

Forum of Mayors

6 October 2020, Bâtiment des Forces Motrices, Geneva

Concept Note for the

First meeting of the Steering Committee on 9 January 2020

Draft 7 January 2019

I. Introduction

1. The UNECE Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management agreed “to dedicate one of the three days of the Committee session to discussions, and the participation of, local authorities, in particular mayors” (ECE/HBP/201). This document presents a draft concept note on organization of the Forum of Mayors.
2. The draft concept note was presented and discussed at the Committee Bureau meeting on 17 December 2019. This document presents its updated version with comments of the Bureau members incorporated.

II. Background

3. The [Day of Cities](#), organized by UNECE on 8 April 2019 in Geneva, featured two roundtables in which mayors and deputy mayors from UNECE member States presented best practices from their cities, described challenges encountered in trying to make their cities smarter and more sustainable, and elaborated their vision for the future of urban sustainability in the region. The first roundtable was themed “Improving the quality of life of urban inhabitants”. During this roundtable, the mayors were invited to discuss smart tools for more sustainable environment, increased resilience to disasters and climate change; as well as affordable and healthy housing, improving the access to basic services for vulnerable populations and sustainable infrastructure. The second roundtable was themed “Improving the efficiency and competitiveness of urban operations and services”. This roundtable accommodated a discussion on smart tools for road safety and sustainable urban mobility, the desired infrastructure for cities of the future, and policy instruments needed to improve the efficiency and competitiveness of urban services. Speeches of the participants were followed by a Q&A session and the audience was given the opportunity to enquire about any specific projects or initiatives mentioned. Summary of discussions from the Day of Cities is available in [ECE/HBP/2019/3](#).
4. This discussion was continued during the high-level segment of the UNECE sixty-eight Commission Session on 9 April 2019, where member States further deliberated on how to harness smart sustainable cities as drivers for sustainable development in the UNECE region. Building upon discussions led both at the Day of Cities and the Commission Session, it was proposed that the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management explores “the possibility of establishing a forum of Mayors” (see E/2019/37; E/ECE/1488 paragraph 38).
5. Following the successful Day of Cities and based on its discussion, the UNECE Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management at its 80th session agreed “to dedicate one of the three days of the Committee session to discussions, and the participation of, local authorities, in particular mayors, following a similar format to the Day of Cities. The “Forum of Mayors” will be organized on the first day of the Committee session and focus on a specific thematic issue related to sustainable urban development, housing and land management.” (see ECE/HBP/201 paragraph 34). The Committee “also decided to hold the Forum in 2020 and 2021. An assessment of the meeting format, based on parameters agreed upon by the Committee Bureau, will be presented at the Committee session in 2022” (see ECE/HBP/201 paragraph 34).
6. The Committee “recognized the important role of cities and local authorities in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the SDGs” and “invited the Forum to transmit its recommendations on how to address the challenges that local authorities/governments face in achieving sustainable urban development, housing and land management” (see ECE/HBP/201 paragraph 34).

III. Proposed organization of the Forum of Mayors

7. The Committee “agreed on the following theme to be covered by the 2020 Forum of Mayors: Cities Climate Action” (see ECE/HBP/201 paragraph 34). The first Forum of Mayors will be convened on the first day of the 81st session of the Committee on 6th or 7th of October 2020. The list of actions which are necessary to complete its organization, as well as provisional timing, are listed in Annex 1.
8. The preparation of the Forum is coordinated by the secretariat of the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management where responsible officers are Ms. Paola Deda, Director, Forests, Land and Housing Division, paola.deda@un.org; and Ms. Gulnara Roll, Secretary to the UNECE Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management, gulnara.roll@un.org.
9. In line with the Committee’s decision during its 80th session, “the Forum will be supported by a Steering Committee composed of Bureau members, the ECE sustainable smart cities nexus and experts based on the thematic session of the Forum” (see ECE/HBP/201 paragraph 34).
10. The Committee Bureau at its meeting on 17 December 2019 agreed on the composition of the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee includes representatives of the Committee Bureau, UNECE staff who are members of the UNECE Nexus on “Sustainable Smart Cities for all Ages” and external experts.

The members of the Steering Committee for year 2020 are:

Committee Bureau members (a proposal)

- **Ms. Joana Balsemão**, Portugal, Co-Chair, joana.balsemao@cm-cascais.pt
- **Mr. Edouard Jay**, Switzerland, Co-Chair, edouard.jay@seco.admin.ch

- **Mr. Dmitry Doroshevich**, Belarus, doroshevitchdm@mfa.gov.by
- **Mr. Olzhas Sartayev**, Kazakhstan, olzhas.sartayev@gmail.com
- **Ms. Marge Martin**, USA, marge.martin@hud.gov
- **Mr. Giampiero Bambagioni**, Italy, g.bambagioni@tecnoborsa.com
- **Ms. Mari Pierre Meganck** for
Mr. Yves Laurent Sapoval, France, marie-pierre.meganck@diplomatie.gouv.fr
- **Ms. Beatriz Corredor**, Spain bcorredor@registradores.org

Representatives of the UNECE Nexus on “Sustainable and Smart Cities for All Ages”

- **Mr. Anders Jonsson**, Chief, UNECE Innovation Section
- **Ms. Gulnara Roll**, Secretary to the UNECE Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management
- **Ms. Franziska Hirsch**, Secretary to the UNECE Convention on Industrial Accidents
- **Ms. Stefanie Held (tbc)**, Secretary to the UNECE Sustainable Energy Committee.

