



**THIRD INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON  
URBAN-RURAL LINKAGES**

Songyang County LISHUI CITY, ZHEJIANG PROVINCE  
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA | 29<sup>th</sup> Oct - 01<sup>st</sup> Nov, 2023

# CONCEPT NOTE

## THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON URBAN-RURAL LINKAGES

### Theme:

*Enhancing Urban-Rural Connectivity for Better Livelihoods*

### Sub-themes:



Youth



Rural Development



Resource Distribution



Transportation



Anticipated number of **participants**: 200-300



**Anticipated groups:** Representatives from relevant UN Agencies, private sector, government officials and other scholars, professors, and relevant individuals from reputable universities in Songyang county, China at large and around the world.



**Date:** 29<sup>th</sup> October to 1<sup>st</sup> November, 2023



**Location:** Songyang County, Lishui City, Zhejiang Province, China



**Leading partners:** UN-Habitat, Zhejiang Provincial Department of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, Lishui Municipal People's Government, Zhejiang Provincial Department of Transportation.



**Organizers:** UN-Habitat and Songyang County People's Government

## BACKGROUND



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While the world is urbanizing especially in Asia and Africa, the interdependencies between the urban and rural areas still exist and the development gap between rural and urban areas cannot be overlooked. This has been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 global pandemic, Food crisis from the Ukraine war and other environmental related crises. Nevertheless, achieving sustainable development is more likely if there is a definite move away from the economic, environmental and social dichotomies between urban and rural areas. Urban-Rural Linkages touch on a broad variety of thematic areas, ranging from urban and territorial planning and development, strengthening small and intermediate towns, enabling spatial flows of people, products, services, culture and knowledge, mobility and migration, food systems, and sustainable public health among others. The global agendas and most importantly the **agenda 2030 for sustainable development** and the **New Urban Agenda** further point out that urban, rural and peri urban areas shouldn't be considered in isolation in decision making. Rather, there should be efforts to intensify and maximize the potential benefits in settlements in the urban -rural continuum since they are mutually dependent. This includes directing initiatives in small and

intermediary cities which serve as a bridge between the urban and rural areas, serving the rural counterparts with most urban services.

The UN-Habitat strategic plan 2020-2025 also points out the need to ensure no one and no space is left behind in the urban rural continuum most importantly through two of its goals namely 1) reduced spatial inequality and poverty in communities across the urban-rural continuum and 2) enhanced shared prosperity of cities and regions. Further, UN-Habitat and partners further initiated the guiding principles of urban rural linkages development process, being completed, and launched at the first UN-Habitat Assembly in 2019.

This was underpinned by the adoption of a resolution by member states titled "Enhancing urban-rural linkages for sustainable urbanization and human settlements". During the same period, Songyang County in China which has made tremendous work on rural revitalization joined forces with UN-Habitat and became the host and sponsor of the first ever forum on urban rural linkages in 2019. This collaboration has continued since then making them the host of the second and this forthcoming third forum.

The International Forum on Urban-Rural Linkages (IFURL) is a platform by UN-Habitat whose aim is to promote urban-rural linkages (URL) as an effective approach for sustainable development. The focus is to promote sustainable rural transformation amidst urbanization through diverse topics. The theme of the first forum was “Rural Revitalization through Innovation and Valorization” and was held on 11-13 November 2019. Over 200 participants from 17 countries attended the Forum, featuring 37 presentations on different themes and producing the “Songyang Consensus.”

# IFURL

**FIRST INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON URBAN-RURAL LINKAGES**  
Songyang County | LISHUI CITY, ZHEJIANG PROVINCE, PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA | 10th -14th November, 2019



**200**

Participants



**17**

countries



**18**

International Organisations



**32**

Guest speakers



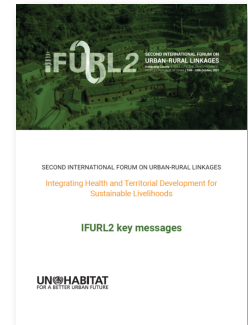
During the First International forum on urban rural linkages in Songyang, China 2019 © UN-Habitat/Julius Mwelu

The second Forum shaped its theme as “Integrating Health and Territorial Development for Sustainable Livelihoods” building on the first Forum’s success and articulation of urban-rural revitalization. The Forum took place from 18-20 October 2021, which was one and a half years into the COVID-19 pandemic at a time of intensified focus on the intersection of health, equity, and prosperity. The successful lessons from the previous two IFURLs has already proven the resilience, solidarity and determination needed to enhance urban-rural linkages for sustainable urbanization.

