



## WORLD URBAN YOUTH ASSEMBLY WUF 7 CONCEPT NOTE

# YOUTH AND THE NEW URBAN AGENDA

**UN HABITAT**  
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

### Objectives of the Assembly

There are more people under the age of 25 today than ever. These youth live, by and large, in cities and towns. It is estimated that as many as 60% of all urban dwellers will be under the age of 18 by 2030. The World Urban Youth Assembly, held the day preceding the main WUF, strives to be the leading global platform for youth on issues of sustainable urbanization. The Youth Assembly's theme will be "Youth and The New Urban Agenda", focusing on the importance of youth as drivers of positive change for cities.

The Youth Assembly provides a space for youth to offer innovative solutions to pressing urban issues impacting their communities such as housing, transport, employment, and good governance.

### Introduction of the topic

Urbanization is the engine that propels the world towards prosperity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and youth are the engineers. Youth are society's most essential and dynamic human resource.

Historically, youth have not been seen as a demographic important enough to engage with. Yet there has been a growing understanding and concern over the declining socio-economic situation of young people and their lack of livelihood opportunities. These youth often grow up in poverty and they are excluded from the economic, political, and social life of their countries, which in turn breeds disillusionment and hopelessness, violence, and upheaval. The Urban youth population in the developing world is growing at an explosive rate. Between 2000 and 2030, Africa's urban population, which has a high percentage of youth, will grow from 294 million to 742 million (155%). Similarly an increase of youth population in Asia (94%), and Latin America's (55%) will occur.

Should these youth transition into adulthood happen in an environment that supports equal opportunities, representation in governance, education, and secure employment opportunities, then they can become the engine for the creation of the economic and social capital that is needed to jump-start development in many regions of the world. This demographic "youth bulge" can be a "demographic gift" to the countries where it is occurring. Even halving the world's youth unemployment rate may add an estimated USD 2.2 and 3.5 trillion, or between 4.4 and 7.0%, to the global GDP.

The 6<sup>th</sup> session of the World Urban Youth Assembly is being held at a critical time globally. In a number of cities globally, young men and women have demanded to be meaningfully engaged in the new "urban agenda". Often driven by urban

youth-led social movements, youth inequity and inequalities have been highlighted in the form of unequal access to education, employment, governance, and public space. The UN-Habitat State of the Urban Youth Report found that there needs to be a levelling of the playing field in these areas so as to assure that youth have equal opportunities to lead healthy and successful lives.

Youth are not only demanding recognition, they are demonstrating their leadership through working at local, national and international levels to bring about positive change. A concrete example of their international leadership has been the appointment of the UN Secretary General's Envoy on Youth, a position advocated for by UN-Habitat's Youth 21 initiative. At a local level youth have effected positive change through youth-led projects such as supported by the Urban Youth Fund in 172 cities and 66 countries in the developing world. Government at all levels have also been involved, such as through the establishment of the One Stop Youth Resource Centres by local government in four capital cities in East Africa.

Unquestionably, the implications of the demographic "youth bulge" can bring both opportunities as well as challenges. The World Urban Youth Assembly will concretely demonstrate that youth are leaders not only of tomorrow, but today, in the new urban agenda.

### Linkages with Post-2015 Development Agenda and Habitat III

The World Urban Youth Assembly is the key bi-annual global event focused on urban youth issues. The first was held in Barcelona in 2004, and each subsequent Youth Assembly has brought together youth from around the world to deliberate on youth policy and practice. The core youth programmes of UN-Habitat were developed based on dialogues held at the Youth Assembly as reflected in the final statements from each Youth Assembly.

The 2014 Youth Assembly will, in line with previous practice, feed into the Post-2015 deliberations and Habitat III. The Youth Assembly not only brings together partners with a stake in youth-led urban development, but also serves as a sounding

board for UN-Habitat to develop initiatives that are youth-led, sustainable and relevant, reaching beyond the urban agenda to encompass and influence current global development initiatives to empower youth. Against this backdrop, the Youth Assembly will play an important role in informing future initiatives that can position youth and urbanization high on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and Habitat III.

The discussions will be centered on key issues that directly impact youth, with a particular focus on urban governance and youth participation as an entry point to ensuring equitable cities.

The Assembly will strive to secure renewed commitment from partners present to advance youth-led development as it relates to sustainable urban development, assessing accomplishments to date and addressing new and emerging challenges. Discussions will lead to a statement from participants on the 'New Urban Agenda' for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in preparation for Habitat III and in line with the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

### Key interrogatives

The Youth Assembly seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the role of youth as related to urban sustainability and the New Urban Agenda?
2. What is the role of youth in conflict and post-conflict situations? Which best practices does UN-Habitat and its partners have?
3. What rights do youth have? How do these rights relate to urbanization? How are these rights articulated for marginalized groups such as young women and aboriginal youth?