, and stakeholder partnerships are also needed to encourage and support youth's participation in decision-making at both local and national level.

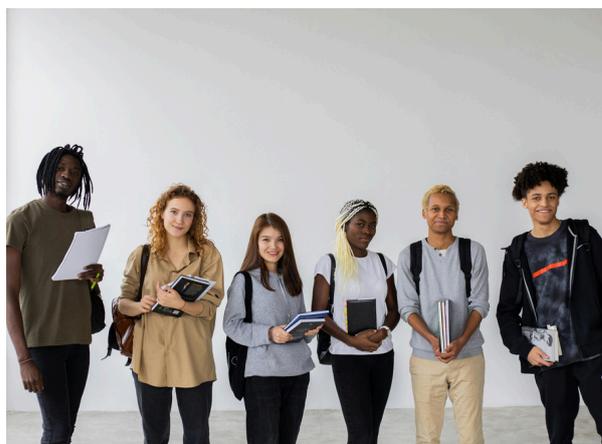


Photo by Monstera Production on Pexels

[6] <https://www.un.org/en/un-chronicle/recognizing-and-overcoming-inequity-education#:~:text=Around%20the%20world%2C%20258%20million%2C%20or%2017%20per,children%2C%20adolescents%20and%20youth%2C%20are%20out%20of%20school.>

[7] <https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-marriage>

[8] <https://www.unicef.org/gender-equality#:~:text=Adolescent%20girls%20are%20more%20likely%20than%20anyone%20else,the%20studies%20they%20choose%2C%20like%20science%20and%20mathematics.>

[9] https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/75217/9789241503594_eng.pdf

[10] <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/08/global-youth-survey-skills-jobs/>

[11] <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/young-people-unable-access-skills-needed-todays-job-market-new-report-says>

[12] https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS?most_recent_value_desc=true

[13] <https://www.ilo.org/publications/major-publications/global-employment-trends-youth-2022-investing-transforming-futures-youth>

Segment 4 | Youth and Future Generations

Expectations

In this session, mayors/deputy mayors are encouraged to reflect on the challenges faced by youth and future generations and explore ways to engage them in sustainable development. We encourage cities to highlight plans and projects aimed at empowering youth and discuss their community impacts.

Representatives are invited to participate in the discussion by requesting the floor from their seats (by raising their city's nameplate). The chairperson will then grant them the opportunity to speak. To ensure that all mayors have the chance to contribute, each intervention should be no more than 2 minutes and should be directly related to the topics discussed, covering the key aspects outlined above.

Guiding Questions

1. What is the status of youth in your city, considering factors such as education, economic conditions, and health?
2. What are the primary challenges youth are facing in your city?
3. What projects and initiatives have been implemented/are being implemented to empower youth in your city, and what impacts have they had?
4. What future directions should be pursued to engage and empower youth and protect the future generation? (Examples include improving the education system, investing in critical social services, incorporating youth perspectives in development strategies, and creating job opportunities for youth.)

Related SDGs



Segment 5 | Transforming Global Governance



Photo by Hugo Magalhaes on Pexels

Background

While our multilateral system has achieved significant milestones, new global challenges compel us to explore innovative approaches to global governance while adhering to multilateralism. This is crucial for fostering greater international cooperation, renewing public trust, and enhancing solidarity, as well as creating a safer, more equal, peaceful, sustainable, and inclusive world.

Cities play a crucial role in transforming global governance by leveraging their unique perspectives, innovations, and local expertise. Despite being at the forefront of many global challenges, cities often lack direct representation in global decision-making processes. Recognizing this gap, there is a growing call to include local and regional governments within the United Nations framework and the multilateral system[14].

Enhancing gender equality in city leadership is vital for sustainable development and inclusive governance. Despite women making up more than half of the global population, their representation in city mayoral positions stands at a mere 5%. Amplifying women's voices can thus enrich global governance with diverse perspectives and priorities.

Platforms like the Forum of Mayors serve as an exemplary model for cities to collaborate and share best practices on a global scale. They facilitate the exchange of knowledge, innovations, and local solutions, particularly in the localization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

[14] <https://www.highleveladvisoryboard.org/breakthrough/>

Segment 5 | Transforming Global Governance

Expectations

In this session, mayors/deputy mayors will discuss the roles of cities in supporting global governance and achieving gender balance within it. City representatives are encouraged to envision a governance system that is more adaptive to the evolving global landscape.

Representatives are invited to participate in the discussion by requesting the floor from their seats (by raising their city's nameplate). The chairperson will then grant them the opportunity to speak. To ensure that all mayors have the chance to contribute, each intervention should be no more than 2 minutes and should be directly related to the topics discussed, covering the key aspects outlined above.

Guiding Questions

1. How has your city contributed to the implementation of intergovernmental commitments or multilateral agreements?
2. What are the main challenges your city faces in participating in global decision-making processes, and how can these be addressed?
3. How can city authorities strengthen their involvement in UN intergovernmental bodies to help respond to global challenges effectively?

Related SDGs





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