 **SECOND INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON URBAN-RURAL LINKAGES**  
 Songyang County LISHUI CITY, ZHEJIANG PROVINCE, PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF CHINA | 19th - 20th October, 2021



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Site visit during the third International forum on urban rural linkages in Songyang, China 2021 © UN-Habitat/Julius Mwelu

**IFURL3  
SUB THEMES****Youth****Resources  
Distribution****Rural  
Development****Transportation**

The third international forum on URL, will similarly be co-hosted and co-organized by UN-Habitat, Zhejiang Provincial Department of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, Lishui Municipal People's Government and Songyang County People's Government in November 2023. The theme of the forum will be 'Enhancing Urban-Rural Connectivity for Better Livelihoods' which will be further discussed elaborated through four sub themes, namely: youth, resources distribution, rural development and transportation.

The third forum comes at a time when the world is recovering from challenges such as reverse migration and mobility, health issues, enlarged territorial inequities and disproportionate impacts from the recent global crises.



## ABOUT THE FORUM LOCATION: SONGYANG COUNTY



Shangtian Village in Songyang, China 2019 © UN-Habitat/Julius Mwelu



In May 2019, the People's Government of Songyang County, as the only county-level representative among the three entities in China, participated in the first UN-Habitat Conference at the invitation of UN-Habitat, and signed a letter of intent for cooperation. Songyang organized and launched the 1st and 2nd Urban-Rural Linkage Forum in November 2019 and October 2021 respectively, yielding fruitful results. As such, Songyang agreed to hold such forum every two years.

In recent years, under the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, Songyang County has implemented the strategies put forward in the 20th CPC National Congress and of the central, provincial and municipal government, deepened the Double Eight Strategy, focused on the Two Priorities as key windows, adhered to the development concept that stresses "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets" in an innovative way to boost urban-rural integration and regional coordinated development, and explore path towards urban-rural sustainable development.

It has strived to promote common prosperity, and become the demonstration county for concentrated conservation of traditional villages, one of the first pilot areas in Zhejiang province to narrow the gap between urban and rural areas, the first pilot county in Zhejiang province for the development of smart traffic industry, and the pilot area of county-level organizational reform of the Communist Youth League. Songyang's 78 villages have been included in the list of Chinese traditional villages, and its "Save Old Residences" project has been selected into the Rural Revitalization Strategy (2018-2022), and written into the No. 1 Central Document for 2022 and 2023.

To tell Songyang's stories well and promote the exchanges and cooperation in the coordinated and sustainable development between urban and rural areas as well as the urban-rural sustainable development of other areas, the 3rd Urban-Rural Linkage Forum serves as a research platform that brings together case studies in the field of narrowing the urban-rural gap, so that the concept of Chinese-style modernization and common prosperity in the county can be spread more widely.



Zhulin Theater Songyang © UN-Habitat/Julius Mwelu

# THE THEME OF THE FORUM



Urban and rural areas do not live in isolation from each other but are mutually dependent. There is continuous mobility of people, goods, services, capital and information among others. There are tangible and intangible flows between the two spaces which require supporting infrastructure to necessitate these interactions. The theme of the forum focuses on the connectivity of the two spaces with specific detail on rural development, youth, distribution of resources and transportation. Rural development is a vehicle in enhancing the utilization of the potential of rural areas while enhancing equitable development of urban and rural areas. Equitable development will also be coupled with mutual sharing of resources between urban and rural areas. Both spaces, urban and rural have a comparative advantage and this should be exploited through initiatives supporting equitable distribution of resources. Transportation enables the mobility of people and goods thereby providing a channel for depriving or crowning the rural areas.

Transportation is also complex and involves a wide range of sectors as healthcare, education, employment, energy, housing, basic services among others especially in the context of urban-rural linkages. Similarly, it involves different actors, institutions, policies and even environmental landscape. Therefore, context specific transportation needs must be defined for relevant strategies to enhance useful urban rural interactions. The majority of human mobility from rural areas are the youth, this means understanding them is key for effective and relevant urban and rural development. Youths have also become major contributors socio-economic development through innovations among others which are not only required in urban but also rural areas.

