

AFRICAN MINISTERIAL SESSION ON NATIONAL URBAN POLICY

NAIROBI, KENYA, 8TH JUNE 2023



African Ministers and other high-level representatives following conclusion on the African Ministerial Session on National Urban Policy

Urbanization in Africa is progressing rapidly. With an urban growth rate of 3.4 per cent, currently, 44 per cent of the region's population resides in urban areas. By 2035, the region will have half of its population living in cities and will be predominantly urban by 2050 with six in ten persons living in urban areas. National Urban Policies (NUP) provide an effective opportunity capitalize on the potential of urbanization as well as mitigate its negative externalities in Africa. It's not only an integrated development tool to create common vision for urbanization but also an overarching framework that supports implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda (NUA)

Against this backdrop, African Ministers and other high-level government representatives joined other diverse participants on 8th June 2023, in a session on urban policies in Africa.

Held along the sidelines of the United Nations Habitat Assembly, the session offered a unique opportunity to share experiences on how National Urban Policies are providing the required coordination mechanism needed to promote equitable urban development in Africa.

Participants underscored their experiences on using Urban Policy to unlock financing opportunities, enhance local economic growth and ensure equitable quality of life for all while protecting the environment.

The session featured several speakers who shared a wealth of knowledge and experiences in NUP development and implementation, both at the country level and from the development partners' view.

Michal Mlynar, UN-Habitat Deputy Executive Director, expressed gratitude to ministers and development partners for their support in national urban policy (NUP) work in Africa. He emphasized that national urban policies are critical for achieving the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda. He pointed out that at the time of the UN-Habitat survey in 2020, only 28 countries in Africa had explicit NUPs. UN-Habitat has been supporting urban policy processes in Africa through various programs and collaborations with countries such as Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, and other countries. Mr. Mlynar stressed the importance of implementing NUPs on the ground and investing in sustainable financing mechanisms and urban-scale data.

Byungwoo Gil, Director General for Urban Policy Korea's Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (MOLIT), shared Korea's experiences in supporting NUPs in Africa. He advocated for a smart city approach to address emerging urban challenges and emphasized the importance of knowledge sharing to facilitate learning and improvement of cities.

Oumar Sylla, Director of the UN-Habitat Regional Office for Africa, highlighted the urban transition Africa will experience by 2030 and the need to utilize cities as engines for economic development. He emphasized the importance of collaboration, mutual learning, and consensus-building to effectively address urbanization issues. Oumar Sylla also reiterated the need for a multi-level approach involving regional, national, and local dynamics, as well as the opportunities presented by processes such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AFTA) for trade connectivity and economic integration.

Remy Sietchiping, Chief of Policy, Legislation, and Governance Section at UN-Habitat, presented an outlook of Africa in relation to NUPs based on a survey conducted in 2020. He emphasized the need for a coherent framework to guide urbanization efforts and the importance of utilizing urbanization as an economic lever and a tool to address environmental and climate change concerns. He highlighted that while 28 African countries have explicit NUPs, most of them have not been effectively implemented. He also mentioned that NUPs are officially part of the SDG indicator framework, providing an opportunity for African governments to accelerate their development and report on SDG implementation.

Employing a participatory approach, country representatives were invited to share their experiences in NUP development and urbanization issues and opportunities. Here are some examples:

- Cameroon: Cameroon is actively engaged in developing better planning strategies for improved urbanization. They have accepted invitations for smart cities strategies and are working on a National Urban Policy document that adopts a proactive and inclusive approach.
- Algeria: Algeria is focusing on the digitization of services in cities and communities, with ongoing smart city strategies in four main cities. They are also working on legislative aspects, urban and rural governance, and promoting social coherence.
- Kenya: Kenya has been implementing NUPs at the county level, with a parliamentary group focused on assisting local governments. They emphasize the importance of participation and have showcased innovative solutions to urban problems.
- Malawi: Malawi has been supported by UN-Habitat and the World Bank in developing their NUP, with a focus on urban resilience, slum upgrading programs, and community mobilization efforts.

Other countries, including Central African Republic, Comoros, Djibouti, Eswatini, Nigeria, Guinea, Liberia, Tunisia and Uganda also shared their experiences challenges and opportunities in developing and implementing NUPs. These country experiences not only highlighted the diverse approaches in NUP development, but also enriched the session with on-the-ground knowledge which can be applied as good practices and lessons in other country contexts.

In the Development Partners Dialogue, the African Union perspective was presented, emphasizing the importance of global and regional frameworks for implementing urban policies. The African Union supports the implementation of global policies while recognizing the need for regional frameworks to address Africa-specific challenges.

Overall, the session highlighted the significance of national urban policies in achieving sustainable, inclusive, and resilient cities in Africa. It emphasized the need for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and investment in sustainable