AFRICAN MINISTERIAL SESSION ON NATIONAL URBAN POLICY

📅 8th June, 2023

🕐 07.30hrs - 09.00hrs

#UNHA2

Opening Remarks

Michael Mlynar: UN-Habitat Deputy Executive Director:

The DED expressed gratitude to ministers and development partners for their support in NUP work in Africa. Here are some key points from his remarks:

National urban policies are critical for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) and the New Urban Agenda.

Countries need to develop national urban policies that support inclusive, resilient, and sustainable cities and human settlements, effectively implementing and monitoring global agreements.

While African governments recognize the value of national urban policies, only 28 countries in Africa had explicit policies at the time of the UN Habitat survey in 2021.

UN-Habitat has been supporting urban policy processes in Africa through global and regional programs, collaborating with various countries including Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Zambia, and others.

The implementation of national urban policies is essential to have a tangible impact on the ground and address the needs of the people.

Governments need to invest in sustainable financing mechanisms and robust urban-scale data to help design and implement urban policies that address place-based concerns and deliver better lives for all in an urbanizing world.

Byungwoo Gil: Director General for Urban Policy, MOLIT (Korea)

The Director shared experiences of Korea support to UN-Habitat and for National Urban Policies (NUPs).

The Director encouraged a smart city approach to address emerging urban challenges and expressed their willingness to assist the international community.

Knowledge sharing was emphasized as a crucial aspect, and he highlighted that NUPs can encompass smart city approaches.

There was an emphasis on the importance of sharing both successful and challenging cases to facilitate learning and improve cities.

Key Summary:

Mr. Gil discussed their experiences supporting NUPs in Africa and advocated for a smart city approach to tackle new urban challenges. The Minister emphasized the significance of knowledge sharing and the inclusion of successful and failed cases to promote learning and enhance cities.

Oumar Sylla: Director, Regional Office for Africa

By 2030, Africa will experience an urban transition with a significant increase in urban population.

Human capital is the most important resource, and cities should be utilized as engines for economic development.

A multi-level approach involving regional, national, and local dynamics is needed to tackle urbanization issues in Africa.

Previous challenges due to lack of planning highlight the need to deviate from business as usual in addressing urbanization.

The focus should be on the entire system of cities rather than individual cities alone.

Collaboration, mutual learning, and consensus-building are crucial for addressing urban challenges effectively.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AFTA) offers opportunities for trade connectivity and economic integration.

National Urban Policies (NUPs) can serve as frameworks for promoting good governance, sustainability, and attracting investment.

Key Summary:

Oumar's speech highlighted the importance of leveraging cities for economic development, promoting collaboration, adopting a multi-level approach, addressing planning challenges, considering the system of cities, utilizing the AFTA for trade connectivity, and using NUPs to advance good governance and attract investment.

Status of National Urban Policies in Africa

Remy Sietchiping: Chief, Policy, Legislation and Governance Section, UN-Habitat.

Remy presented an **Outlook of Africa in Relation to NUP** as from the NUP survey done in 2020 as follows:

28 African countries have explicit NUPs, and most of them have not been effectively implemented.

However, the success of NUPs is not limited to explicit policies alone.

Some governments use NUPs to monitor and implement SDGs, the New Urban Agenda, and the Paris Climate Agreement.

NUPs are officially part of the SDG indicator framework (SDG 11.a.1), presenting an opportunity for African governments to accelerate their development, and report on SDG implementation.

Globally, UN-Habitat supports urban policy through various programs, including 58 NUP processes in different countries, with specific support in Africa.

African countries should align NUP targets and indicators with SDGs, invest in sustainable financing mechanisms, and utilize urban-scale data for effective policy implementation.

It is important for countries to emphasize the economic development aspect, ensure coherence between climate and urban policies, and recognize countries implementing SDG targets.

Implementation should also occur at all levels with fiscal support.

Way Forward:

From this outlook it is crucial to recognize that urbanization has the potential for transformation and the need to establish a coherent framework. Urban Policy should guide efforts by leveraging opportunities and addressing challenges. Specifically, in the context of Africa, it is important to pay closer attention to utilizing urbanization as an economic lever and a tool to address environmental and climate change concerns. This approach should be further explored. Additionally, by doing so, countries not only serve their own agendas but also contribute to the global agenda. We are in the process of developing an instrument to guide countries in voluntarily reporting on the progress of specific targets related to urbanization.

Country Experiences

Cameroon

Cameroon is actively engaged in developing better planning strategies for improved urbanization. They have accepted invitations for smart cities in September and recognize the importance of addressing key fundamental issues related to human and urban development. The country aims to initiate planning at all levels, including rural and urban centers. Urban mobility cited was cited as major challenge due to the infrastructure issues on technology.

UN-Habitat has helped the country in formulating a National Urban Policy document which has adopted very proactive, participative, and inclusive approach where the population suggested solutions for urban challenges and is awaiting final report.

