



Financing the transition to sustainable cities and communities: challenges and opportunities

Time: 15:00-16:30

Room: Plenary

Interpretation: Unavailable

Addressing cities' multiple problems and revamping urban infrastructure require sustainable financing models that support housing and urban development policies. There are a number of long established, tried and tested financing methods for national and local governments to fund necessary public infrastructure at city level (including taxes, central government transfers, borrowing and Public Private Partnerships). Multiple instruments can be used to meet policy aims through financial inducements. For instance, to promote access to affordable decent housing and basic services for all, especially vulnerable groups, governments widely use housing subsidies, guarantees, support to rental housing, and other approaches.

As the legacy of the global financial crisis persists and given the multiple challenges cities and human settlements face (such as ageing, international migration, urban sprawl, climate change and environmental degradation), there is a growing gap between available and needed financial resources to support access to affordable and decent housing and infrastructure, including transport for all. Addressing this gap requires structural measures, including the development of robust and transparent legal and institutional frameworks that create space for partnership, dialogue and representation. In addition, innovative financial mechanisms and clear commitments are required to ensure the necessary financial and institutional resources for SDG implementation.

The round table will highlight the major trends and mechanisms for financing this integrated Urban SDG agenda for housing and urban development in the UNECE region. It will review the needs of various sectors (basic services, including waste management and sanitation, sustainable transport, disaster risk reduction, energy-efficiency and ICTs) and discuss measures and good practices related to SDG 11 and its various targets. It will further focus on securing future funding and finance for public infrastructure, and access to affordable and adequate housing, which are among the key challenges for the UNECE region.

Furthermore, the round table will discuss, the role of the state and private sectors and their interplay in housing financing and how various sources of finance can meet different needs. The round table will also address best practices and approaches to tackle social and economic challenges, including new models of public and private partnerships and the contribution of appropriate regulatory and policy frameworks to support long-term stability.

Questions for discussion

What policy tools and financial mechanisms do policy makers use that promote access to affordable decent housing and basic services? What are the challenges they face in financing effective policies? (11.1)

What are the policy tools and financial mechanisms they can use to reduce the environmental footprint of cities, improve air quality and manage waste, ensure sustainable transport and disaster risk management? How can they harness the power of ICT and other innovative technologies and processes? (11.2, 11.5, 11.6, 11.b)

Which governance structures for housing and urban finance have been shown to be successful? Who are key stakeholders in urban and housing finance? How does integrated and participatory urban planning promote effective use of existing financial resources and leveraging new sources of finance? (11.3, 11.a)

Objectives & Focus

The round table will focus on the following topics:

- Housing finance - reassessing housing policies and financial mechanisms
- Urban finance
- Smart Sustainable Cities
- Sustainable real estate markets
- Financing resilient infrastructure, including transport
- Investments in institutions and policy solutions at the local, national and regional levels.

The aims of the round table are:

- To discuss how activities supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development in connection with the achievement of the SDG 11 are financed in different countries at national and local levels; to provide a mutual learning space where policymakers can interact with their peers and other relevant stakeholders in order to exchange experiences, propose solutions to address identified problems and anticipate future developments.

- To identify lessons learned and experiences; and to compile a set of key action areas and good practices that can be shared with a wider audience.

In the SDG context

The key focus of this round table will be on SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities. However, while taking an integrated view of urban development, it will also touch on various other sustainable development goals. Progress in financing the transition to more sustainable cities and communities is also linked to ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being (SDG 3), improving water management and protect water-related ecosystems (SDG 6), improving energy efficiency in buildings (SDG 7), promoting sustainable economic growth as well as full and productive employment and decent work for all (SDG 8), building resilient infrastructure and promoting sustainable industrialization (SDG 9), facilitating the transition to low-carbon society through emissions reduction and promoting developments in renewable energy (SDG 13), strengthening sustainable management of natural resources (SDG 15), and strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development (SDG 17).

Target audience

This round table will be of interest to policymakers and other stakeholders involved in regional development, urban planning, housing provision, financing of public services, infrastructure development, coordination between different government levels and environmental management.

Case studies

COUNTRY	TITLE AND AREA OF CASE STUDY	FOCAL POINT IN COUNTRY
Italy	Financing for renovating school buildings	Stefano Scalera Counselor of the Italian Minister of Economy and Finance
Czech Republic	Rental housing finance for older persons	Daniela Grabmüllerová Director, International Relations Department, Ministry of Regional Development
Glasgow City Council	Achieving SDGs at city level through the Glasgow City Development Plan	Brian M. Evans Head of Urbanism The Glasgow School of Art
Belgium	A Flemish instrument for urban renewal projects with attention to environmental sustainability, climate neutrality and mobility	Matthias De Moor International Policy Advisor Government of Flanders

Department of Environment
and Spatial Development

Council of Europe
Development Bank

Fostering competition in small
housing markets - innovative housing
project in Montenegro

Samir Kulenovic
Technical Advisor for Housing
and Urban Development

Key participants

Moderators: Marco Kamiya, Coordinator a.i., Urban Economy and Finance Branch, UN-Habitat & Krista Kampus, Senior Adviser and Head of the Sustainable Development Unit – Baltic 2030, Council of the Baltic Sea States

Rapporteur: Damegul Kamieva, Deputy Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Kazakhstan to the UNO and other international organisations in Geneva

Resource persons to provide expertise: THE PEP Programme - the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (WHO-UNECE); EIB; UN-Habitat

Lead organizers of round table: UNECE

Other contributors to round table organization: Council of Europe Development Bank, Housing Europe Federation; Canton of Geneva

Background materials

- [Geneva UN Charter on Housing and Sustainable Development \(2015\)](#)
- [Geneva Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Housing and Urban Development \(2016\)](#)
- [Housing Finance Systems for Countries in Transition: Principles and Examples \(June 2005\)](#)
- [Paris Declaration "City in Motion - People First!" \(2014\)](#)
- [Social Housing in the UNECE Region \(2015\)](#)
- [Collection Methodology for Key Performance Indicators for Smart Sustainable Cities \(2017\)](#)
- [New Urban Agenda \(2016\)](#)
- [Habitat III Regional Report for the UNECE Region \(2016\)](#)
- [Connecting cities and communities with the Sustainable Development Goals \(2017\)](#)
- [Strategy for Sustainable Housing and Land Management in the ECE region for the period 2014-2020 \(2013\)](#)
- [Climate Neutral Cities: How to make cities less energy and carbon intensive and more resilient to climatic challenges \(2012\)](#).