

**Economic and Social Council**Distr.: General
27 July 2020

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe**Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management****Eighty first session**

Geneva, 6-8 October 2020

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Forum of Mayors

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

Report on the outcomes of the Forum of Mayors, the roundtable**“In Focus: SDG 11” and related recommendations****Forum of Mayors concept note****Note by the Bureau of the Committee***Summary*

At its eightieth session in October 2019, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) 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) and to organize the “Forum of Mayors” following a similar format to the one of the Day of Cities held in April 2019. This Note includes information on the organization of the Forum of Mayors 2020. The concept note was developed by the secretariat and updated following the outcomes of the Seventh Steering Committee meeting which took place online on 8 July 2020.

The Committee is invited to:

- (a) Consider extending the Forum of Mayors until 2030 in order to support the Committee in implementing the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, pending the results and recommendations of the assessment of the meeting format to be conducted in 2022. The assessment will be based on parameters to be agreed upon by the Committee Bureau, as per the decision of the Committee 80th session (ECE/HBP/201);
- (b) Decide whether the Forum of Mayors will take place in 2022 in Geneva;
- (c) Agree that in the case the decision is taken to extend the Forum until 2030, and if an invitation to host the Forum is received from another country than Switzerland, the organization of the Forum of Mayors sessions will alternate between Switzerland/Geneva and other countries/cities;
- (d) Provide financial assistance to the secretariat to cover coordination costs of the Forum organization and its hosting.



I. Introduction

1. At its eightieth session in October 2019, the ECE 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 the concept note on the organization of the Forum of Mayors.
2. The concept note was presented and discussed at the Committee Bureau meeting on 17 December 2019 and was regularly discussed at the Steering Committee meetings of the Forum of Mayors.
3. This document presents an updated version based on conclusions and outcomes of the Seventh Steering Committee meeting which took place online on 8 July 2020.

II. Background

4. The Day of Cities, organized by ECE on 8 April 2019 in Geneva, featured two roundtables in which mayors and deputy mayors from ECE 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 focussed on “Improving the quality of life of urban inhabitants”. During this roundtable, the mayors were invited to discuss smart tools for a more sustainable environment, increased resilience to disasters and climate change; as well as affordable and healthy housing, improved access to basic services for vulnerable populations and sustainable infrastructure. The second roundtable focussed on “Improving the efficiency and competitiveness of urban operations and services”. This roundtable included 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 which provided the audience with the opportunity to inquire about specific projects or initiatives. A summary of the discussions from the Day of Cities is available in the document [ECE/HBP/2019/3](#).
5. The discussion continued during the high-level segment of the ECE sixty-eighth 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 ECE region. Building on 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 28).
6. Following the successful Day of Cities and based on its discussions, the ECE Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management at its eightieth 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 will focus on a specific thematic issue related to sustainable urban development, housing and land management” (see ECE/HBP/201 paragraph 35). 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 35).
7. 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 35).

8. The aim of the Forum of Mayors is to reinforce the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially Goal 11 “Sustainable Cities and Communities” and the New Urban Agenda. The Forum of Mayors will also support the implementation of the UN Geneva Charter on Sustainable Housing.

9. Prior to the Forum of Mayors, the roundtable “In Focus: SDG 11” (SDG 11 Day) will bring together experts from various backgrounds – including international organizations, academia, civil society, private and public sector and city networks – to foster cooperation and accelerate progress on the implementation of SDG 11. Under the theme ‘Supporting city actions for a resilient future’, SDG 11 Day will take place as an informal meeting on 5 October 2020 (Palais des Nations and online, 15:00-18:00) and is jointly organised by the ECE Housing and Land Management Unit and the Geneva Cities Hub.

III. Adjustment of the thematic focus

10. The topic for the Forum of Mayors, initially agreed by the Committee, was “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 contributors¹. The focus was initially agreed following the recommendations of the Committee Bureau meeting, which took place on 17 December 2019. The Bureau recommended to the Secretariat to focus the Forum’s discussions on the topics which are within the Committee’s mandate such as urban planning, housing and land management. The topic was further updated based on the discussion at the meetings of the Steering Committee.