In a nut shell the theme of this forum aims to address 4Ws: WHAT- Connectivity, WHERE- urban and rural areas, HOW- Rural development + equitable sharing of resources + integrated urban and rural transportation and special focus on WHO- the youth.

## OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of the forum will be to discuss with experiences from Songyang County, China and other parts of the world effective mechanisms for enhancing effective and efficient connectivity between urban and rural areas for better livelihoods. The specific objectives include



1. To exchange successful experiences and practices on rural development, integrated urban-rural transportation and equitable distribution of resources in urban and rural areas



2. To share innovative tools and approaches for better and effective urban-rural connectivity



3. To engage with policymakers and other stakeholders on the significance and the modalities of enhancing equitable urban and rural development with youth at the center



4. To call for broader awareness and solidarity on urban rural linkages including establishing sustainable connections with global partners as UN entities, the NGOs, academic institutions among others

## FORUM SESSIONS

### i. Keynote speeches and plenary sessions.



The keynote speeches will deepen audience overall understandings of the theme “Enhancing urban-rural connectivity for better livelihoods”. The key note speeches will be by the co-organizers and other high level representatives from select organizations. They will give a broad overview of the theme along with their ongoing initiatives on the subject. This will be on the first and last day at the Tianyuan Mingdu Hotel



### ii. Thematic sessions and field trips

There will be four proposed thematic sessions as per the sub-themes namely youth, resources distribution, transportation and rural development. The speakers will be called upon to share outcomes from research in their different capacities all contributing to the overall theme of the forum and the specific subject of the session. Each session will have a moderator and five speakers as appropriate.



# AGENDA

## DAY ONE (OCTOBER 29<sup>th</sup>)

Time (Beijing)	Activity
	Register and check-in Place: Tianyuan Mingdu Hotel
12:30 - 13:30	Warming-up activity (Songyang Hing-pitched Tunes)
18:00 - 20:00	Dinner party at Songzhou Hall, Tianyuan Mingdu Hotel

## DAY TWO (OCTOBER 30<sup>th</sup>)

Time (Beijing)	Activity
08:15 - 09:00	Departure from Tianyuan Mingdu Hotel to visit the “Window of Songyang”
09:00 - 09:15	Trip to the opening ceremony at Tianyuan Mingdu Hotel
09:30 - 10:15	Opening ceremony and welcoming address at Mingdu Hall, Tianyuan Mingdu Hotel
10:30 - 12:00	Keynote speeches at Mingdu Hall, Tianyuan Mingdu Hotel
12:30 - 13:30	Tianyuan Mingdu Hotel
13:15 - 17:00	Field visit and on-site meeting 1 on the topic “Youth” Trip: Xiangrui E-commerce Park → Dalutan Post
13:15 - 17:00	Field visit and on-site meeting 2 on the topic “Resource Distribution” Trip: Shanxiayang Village (on-site communication)
17:30 - 19:00	Dinner (at Tianyuan Mingdu Hotel)
19:15 - 21:15	Networking (at the Hotels)

**DAY THREE (OCTOBER 31<sup>st</sup>)**

Time (Beijing)	Activity
08:30 - 12:00	Field visit and on-site meeting 3 on the topic "Rural Development" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trip: Longshan Village</li> <li>• Field visit and on-site meeting 4 on the topic "Transportation"</li> <li>• Trip: Beishan Village →Chenjiapu Village</li> </ul>
12:30 - 13:30	At the hotels
14:15 - 15:45	Group discussion at Meeting Room, Tianyuan Mingdu Hotel
18:00 - 19:00	Dinner (at Tianyuan Mingdu Hotel)
19:15 - 21:15	Networking (at the Hotels)

**DAY FOUR (NOVEMBER 1<sup>st</sup>)**

Time (Beijing)	Activity
	Guests Depature
12:00 - 13:00	At the Hotels



**Date:** October 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>, 2021



**Format:** Hybrid. Chinese participants will physically attend the Forum in Songyang County, Lishui City, Zhejiang Province, China. International participants will attend the Forum virtually.



**Co-hosted and Co-organized by:**

UN-Habitat, Zhejiang Provincial Department of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, Health Commission of Zhejiang Province, Lishui Municipal People's Government, Songyang County People's Government.