The is also need for the country to carefully consider the link between urban and rural sector for sustainable urbanization. Cameroon is collaborating with UN-Habitat develop and implement National Urban Policy (NUPs) aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They emphasize the importance of involving the population in finding solutions and are currently finalizing the NUP, particularly for cities affected by crises. The government of Cameroon is taking proactive measures in this regard and is also working on smart cities. They acknowledge the challenges posed by COVID-19 and the need to prioritize the well-being of semi-urban and rural areas.

Algeria

In Algeria, there is a focus on digitalization of its services in cities and communities. Smart city strategies are ongoing in four main cities, metropolitan management is guided by a team of urban experts. The country is working on various plans to ensure social coherence, with attention to legislative and national aspects, urban and rural governance, and addressing population divisions, particularly in the southern region.

They are also aggressively following up on partnerships with donors and willing support groups. Urban laws are being formulated and a review of legislative framework, SNAT work on sustainable development to align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to promote the continuation of smart cities. Algeria is also designing new instruments to consider urban development and incorporate renewable energy into their plans.

Kenya

Kenya recently held the Kenya Urban Forum to share experiences of implementing National Urban Policies (NUPs) at the county level. There is a parliamentary group focused on assisting local governments in the implementation of NUPs, particularly in the context of devolution. Counties have been encouraged to participate in Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) to assess their progress. Nairobi County organized a smart city side event, showcasing innovative solutions to urban problems and emphasizing the use of MPESA as a transactional means.

Kenya has collaborated with UN-Habitat in the planning and development of cities, particularly Nairobi. The country expresses gratitude to UN-Habitat for organizing the meeting and emphasizes the importance of sharing experiences in advancing NUP implementation. Additionally, Kenya will be hosting the Kenya Urban Forum in the following week, highlighting the ongoing commitment to NUPs and addressing climate change challenges.

Comoros

Comoros has launched a capacity-building process in collaboration with UN-Habitat. They intend to revise their constitution to establish a comprehensive National Urban Policy (NUP) that addresses urban issues effectively. The country is also seeking support from UN-Habitat for capacity building in climate change, particularly for the most vulnerable countries.

Comoros aims to enhance their city policies and strengthen their capacity to conduct NUP processes. They are closely monitoring the situation and experiences of other countries. Additionally, Comoros is in the process of revising their urbanization code to ensure effective urban development and management.

Tunisia

Tunisia appreciates UN-Habitat for supporting in developing a national urban policy among other partnerships on urbanization. The country has also established partnerships and conducted various workshops at the national, regional, and local levels to support the implementation of their National Urban Policy (NUP). The majority of the population in Tunisia resides in urban areas, emphasizing the importance of effective urban planning and development. The UN-Habitat ministry in charge is actively working to establish an urban structure that prioritizes the development of road networks to maintain infrastructure to enhance mobility within.

The NUP in Tunisia encompasses all sectors and aims to facilitate smooth implementation. With a high urbanization rate of 70%, Tunisia has a significant population that requires adequate coverage and planning. The country has a substantial number of homeowners, with approximately 3.2 to 3.3 million families owning homes. Tunisia recommends more engagement with international community on urban policy process and sustainable development.

Malawi

Malawi's experience in developing their National Urban Policy (NUP) has been supported by UN-Habitat and the World Bank. They initiated a participatory process through National Habitat committees to ensure inclusivity. Urban resilience has been identified as a priority, leading to the updating of master plans, risk management plans, and resilience strategies. The government has increased the budget for urban development, focusing on national slum upgrading programs.

They have engaged in community mobilization efforts to emphasize the importance of collaboration and participation in upgrading initiatives. Partnerships with organizations like the Center for Community Mobilization and Development and Habitat for Humanity have contributed to progress. Malawi encourages other countries to share their experiences in developing their own NUPs, and they have engaged with Lesotho in this regard. The NUP is seen as a crucial tool for unlocking financial resources through collaboration with development partners.

Tanzania

Tanzania's country experience in human settlement development policy highlights the need for a review of their outdated policy. They have requested the support of UN-Habitat in this regard. The focus is on social and equitable urban development, considering spatial considerations. Better coordination is needed to guide action at both national and lower levels of governance, involving various sectors. Public investment in urban development is emphasized, aiming to improve the collective and inclusive urban environment.

The implementation of human settlement policies requires a strong commitment from both public and private sector stakeholders. Collaboration between local and national governments is crucial for effective human settlements development. Tanzania recognizes the importance of developing a National Urban Policy (NUP) and acknowledges that it requires strong collaboration among all stakeholders.

Djibouti

Djibouti's country experience involves the development of a strategic plan with support from the World Bank and Islamic Development Bank. They have focused on the development of 13 neighborhoods, addressing low-income areas, slum development, and disaster management. The objective is to prevent informal settlements and promote proper housing.

Funding is identified as a key challenge, and Djibouti has established a guarantee fund to address this issue. The country recognizes the importance of exchanging experiences with other nations and emphasizes the need for infrastructure development that considers climate-related issues.

