

Seventh World Urban Forum
Medellín Declaration
Equity as a foundation of sustainable urban development

We, the participants of the Seventh World Urban Forum — governments, private sector, international organizations, academia, professionals and civil society — reaffirm our commitment to integrate urban equity into the development agenda, employing all means and resources available to ensure that cities are transformed into inclusive, safe, prosperous and harmonious spaces for all. As a matter of urgency, we must take action, collectively and individually, to bring the benefits of sustainable urban development to all.

We, the participants of the World Urban Forum, commit ourselves to advance this vision, and to promote equitable urban development in our communities, towns, cities and countries.

The City as Opportunity

Since 2008, the majority of the world's population has lived in cities. Today, urban areas are a living combination of history, civilization, diversity and culture. Urbanization has been a force that has changed almost everything: ways of thinking and acting, ways of using space, lifestyles, social and economic relations, and consumption and production patterns. Cities, as economic and productive innovation spaces, provide opportunities for improving access to resources and services, as well as options in the social, legal, economic, cultural and environmental fields. Urbanization has ushered in economic growth, development and prosperity for many.

However, cities are also spaces where multidimensional poverty, environmental degradation, and vulnerability to disasters and the impact of climate change are present. Today, more than two thirds of the global population live in cities with greater levels of inequality than 20 years ago. We acknowledge the notable efforts that are underway to ensure that urban places can overcome challenges to sustainable and inclusive development; while recognizing and commending these efforts, we agreed that much work remains to be done.

The Seventh World Urban Forum, convened by UN-Habitat, gathered 22,000 attendees in Medellín — a city recognized globally for its innovation in sustainable urban development — to search for ways to promote inclusive development in all parts of the world.

Participants at the Seventh World Urban Forum acknowledged that when equity is an integral part of the development agenda, the deep structural problems and challenges of cities can be better addressed. Equity is both a moral obligation and a central element of social justice, and becomes part of transformative change.

New Urban Agenda

Participants of the Seventh World Urban Forum highlighted the need to promote a new urban agenda that can overcome the challenge of the lack of adequate legal framework and planning, which leads to the relentless expansion of cities, intensive energy use, alarming and dangerous on climate change impacts, multiple forms of inequality and exclusion, and increased difficulties in providing decent work for all. This agenda should promote an urbanization model that is people-centered, based on “Cities for Life”.

The new urban agenda requires new technologies, reliable urban data and integrated, participatory planning approaches to respond both to present challenges and emerging needs of cities of the future.

We acknowledge that there are many models of urbanization that respond to countries' and cities' diverse cultural, institutional and social conditions. In this context, the new urban agenda should:

- Encourage governments to develop and use methods, such as national urban plans and policies, that link current urban development with future needs, and that are solidly grounded in the fundamental principles of equity, justice and human rights;

- Advance greater social cohesion and break down social divides, promoting equity through empowering all segments of society, particularly women, youth and indigenous peoples.
- Promote participatory and inclusive local governance that empowers all inhabitants; recognize key contributions of various levels of government, including regional, sub-regional and municipal levels; strengthens formal coordination mechanisms; defines joint responsibilities; and provides each level of government with the necessary resources and incentives to carry out their respective roles effectively;
- Promote sustainable urban development, based on urban planning that promotes youth participation, gender equality, balanced territorial development; strengthened resilience to climate change and natural disasters; the upgrading and prevention of slums; and provision of housing, basic services and land tenure security; access to safe, affordable, accessible, and sustainable transport; and access to safe public spaces and services for all.
- Promote active and committed participation of the private sector, civil society, including grassroots communities, and other constituencies through partnerships to ensure broad-based economic and social development, in order to reduce poverty and create jobs for all.

Contributing to the future:

1. Sustainable Urbanization in the Post 2015 Development Agenda

The framework of the Post 2015 Development Agenda is an opportunity to reaffirm the universal relevance of well planned and managed cities as real drivers for change. Towards this end, the participants at the World Urban Forum reaffirm the need to include key aspects of sustainable cities and human settlements in the Post 2015 Development Agenda, in order to harness the transformational power of cities to achieve and advance sustainable development.

2. Contributing Towards HABITAT III

The Seventh World Urban Forum discussions provide an important contribution towards the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III). We see Habitat III as a unique opportunity to develop a new urban agenda that contributes to harnessing urbanization as a positive force for present and future generations, and to advancing the quest for equity and shared prosperity. To this end, we recognize the World Urban Campaign as a participatory process and partnership platform among actors of change working to ensure an inclusive and encompassing process towards HABITAT III.

3. The World Urban Forum

The participants at the Seventh World Urban Forum recognize the unique and positive role that the Forum plays as a space for effective dialogue. We commend the efforts of the City of Medellin, the Government of Colombia and UN-Habitat for organizing this innovative and inclusive Forum. We reaffirm our support for the World Urban Forum process and commit to provide continued cooperation to the next host as they shoulder the challenge of preparing the next Forum.