Experts

- **Mr. Oleg Golubchikov**, Professor, Cardiff University, UK

Additional experts may be added

IV. Topics to be addressed at the Forum of Mayors and structure of the meeting

11. The first thematic meeting of the Forum of Mayors in 2020 will be focused on Climate Actions in Cities. This topic is of crucial importance as estimates suggest that cities are responsible for 75 percent of global CO₂ emissions, with transport and buildings being

among the largest contributors.¹ Moreover in 2019 a special report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) stated that limiting warming to below 1.5 degree centigrade would “require rapid and far-reaching transitions in energy, land, urban and infrastructure (including transport and buildings), and industrial systems (high confidence).”² The implications of this for cities are clear.

12. Discussions of the topic of climate action in cities will cover the following subtopics (the content will be reflected in the background document which will be prepared by the experts):

- i. **Built environment with a focus on housing.** Under this theme, participants will discuss the ways in which buildings’ and housing management practices may need to adapt to new conditions caused by climate change and extreme weather conditions, as well as ideas on how to mitigate climate change. Mayors will share best practices and discuss methods of achieving this aim.
- ii. **Urban planning.** According to UN-Habitat, “adapting to new conditions brought by climate change will be challenging and will demand strategic and creative thinking from planners and others.” Moreover, in September 2019 more than 20 cities, including Abidjan (Côte d’Ivoire), Dakar (Senegal), Helsinki (Finland), Paris (France), La Paz (Bolivia), Melaka (Malaysia) and São Paulo (Brazil), endorsed the São Paulo Statement on urban development that integrates environmental considerations, including low-emission targets, local biodiversity action plans, and nature-based solutions focused on enhancing green urban infrastructure and urban resilience.³ Mayors will consider the crucial role that urban planning plays in climate change mitigation and response.
- iii. **Urban transport.** Transport is a significant source of CO₂ emissions within cities. Currently, emissions in the transport sector make up 30% in the case of developed countries and about 23% in the case of the total man-made CO₂ emissions worldwide.⁴ Cities have the power to affect this, for example through the use of Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) to avoid traffic congestion and to foster the use of intermodal transport (road, rail and waterways).⁵ Adapting urban transport to climate change and decreasing environmental emissions from transport will be discussed under this theme.
- iv. **Nature Based Solutions in cities.** Climate change will have profound impacts on a broad spectrum of infrastructure systems (transport and telecommunication, water and energy supply, sanitation and drainage), services (including health care and emergency services), the built environment, and ecosystem services. The creation of resilient infrastructure systems using nature-based solutions, such as planting trees and building parks, can significantly reduce this hazard exposure and vulnerability to climate change, especially for those who are most at risk or vulnerable.⁶

13. The topics above were selected on recommendations of the Committee Bureau meeting, which took place on 17 December 2019. The Bureau recommended to the Secretariat to, at one hand, focus on the Forum discussion on the topics which are within the

¹ <https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/resource-efficiency/what-we-do/cities/cities-and-climate-change>

² <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/resources/headline-statements/>

³ <https://sdg.iisd.org/news/20-cities-call-for-integrating-climate-biodiversity-concerns-into-urban-planning/>

⁴ https://www.unece.org/trans/theme_global_warm.html

⁵ https://www.unece.org/trans/theme_global_warm.html

⁶ Revi, A., D.E. Satterthwaite, F. Aragón-Durand, J. Corfee-Morlot, R.B.R. Kiunsi, M. Pelling, D.C. Roberts, and W. Solecki, 2014: Urban areas. In: Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge University Press. pp. 535-612.

Committee's mandate such as urban planning, housing and land management.

14. It is proposed that the Mayors participating in the Forum will be invited to commit to the preparation of Climate Smart City Action Plans. The secretariat will develop criteria for the action plans to be adopted by the cities.
15. The Forum of Mayors will be held on 6 October 2020 at Bâtiment des Forces Mortices in Geneva. The 81st Committee session will continue on 7 and 8 October 2020 at the Palais des Nations. The event will be organized in the following manner: it will start with an opening, a keynote address and a plenary session. Four thematic sessions will be organized on the topics of (i) build environment, (ii) urban planning, (iii) urban transport, and (iv) nature-based solutions for cities.
16. The Mayors will be invited to make 3-minute long interventions on one of the topics cited in one of the three official languages of UNECE – English, French or Russian; a simultaneous translation will be provided. In exceptional cases, mayors will be permitted to speak in their own languages if the city provides a professional interpreter who will translate the presentation into one of the official languages. Costs of such interpretation are to be covered by the respective city.
17. The outcomes and recommendations of the Forum of Mayors discussions will be presented on 7 October 2020 at the 81st session of the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management.
18. Given the cross-cutting character of the Forum theme on city climate actions, the Forum outcomes will be also transmitted to other UNECE intergovernmental committees than just the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management.
19. **Points for consideration of the Steering Committee:**
 - The list of topics for the Forum (listed above in this concept note)
 - The list of mayors to be invited
 - A possible format of the possible outcome document (a declaration, etc.) and possible commitments by the cities (e.g. Climate Smart City Action Plans)
 - Other issues as may be proposed by the Steering Committee members.