

Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Housing and Land Management

Seventy-third session

Geneva, 24 -25 September 2012

Item 9 of the provisional agenda

Information on outcomes of global meetings

**Rio+20 Conference and Sixth World Urban
Forum: outcomes and implications for the
work of the UNECE Committee for Housing
and Land Management**

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This note contains information on the outcomes of two global conferences on sustainable urban development, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, 20-22 June 2012, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; and Sixth World Urban Forum, 1-7 September 2012, Naples, Italy; and ensuing recommendations for the future work of the Committee.

The Committee is invited to take note of the outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference and the Sixth World Urban Forum.

I. Introduction

1. Sustainable urban development is an important part of the mandate of the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management. It is also one of the key priorities of work of UNECE, and as such is included in the UNECE Executive Secretary's compact with the Secretary-General.

2. Two global conferences addressing sustainable urban development took place in 2012: the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (20-22 June); and the sixth session of the World Urban Forum in Naples, Italy (1-7 September). The outcomes of the two events are relevant to the work of the Committee, which should consider them when developing its strategic documents, including the programme of work for 2014-2015.

II. Rio+20 Conference and its outcomes

3. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development focused on two themes:

- a green economy, and poverty eradication
- the institutional framework for sustainable development.

4. The main issues it covered were:

- decent jobs
- energy
- sustainable cities
- food security and sustainable agriculture
- water and oceans
- disaster readiness.

5. The secretariat of the Committee on Housing and Land Management participated in the Conference. A Rio+20 informal Side Event "Greening the Real Estate Market: The Development of a Sustainable Real Estate Sector" was organized by the International Real Estate Federation Brazilian Chapter, with the support of the Committee's Real Estate Market Advisory Group. The Side Event discussed the importance of a healthy real estate market to a sustainable economy and presented the UNECE *Policy Framework for Sustainable Real Estate Markets*.

6. The Rio+20 Conference outcome document "The Future We Want" focuses on areas where the Committee is already very active:

- sustainable urban development
- energy efficient and affordable housing
- disaster risk reduction
- reducing climate risks in urban planning
- informal settlements.

7. The document raised the importance of urban planning and housing policies for sustainable development to a much higher political level.

8. It also strengthens the role of the regional commissions of the United Nations in promoting sustainable development in their member States.

9. The Conference outlined the following key issues, which are relevant to sustainable urban development:

Strategic, including, spatial, planning

- (a) a holistic approach to urban development and human settlements, including an integrated approach to planning and building sustainable cities and urban settlements;
- (b) mixed-use urban planning;
- (c) long-term visions for cities' development;
- (d) land administration and real estate markets for economic recovery;
- (e) promoting urban regeneration;
- (f) energy efficiency programmes in building management.

Social and cultural aspects

- (a) affordable and social housing, access to basic services;
- (b) conservation of the natural and cultural heritage in cities.

Environmental aspects

- (a) healthy housing/health living environment;
- (b) protection and restoration of safe and green urban spaces;
- (c) safe and clean drinking water and sanitation;
- (d) healthy air quality.

Disaster risk reduction

Includes disaster risk reduction, resilience and climate risks in urban planning.

Transport and energy in an urban context

- (a) adopting energy-efficiency programmes in building management and developing sustainable locally appropriate transport systems in cities;
- (b) green cities' procurement policies.

Institutional and financial aspects

- (a) strengthening existing cooperation mechanisms or platforms, partnership arrangements, interagency cooperation;
- (b) involvement of stakeholders, especially municipalities; public-private partnerships for sustainable urban development.

III. Sixth World Urban Forum and its outcomes

10. The Sixth World Urban Forum, organized by UN-HABITAT, was held on 1-7 September 2012 in Naples, Italy. It focused on ongoing rapid global urbanization processes and the future of the cities.

11. At the Forum, the Committee Bureau and the secretariat held a networking event entitled “Housing Agendas in Transition: UNECE Country Profiles and their impact on housing policies in countries in transition”. The event was opened by Minister for Public Administration and Housing of Sweden, Mr. Stefan Attefall, Support to the networking event was provided by the UN-HABITAT Moscow office, which funded the travel of presenters from Azerbaijan, Belarus and Tajikistan, and the English-Russian interpretation.

12. The event presented findings, recommendations and lessons learned from the Country Profiles prepared for transition countries in recent years, including Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Ukraine. Participants discussed housing policies in these and other transition countries, as well as the methodology for preparing the country profiles.

13. As a parallel event to the World Urban Forum, a round-table discussion on real estate market stability was held with the Chamber of Commerce of Naples. Participants discussed the UNECE Real Estate Market Advisory Group’s publication, *Policy Framework for Sustainable Real Estate Markets* and potential reforms for the Italian real estate market in the light of policy recommendations by the Real Estate Market Advisory Group.

14. With the City of Vienna and UN-Habitat, UNECE also held a networking event “Energy-efficient housing as a participatory effort between policies, private sector and the people in the wider European region”. It also presented a new project to develop a casebook on good practices in energy efficiency in the housing sector and shared case studies from the region on energy-efficient housing practices. Support to the networking event was provided by the UN-HABITAT Moscow office, which funded the travel of presenters from Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine, and the English-Russian interpretation.

15. UNECE was present at the high-level interagency meeting organized by UN-Habitat during the Forum. This meeting brought together representatives of about 20 United Nations agencies and programmes. Participants discussed interagency coordination to prepare the Global Housing Strategy, which will be in effect until 2025 and the organization of the Habitat III Global Conference in 2016. It was proposed to form a United Nations interagency Urban Forum Group, which will support the preparations for Habitat III.

IV. Recommendations for the future work of the Committee based on the outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference and the World Urban Forum

16. The Rio+20 Conference and the World Urban Forum highlighted the following priorities for activities in the UNECE region:

- renovation of the housing stock in an ecological and energy-efficient way
- urban planning for carbon-neutral cities

17. The importance of intersectoral and interagency cooperation was stressed at both events. Promoting sustainable urban development offers UNECE divisions an excellent opportunity to work together. An internal interdivisional working group could be established to coordinate the activities in this area through regular meetings and joint events. Its priorities would be in line with those outlined in the Rio+20 Conference outcome document “The Future we want”, the Secretary-General’s Five-year action agenda and the Secretary-General’s Sustainable Energy for all Initiative.

18. The group would include representatives of the following UNECE subprogrammes: Sustainable Energy, Transport, Trade, Forestry and Timber, Environment and Statistics. Its work would be coordinated by the secretariat of the Committee on Housing and Land Management.