## BACKGROUND



IMPLEMENTING  
THE NEW  
URBAN AGENDA

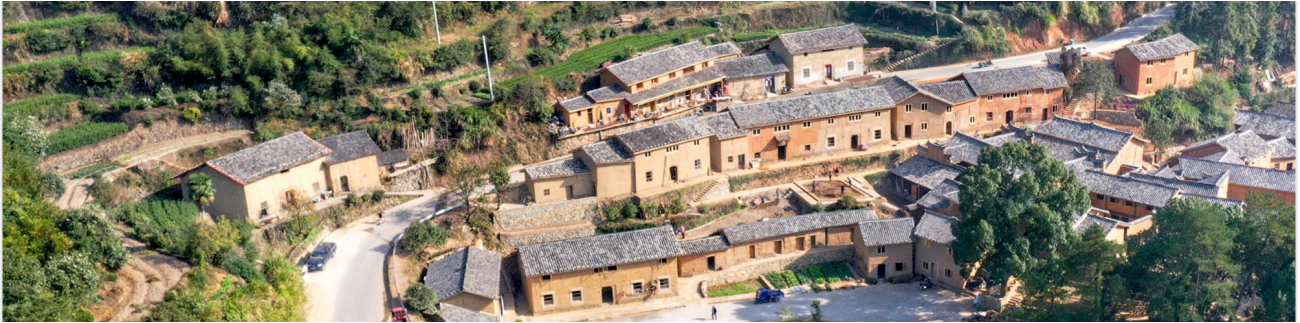


The promotion of urban-rural linkages through functional territories can help reduce regional inequalities and increase resource efficiencies. Formulating and implementing policies, and planning interventions that reduce territorial inequality and strengthen urban-rural territories have the potential to generate better and more sustainable development results that will meet many of the goals and targets in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda (NUA) among other international agendas. Urban-rural linkages are increasingly vital to successful interventions for nature-based solutions that build resilience to climate change, protect biodiversity, strengthen food systems, restore ecosystems and reduce risk from disaster and shocks.

The NUA makes numerous specific references to conditions in both urban and rural areas, simultaneous urban and rural development, interactions and connectivity, and the need to support territorial systems that integrate both urban and rural functions across the urban-rural continuum. This global strategy has addressed the fundamental linkages between health and the sustainable development of human settlements.

It has clarified the importance of those linkages and that health is not only about the provision of health care services. The successful implementation of the NUA hinges on a clear understanding of how health of both ecosystems and human communities can act as a driver of inclusive, sustainable development and on the identification and pursuit of practical steps for improving the health and wellbeing of all people.

Among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, SDG 11 is dedicated to making human settlements inclusive, safe, sustainable and resilient. Targets key to achieving this goal such as housing, air quality, transport and ecosystem services including food and water are important determinants of people's health. Improving health will remain a global priority with SDG 3 focused on ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages. Healthy environments and populations are essential to realizing human potential as well as the objective of equitable, inclusive and economically vibrant human settlements. As the United Nations focal agency for human settlements comprising the urban-rural continuum, UN-Habitat is mandated to foster the implementation of SDG11 and NUA.



This is clearly stipulated in two out of four of the domains of change of the strategic plan 2020-2023 that is:



1. Reducing poverty and spatial inequalities in the urban-rural continuum



2. Enhanced prosperity of cities and regions. The implementation of the two domains of change of the strategic plan includes among many other programs, the work on urban-rural linkages which is broadly guided by the “Urban Rural Linkages: Guiding Principles and Framework for Action”<sup>1</sup>.

This provides a reference for revising national and sub-national rural, urban and territorial policy frameworks including health sector.

A resolution on urban-rural linkages towards sustainable urbanization was also adopted by member states in 2019 during the UN-Habitat assembly.

In the subject of health and territorial development, UN-Habitat in collaboration with WHO launched a guide for “integrating health in urban and territorial planning”<sup>2</sup>. This has become an instrumental tool for member states in the response and recovery mechanisms to COVID-19.

Similarly, other related products by UN-Habitat include compendium of inspiring practices on health<sup>3</sup>, upcoming paper on urban rural linkages and health and an issue brief<sup>4</sup> on COVID-19 through the Lens of Urban Rural Linkages-Guiding Principles and Framework for Action (URL-GP) among others.