11. At its meeting on 25 March 2020, the Steering Committee underlined that the spread of COVID-19 has raised significant concerns at the global level vis-à-vis its long-term economic and social impacts, especially on cities. Given the relevance of the topic for cities in 2020, at its meeting on 8 April 2020 the Steering Committee decided to adjust the theme of the Forum of Mayors 2020 to: “**City action for a resilient future: Strengthening local government preparedness and response to emergencies and the impact of disasters and climate change.**” and to submit this proposal to the Bureau of the Committee for endorsement and then to the Committee (online), so that EXCOM could be informed accordingly.

¹[UNEP, Cities and climate change](#)

Table 1.
Adjusted Theme of the Forum of Mayors 2020

City Action for A Resilient Future: Strengthening Local Government Preparedness and Response to Emergencies and the Impacts of Disasters and Climate Change

Theme	City Action for A Resilient Future
Focus	Immediate and long-term responses by local authorities to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as to climate change and natural disasters. Actions presented by mayors can include local stimulus plans, urban infrastructure and city partnerships, long term plans for resilience on climate change impacts.
Output	Declaration of Mayors addressing responses to emergencies, including pandemic, climate change and natural hazards. An online tool or database/platform to be developed jointly with Mayors, which facilitates the exchange of best practices
Key partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ UN System partners: UN DESA, UN Habitat, ITU, OHCHR and others ▪ City alliances: Geneva Cities Hub, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), Covenant of Mayors, Eurocities, Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI), Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and others ▪ Partners from academia (University of Geneva), civil society and the private sector.
Added value of ECE	ECE Nexus on “Sustainable Smart Cities for all Ages” as well as “Natural Resources Management” Nexus, various Conventions and ECE tools

IV. Organization

12. The first Forum of Mayors will be convened on the first day of the 81st session of the Committee on 6 October 2020. Online participation will be possible; ensuring that the Forum will take place regardless of potential travel restrictions.

13. 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 ECE Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management, gulnara.roll@un.org. Ms. Elise Zerrath, Elise.Zerrath@un.org is the coordinator of the Forum.

14. In line with the Committee’s decision during its eightieth 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 35).

15. 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, ECE staff who are members of the ECE Nexus on “Sustainable Smart Cities for all Ages” and external experts.

16. The members of the Steering Committee for the year 2020 are:

Committee Bureau members

- Ms. Joana Balsemão, Portugal, Co-Chair
- Mr. Edouard Jay, Switzerland, Co-Chair
- Ms. Doris Andoni, Albania
- Mr. Dmitry Doroshevich, Belarus
- Ms. Marie-Pierre Meganck on behalf of Mr. Yves Laurent Sapoval, France
- Mr. Giampiero Bambagioni, Italy
- Mr. Olzhas Sartayev, Kazakhstan
- Ms. Beatriz Corredor, Spain
- Ms. Anna Spirina, Russian Federation

Representatives of the Canton of Geneva

- Mr. Olivier Coutau, Canton de Genève

Representatives of other organizations

- Ms. Kamelia Kemieva, Geneva Cities Hub

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

- Mr. Tony Bonnici, Coordinator of the ECE Nexus “Sustainable Smart Cities for all Ages Nexus”
- Mr. Anders Jonsson, Chief, ECE Innovation Section
- Ms. Gulnara Roll, Secretary to the ECE Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management
- Ms. Franziska Hirsch, Secretary to the ECE Convention on Industrial Accidents
- Mr. Scott Foster, Director, ECE Sustainable Energy Division
- Mr. Roel Janssens, Economic Affairs Officer, ECE Transport Division.

V. Structure of the discussions and expected outcomes

17. The Forum is expected to adopt the Geneva Declaration of Mayors (ECE/HBP/2020/1) addressing local responses to emergencies, including pandemic, climate change and natural hazards.

18. An online database/ platform is to be developed jointly with Mayors which facilitates the exchange of best practices and successful strategies to urban resilience.

19. 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.

20. Given the cross-cutting character of the Forum theme, the Forum outcomes will be also transmitted to other ECE intergovernmental committees, as appropriate.

21. Mayors will be invited to share best practices and local actions related to the overall theme in 3-minute interventions. The official languages of the meeting are English, French and Russian. 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.

VI. Recommendations

22. The Committee is invited to:

(a) Consider extending the Forum of Mayors until 2030 in order to support the Committee in implementing the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, pending the results and recommendations of the assessment of the meeting format to be conducted in 2022. The assessment will be based on parameters to be agreed upon by the Committee Bureau, as per the decision of the Committee 80th session (ECE/HBP/201);

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