
"WORKSHOP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN ASIAN AND PACIFIC CITIES"

30 November – 1 December 2016
United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok, Thailand

WORKSHOP SUMMARY

The **Workshop on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asian and Pacific Cities** took place on 30 November and 01 December 2016, and was organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) as part of the "ESCAP SDG Week". The Workshop brought together national and local government officials and other key stakeholders to discuss the role of cities in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the New Urban Agenda recently adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III). The workshop also provided an opportunity to launch the **Urban SDG Knowledge Platform**, developed by ESCAP, the Seoul Metropolitan Government and CityNet. Over 110 participants attended the workshop, including 25 national government representatives, 46 local government representatives, representatives of city network, academic experts, representatives from civil society organizations, regional development partners, United Nations bodies and other key stakeholders.

The workshop allowed reviewing urbanization trends in Asia and the Pacific and highlighted the importance of localizing SDG implementation given that what happens in cities will to a large extent define the success or failure of the 2030 Agenda. As occurring globally, the future of the Asia-Pacific region is increasingly urban; thus, it is in cities where we need to look for solutions to many of the challenges that the Agenda 2030 is aiming to address. With over 60 percent of the world's urban population now residing in Asian and Pacific cities, how the region urbanizes will also have a great impact on the sustainability of the planet as a whole.

During the workshop, national government representatives provided updates on the SDG implementation strategies of their countries, including steps taken to mainstream the SDGs into national frameworks. The workshop highlighted the need for institutional approaches that enhance the involvement of local governments in the planning and development of national SDG strategies and frameworks rather than limiting the role of local governments to mere implementers. In addition, it was recognized that greater attention needs to be paid to the development national urban policies and strategies. Existing examples shared during the workshop included Indonesia's National Urban Development Policy and Strategy and Cambodia's National Policy on Spatial Planning.

The workshop sessions underscored the potential of cities to generate innovative and transformative solutions, as highlighted by the action that many cities across the region are already taking to implement the 2030 Agenda. Initiatives shared during the workshop included, for example, Seoul's initiative to cut the city's energy consumption by directly engaging citizens in energy-saving and renewable energy generation, Almaty's community-participation-driven public space improvements, Da Nang's urban resilience strategy, Honiara's youth and sports programmes, and innovative initiatives to promote gender equality, such as Safetipin's use of data and technology to increase women's safety in cities and Seberang Perai's gender responsive budgeting. The workshop highlighted the urgent need to scale-up and replicate such innovative best practices and the importance of sharing and disseminating information and knowledge in this regard. Participants called for strengthened regional cooperation to support both local and national governments in localizing the SDGs.

It was noted that though much of the action required to achieve the SDGs needs to be taken at the local level, local governments and urban authorities face a number of challenges, in particular in terms of capacity, mandates and financing. Thus, local governments require support if they are to effectively respond to the sustainability challenges they face. This includes in terms of financing, as the majority of local governments still depend on transfers from central government, with limited ability to raise revenues. In addition, effective partnerships are critical for the effective localization of the 2030 Agenda. Not only is there a need for new modalities of vertical and horizontal coordination that break down silos, but also for enhanced partnerships between government and various stakeholders, such as the private sector, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and, importantly, civil society.

The need for enhanced mechanisms to support greater public participation in city planning and development was repeatedly emphasized throughout the workshop. And, in particular, calls were made for the increased participation of young people, women and grassroots organizations in decision making processes. It was recognized that many cities across the region are increasingly adopting participatory planning measures which increase ownership of citizens. Nonetheless, there is a need for increased and enhanced public participation that involves people as drivers of change. Given their direct contact with civil society, local government representatives have a key role to play in enhancing public participation. Both national and local governments should strengthen mechanisms to enable the participation of all members of society.

The workshop also allowed taking stock of the outcomes of Habitat III and discussing the synergies between the New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Agenda. The New Urban Agenda calls for a new people-centered approach to urban development that takes advantage of the opportunities urbanization. As such the New Urban Agenda can play an important role in helping to localize the 2030 Agenda. It was noted that the General Assembly of Partners towards Habitat III (GAP) played an important role in ensuring contributions from a wide range of stakeholders and its role should be leveraged also for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, to mobilize contributions from various partners, including in terms of knowledge generation and sharing, advocacy, innovation and monitoring.

Participants welcomed the new Urban SDG Knowledge Platform, launched by ESCAP, Seoul Metropolitan City and CityNet, as a useful tool to facilitate knowledge sharing and partnership development in support to local government action for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It was suggested that the Platform should incorporate additional incentives and mechanisms which may support local governments in contributing to the Platform and, more broadly, include a range of innovative and bottom-up urban initiatives. In addition, concrete feedback was provided regarding opportunities for the Urban SDG Knowledge Platform to contribute and enhance the ongoing work of regional partners, including ideas for how the Platform may coordinate with other online Platforms and offline modes of knowledge sharing.

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