<sup>1</sup> To download this publication, please visit <https://unhabitat.org/urban-rural-linkages-guiding-principles>.

<sup>2</sup> To download this publication, please visit <https://unhabitat.org/integrating-health-in-urban-and-territorial-planning-a-sourcebook-for-urban-leaders-health-and>

<sup>3</sup> To download this publication, please visit <https://unhabitat.org/compendium-of-inspiring-practices-health-edition-international-guidelines-on-urban-and-territorial-planning>.

<sup>4</sup> To download this publication, please visit <https://unhabitat.org/issue-brief-covid-19-through-the-lens-of-urban-rural-linkages-guiding-principles-and-framework-for>



## EXPLORING THE THEME OF THE IFURL2

While health and urban agendas are becoming more comprehensive, they do not yet fully appreciate the importance of the urban-rural continuum and often maintain a rural-urban dichotomy in their analysis and prescription. The spread of outbreaks such as COVID-19 has brought attention to reverse migration from urban areas to rural areas and the territorial inequities of health systems including the lack of access to health facilities, poor nutrition, hunger, and disproportionate impacts on vulnerable groups along the urban-rural continuum. Health agendas do not yet extend that analysis to a more integrated understanding of spatial systems and territories.

Re-examining health through the lens of urban-rural linkages can play a role in addressing the following Challenges



climate change



Ecosystem and biodiversity loss



Social determinants

Health is influenced by many factors beyond the health sector. Both the built environment and natural environment can directly or indirectly affect human health and livelihoods. Re-examining health through the lens of urban-rural linkages can play a key role in addressing the rise of two global phenomena that may bring not only unprecedented challenges but also opportunities to human settlements. First, **climate change** affects the social and environmental determinants of health – clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food and secure shelter. WHO has estimated that between 2030 and 2050, climate change is expected to cause approximate 250,000 additional deaths per year, from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhea and heat stress. Second, **ecosystem and biodiversity loss** can have significant direct human health impacts. Changes in ecosystem services can also indirectly affect local migration and livelihoods of people. National, subnational and local policies, strategies and plans can create or exacerbate major health risks for populations or they can foster healthier environments, lifestyles and create healthy and resilient human settlements along the urban-rural continuum.

Besides the environmental dimensions, the **social determinants** of health must be taken into account. The unbalanced urban-rural investment patterns have widened the inequities in health between urban and rural areas. It is vital to place health and health equity at the heart of urban governance and integrated territorial planning.

The above-mentioned health issues are highly complex and often linked through the social determinants of health. This requires a collaborative approach to improve the health of all people by incorporating health considerations into decision-making across sectors and policy areas. **Health in All Policies**<sup>5</sup> is an approach to public policies across sectors that systematically takes into account the health implications of decisions, seek synergies and avoids harmful health impacts in order to improve population health and health equity. It provides a means to identify and avoid those unintended impacts of public policy that can be detrimental to the health of populations or subgroups of the population, thus reducing risk.

With this background, IFURL2 aims to serve as a platform to promote urban rural linkages for sustainable development and wellbeing for all across the urban-rural continuum. It also provides all participants with the opportunity to showcase country-specific case studies, innovative approaches and tools, emerging knowledge on rural development and health issues, and to learn from each other.

<sup>5</sup> Health in all policies: Helsinki statement. Framework for country action. World Health Organization, 2014.

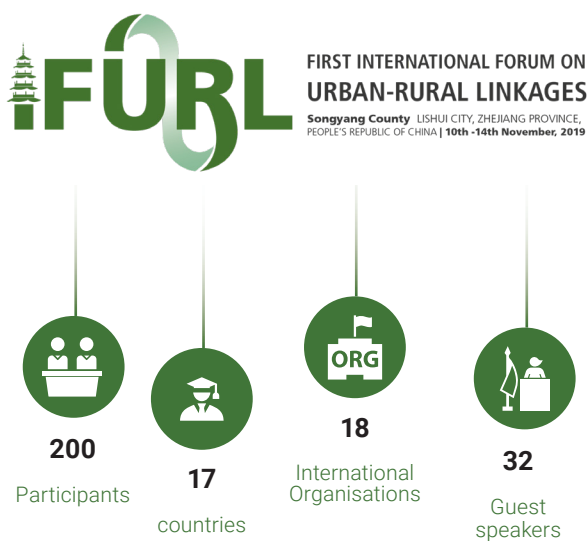
# OVERVIEW OF IFURL



The International Forum on Urban-Rural Linkages (IFURL) is one of the key activities of the UN-Habitat Urban-Rural Linkages programme<sup>6</sup> which includes, capturing, analyzing and promoting the inspiring practices implemented in rural Songyang County among other territories in the world. The story of Songyang's rural revitalization in the context of urbanisation provides valuable lessons and inspiration to other rural areas in other parts of the world. Innovative sustainable development initiatives have the potential to improve rural areas, strengthen urban-rural linkages and contribute to the overall development and prosperity of human settlements.