Uganda

Uganda's country experience involves the implementation of national land policy and the physical planning act, along with three key policies focused on housing, land, and urban development. The government is working on better planning for three secondary cities and addressing infrastructure needs, human settlement, and slum upgrading. They are also emphasizing nature-based solutions to tackle climate change challenges. Capacity building for local governments and partnerships are crucial aspects of their approach. UN-Habitat has provided support in resolving land tenure issues, promoting women's land ownership, and addressing land disputes. Uganda is now placing a focus on industrialization, agriculture, and digitalization as part of its development goals. Uganda is seeking UN-Habitat's support to update or prepare its Urban Development Policy.

Central African Republic

The Central African Republic has faced challenges in planning due to repetitive coups; however, they are now establishing reforms for housing and land. The continuous crisis in the country has led to massive rural-urban migration and overcrowding in the capital. To address this, they have received support from the World Bank, private sector, and Italian partners to conduct feasibility and social-environmental studies for expanding and planning new cities. The country aims to develop eco-cities and has conducted studies, including a feasibility study for a port in Bangui. They are actively seeking partnerships to establish these new eco-cities. Additionally, they have introduced a law on climate change and held ministerial meetings to complement their efforts. The orientation law is currently being discussed in parliament to further guide their urban development initiatives. They hope for continued partnership between UN-Habitat and the government of Central African Republic, as well as other donor groups for creation of 'new cities'.

Eswatini

Eswatini has not yet benefited from UN-Habitat interventions but acknowledges the need for their support. They have implemented stand-alone urban governance, housing, and draft land policies, as well as an intergovernmental fiscal policy. However, they emphasize the importance of developing a comprehensive National Urban Policy (NUP) to ensure coordination and alignment between these policies.

Eswatini recognizes the close linkages between urban and rural areas, with people easily migrating between the two. They welcome any support from UN-Habitat to help address these urban-rural dynamics and promote sustainable development in the country through a national Urban Policy.

Nigeria

Nigeria has had a National Urban Policy (NUP) since 1982, which was reviewed in 2012 and is currently being further reviewed with the assistance of UN-Habitat. The aim is to align the policy with international best practices. However, the NUP is yet to be approved. UN-Habitat and other partners have provided support in terms of capacity building and multilateral funding.

Pilot projects have been implemented in collaboration with UN-Habitat and Korea, specifically in Niger State. Nigeria is now seeking assistance for implementing the NUP in other subnational states including Abiah State.

Guinea

In Guinea, the coastal area, particularly the capital city, faces significant challenges. The last urban planning effort was conducted in 1985 before UN-Habitat's involvement, and the most recent document on the coastal area dates to 1989. UN-Habitat has helped, and Guinea is currently in the process of drafting a National Urban Policy (NUP) and has a master plan in place.

The country is also working on a land use policy and aims to establish secondary cities. Collaborative studies with UN-Habitat and two other partners have been conducted to address urban development issues, encompassing political and territorial activities.

Liberia

Liberia has faced civil unrest until 2003, which has resulted in the proliferation of slums and poses a challenge for transforming into a metropolis. The government has been working on the formation of a local government act that addresses urbanization, and this process is currently ongoing.

They recently held their 4th National Urban Forum, engaging various stakeholders. However, Liberia faces challenges in terms of financing the implementation of urban policies and building institutional capacity.

Development Partners Dialogue

African Union

The African Union perspective highlights the importance of both global and regional frameworks for implementing urban policies. While supporting the implementation of global policies, the African Union has also developed its own regional framework called the African Urban Agenda. This agenda was created by African Union Member States themselves, with support from organizations like the United Nations and UN-Habitat. The African Union expresses gratitude for the support and hopes that the National Urban Policy (NUP) becomes the central point of reference for their meetings and discussions. The NUP is seen as a guiding document for other policies and a means to implement the New Urban Agenda (NUA) at the regional level. The African Union emphasizes the harmonization of legislation and the significance of the NUP for Africa's development. The African Union recommended that African countries and UN-Habitat use the harmonized framework for the New Urban Agenda in in Africa to guide their policy development processes.

SHELTER AFRIQUE
Financing Affordable Housing for Africa

Shelter Afrique's emphasizes their willingness to support different countries in the implementation of urban policies. They highlight the importance of monitoring and evaluation to ensure effective implementation and the need to integrate various policies related to urban and housing development. They mention the significance of pilot projects, particularly in the context of urban regeneration, and express their interest in partnering with different countries and organizations like the African Union to work on such initiatives.

Unlocking financing through national policies is also highlighted as a crucial aspect, as it provides a framework for development partners to align their priorities and secure funding. The importance of implementation, capacity building, and accountability is stressed, as well as the role of development financing institutions. Shelter Afrique reaffirms their commitment to support countries in both the developmental and execution aspects of urban policies.

Wrap up and Next Steps

Some of the key points emerging from this engaging session include:

1. The important role of National Habitat Committees in supporting NUP development was highlighted.
2. National urban policy has the potential to unlock financing opportunities for sustainable development.
3. Focus on capacity development, exchange of experiences, and utilizing National Urban Policies (NUPs) for financing coordination.
4. Noted the continuing demand and request for UN-Habitat support on NUP development.
5. UN-Habitat will disseminate a survey to assess the state of NUPs, which will be reported in the next edition of Global State of National Urban Policy.
6. Encourage continued exchange of experiences and engagement between countries and partners.