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## STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE WE WANT

### Session 2: Why should we care about urban-rural linkages? Managing the impacts of cities on ecosystems, land and climate change

Population growth in cities and increased urbanization across all countries has brought opportunities for many people, but also has resulted in an increasing demand for resources and additional pressures on land-use change worldwide. Although cities occupy just 3 per cent of the Earth's surface, they are responsible for the consumption of roughly 75 per cent of all-natural resources. Furthermore, it is estimated that the 70 per cent of all CO<sup>2</sup> emissions and waste is produced in cities<sup>1</sup>.

Similarly, more than half of the world's agricultural land, 26.5 million km<sup>2</sup>, is needed to support the food consumption in urban areas<sup>2</sup>. Although the heightened use of resources is closely linked to urban lifestyles in developed countries, consumption driven by choice as opposed to need is expected to increase substantially in emerging markets as higher incomes raise demand for material possessions and modern lifestyles<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> UN-Habitat (2010). Supporting Local Action for Biodiversity the Role of National Governments.

<sup>2</sup> Mc Donald et al. (2019). Nature Sustainability Research Gaps in urban biodiversity knowledge

<sup>3</sup> UN-Habitat (2011). Urban Patterns for a Green Economy Optimizing Infrastructure

Urban activities have direct and indirect consequences for the natural environment in the short, medium and long term, and their scale of influence typically extends far beyond the boundaries of what is typically considered to constitute “the city”. Growing urban demand coupled with globalized supply chains and increased global trade are impacting the local availability of resources in distant areas of the world. Cities can only support human life and economic activity if the ecosystems on which they depend for water, food and energy are functioning. Furthermore, urban populations are also affected by changes in distant ecosystems that affect the local availability, price of commodities, water quality or climate. The sustainability of cities is thus inextricably linked to social groups and places elsewhere, whose own sustainability is linked to urban processes. This also exemplifies how local economic gains in some territories have social, economic and environmental costs in others.

Managing the indirect, distant and sometimes obscured impacts of urban activities and city-decision making requires appropriate governance mechanisms that improve cities' accountability for the resources they rely on. For this, governance mechanisms are required to manage the teleconnections and linkages between cities and nearby and distant ecosystems, including rural areas, hinterlands and/or natural spaces. Managing these linkages to benefit ecosystems is necessary to help people, farms and businesses, including also those located in distant communities, to conserve resources that sustain life and enjoy the benefits derived from a healthy environment. In this vein, sustainably managing these linkages entails strengthening the reciprocal and repetitive flows of people and resources between urban and rural areas - urban-rural linkages. Shortening the teleconnections between cities and distant ecosystems by strengthening urban-rural linkages implies reducing the dependency and pressure on

distant ecosystems, increasing the resilience of not only urban population but also of nearby rural communities. This, in turn, promotes a progressive integration of territories, facilitating the sustainable management of resources in a manner that protects and improves the ecosystem and environmental services, reduces land degradation, greenhouse gas emissions and air and water pollution, while promoting disaster risk reduction. Therefore, integrated territorial approaches, including urban-rural linkages, land- and seascape-management approaches, are vital for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

UN-Habitat started a process that culminated in 2019 with numerous stakeholders agreeing to [Urban-Rural Linkages: Guiding Principles and Framework for Action \(URL-GP\) to Advance Integrated Territorial Development](#). The ten guiding principles seek to guide the actions of national and sub-national governments, civil society, the private sector and international organizations interested to begin taking steps to manage the multiple linkages and impacts that urban activities have on nearby and distant areas. The URL-GP provides a set of actions to improve the relationships between an increasingly urbanized population and the actors responsible for generation of resources from ecosystems from outside the urban areas that cities depend on.

Moreover, the URL-GP provides a policy framework to harness the interactions between economic sectors, such as infrastructure, manufacturing, agriculture, water, energy and mining, which play a fundamental role in strengthening urban-rural linkages and therefore promoting integrated territorial development. The opportunities for managing urban-rural linkages are in all three areas of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. The URL-GP are a fundamental tool for the management of interconnected, integrated and continuous territories.

The combined impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation are intertwined and increasing at alarming levels. These socio-environmental challenges are themselves intertwined with enormous pressures from an urbanizing planet on terrestrial and marine ecosystems. They combine with structural socio-economic inequalities that aggravate poverty,

hunger, malnutrition and disease in every region of the world. All of these interlinked challenges have been compounded by the pandemic, giving greater urgency to calls from countries, from civil society and from the private sector for "nature-based", or ecosystem-positive", or "ecological" transitions and solutions.

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**Date:** Tuesday, December 1st, 2020

**Time:** 5:00 - 6:30 PM East Africa Time

3:00 – 4:30 PM Central European Time

9:00 - 10:30 AM Eastern Standard Time

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## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this session are to:

- Indicate how the URL-GP can be applied in practice for governments and other stakeholders in the context of the CBD and the other two Rio Conventions.
- Introduce and disseminate the Urban-Rural Linkages: Guiding Principles as a concept and as a tool, within the [Ecosystem Approach](#) as the main framework of all Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).
- Announce UN-Habitat work on urban-rural linkages and biodiversity and work areas for an integrated territorial approach (i.e. spatial/land- and seascape-management-based).
- Invite Parties, international agencies, the private sector and others to cooperate in organizing subsequent lines of work/webinars/publications on applying the Urban-Rural Linkages tool on infrastructure, manufacturing, agriculture mining and energy, water and health.

## SPEAKERS:

- **Ángel Sánchez**, Advisor to the Deputy Ministry for the Environment, Spatial Planning and Sustainability of the Community of Madrid
- **Andrew Rudd**, Planning and Environment Officer, UN-Habitat
- **Joji Carino**, Senior Policy Advisor, Forest Peoples Programme
- **Kate Newman**, Vice President Sustainable Infrastructure and Public Sector Initiatives, World Wildlife Fund.
- **Paul Wander**, Natural Resources Division, United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

# FORMAT:

Virtual zoom meeting (around 90 minutes). Speakers are invited to deliver remarks, discussing for about 5 minutes each, with 2-4 slides (optional) to discuss the situation in their country/city on the above-mentioned guiding questions. After the initial remarks, the moderator will encourage the discussion and dialogue between the speakers asking questions to the speakers and to comment on the other speakers' presentations.

The session will allow a few discussants selected from the registered audience to comment (around 2-4 minutes) on speakers' presentation to promote debate. The session will allow participants to share their comments through the chat box. As time allows, questions and comments will be transmitted to the speakers by the moderators. Members of UN-Habitat and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) will provide the facilitation and moderation of the session.



## POLICY, LEGISLATION AND GOVERNANCE Webinar Series



# 01

December  
2020

Time: 5:00 - 6:30 PM East Africa Time  
3:00 - 4:30 PM Central European Time  
9:00 - 10:30 AM East Standard Time

Check [time zone converter](#) for event time in your location



Register [here](#)

Join us at this special session of the UN-Habitat "**Strengthening Communities for the Future we Want: urban-rural linkages policy, legislation and governance**" webinar series.

### SPEAKERS

- **Andrew Rudd**, UN-Habitat
- **Ángel Sánchez**, Deputy Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Sustainability Community of Madrid
- **Joji Carino**, Forest Peoples Programme
- **Kate Newman**, World Wildlife Fund
- **Paul Wander**, ECLAC/CEPAL