The first IFURL<sup>7</sup>, themed "Rural Revitalization through Innovations and Valorisation" took place in Songyang County, Lishui City, Zhejiang Province, China, between 11 to 13 November 2019. The forum was attended by over 200 participants from 17 countries and 18 international organizations with 32 guest speakers in the various sessions. The event entailed a variety of sessions which included round table discussions, keynote speeches and field trips within Songyang County.

The event was co-hosted and co-organized by UN-Habitat, Zhejiang Provincial Department of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, Lishui Municipal People's Government and Songyang County People's Government. The Forum adopted the Songyang Consensus, showing co-organizers' dedication and commitment in restoring rural vitality, reforming rural economy, and sustainable urban-rural development. The outcome of the forum was shared during the tenth session of world urban forum held at Abu Dhabi in February 2020, where IFURL 2 was also officially announced.







<sup>6</sup> For more information on the programme, please visit <https://urbanpolicyplatform.org/urban-rural-linkages/>.

<sup>7</sup> For more information on the first IFURL, please visit <https://urbanpolicyplatform.org/ifurl/>



Similarly, the second IFURL will be co-hosted and co-organized by UN-Habitat, Zhejiang Provincial Department of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, Health Commission of Zhejiang Province, Lishui Municipal People's Government and Songyang County People's Government. The overall objectives of the forum will be:

- 
 3. To share recent experiences and good practices in the prevention and containment of infectious diseases and the post-outbreak recovery measures in urban, rural and peri-urban areas.
- 
 4. To highlight the relevance and importance of urban-rural linkages in public health to promote well-being for all.
- 
 5. To discuss ways to promote inclusive development in public health and improve health and well-being for all across the urban-rural continuum.
- 
 6. To share and promote innovative tools and methods to integrate comprehensive health approaches in national, subnational and regional planning policies in the context of the implementation of SDGs and the New Urban Agenda.

To achieve these objectives the forum will entail various activities which include round table discussions/peer learning sessions, keynote speeches, exhibition, call for papers and case studies and field trips in Songyang County. The forum is of interest and benefit to a broad base of stakeholders: government authorities, relevant international organization representatives, academia, and other stakeholders working in the urban-rural continuum in different capacities.

Some of these activities as the call for papers and case studies will be undertaken as part of the preparation for the forum. The rest will be onsite during the forum in Songyang County. Considering the current global situation of COVID-19 and possible travel restrictions during the Forum, hosting the Forum will be held in a hybrid manner with both physical sessions in Songyang and virtual sessions using online conference tools.



# TENTATIVE FORUM AGENDA 1

## DAY ONE (OCTOBER 19<sup>TH</sup>)

Time (Beijing)	Activity
Till 12:00	Domestic participants registration
12:00-13:30	Lunch
14 :00-14 :30	Group photo
14:30-15:30	Opening ceremony & Welcoming remarks
15:40-16:40	Keynote speeches
17:00-18:30	Dinner
19:00-21:00	High-level Dialogue: The Built Environment and Health

## DAY TWO (OCTOBER 20<sup>TH</sup>)

Time (Beijing)	Activity
9:00-12:00	Field Visit ( <i>Domestic participants only</i> )
12:00-13:30	Lunch
15:00-16:00	Thematic Session 1: Public Health, Sustainable Healthy Diets and Food systems
16:00-17:00	Thematic Session 2: Traditional Medicine, Local Knowledge and Culture
17:00-18:30	Dinner
19:00-20:00	Round Table Discussion 1: Health as a key dimension of territorial planning and governance
20:00-21:00	Round Table Discussion 2: Lessons learned from the COVID pandemic and crisis management
21:00-22:00	Closing Ceremony