



HABITAT III REGIONAL REPORT

**LATIN AMERICA AND  
THE CARIBBEAN**





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Sustainable Cities  
with Equality

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The Habitat III Secretariat gratefully acknowledges the Government of Ecuador for the financial support provided to produce this publication.

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This is a United Nations publication issued by the Habitat III Secretariat.

Cover: Urban pattern of Toluca, Mexico.

ISBN Number(Series): 978-92-1-133393-0  
ISBN Number(Volume): 978-92-1-132759-5

# Foreword

Latin America and the Caribbean is currently the most urbanized developing region of the world. The sustainable future of the region depends upon the future of its cities. After the second United Nations Human Settlements Conference (Habitat II), held in 1996, the regional economic model which revolved around exporting goods with little added value caused increased urbanization, which has left a legacy of challenges for this new post-Habitat III phase. One of the key challenges facing the region today is the need to close the gap in access to quality goods and services in cities.

Capitalizing on the advantages and opportunities of urbanization is crucial for sustainable development and equality in Latin America and the Caribbean. Considering the significant population and economic weight of cities in the region -- with metropolises such as Sao Paulo, which in 2010 represented 13.9% of the GDP of the region as a whole, or Buenos Aires, Santiago and Lima, which constituted 23%, 48% and 50% of the total national GDP of Argentina, Chile and Peru respectively -- the improvement of the quality of life and economic productivity in cities has crucial impacts on the national development of countries in the region.

Despite important achievements in terms of reducing urban poverty and improvements in the housing deficit, the cities of Latin America and the Caribbean are characterized by the persistence of inequality, with marked differences in access to the benefits of urbanization, such as quality goods and services as well as economic opportunities. This is the product, among other factors, of an urbanization process which took place without an adequate management framework and without an integrated and multi-sectoral strategy. This process has been unable to facilitate a quality urbanization process to bring the necessary level of social development. The resulting inequality and segregation have deepened the risks associated with climate change and the environmental vulnerabilities caused by environmental degradation.

In this context of high inequalities and inequities, countries in the region have promoted the right to the city, considered a macro-public good, in a bid to improve institutional and governance capacities. In pursuit of the same goal, the United Nations continues to promote the need for structural changes and reforms of urban public policies for the achievement of multidimensional equality and economic development. In the future, it will be increasingly vital to promote more equal, fair, and inclusive cities and urban processes that work towards environmentally sustainable urban economies.

The New Urban Agenda that will emerge from Habitat III will be an important instrument for the management and planning of cities. It promotes a transformation of planning and design systems, as well as changes in institutions and governance, and promotes the strategic alliances between different actors for its implementation and financing. The New Urban Agenda also recognizes and articulates the commitments of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

Urban policies committed to sustainable development which integrates equality are fundamental elements of this process and are similarly recognized in Sustainable Development Goal 11. The Habitat III process and the New Urban Agenda makes possible to position urban development as a necessary condition for the achievement of sustainability in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In this context, national and subnational actors in the region have committed to the design and implementation of a Regional Action Plan, developed through an intergovernmental process, to fulfill regional commitments in Latin America and the Caribbean made in Quito.

This report serves a dual purpose: on one hand, it was conceived as a technical input to the Habitat III process, while addressing the main emerging trends in urban development, as well as analyzing urban policies implemented from Habitat II; and on the other hand, it develops a contextualized analysis and identifies key implications for future urban public policies in the region.



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# Acknowledgements

This report has been prepared jointly by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), in collaboration with the Habitat III Secretariat. Early versions of the report were reviewed through Expert Group Meetings convened in Asunción, Paraguay on 2-3 December, 2015 and Bridgetown, Barbados on 14-15 December, 2015.

This report covers the Latin America and the Caribbean region as defined by the United Nations. The member countries, as well as the territories of the Regional Economic Commission of Latin America and the Caribbean considered in the study are listed in the Report.

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A special acknowledgement for the National Secretariat of Housing and Habitat (SENAVITAT) of the Republic of Paraguay and the Ministry of Housing, Land and Rural Development of Barbados, which kindly hosted the two Expert Group Meetings.

The French Cooperation is also acknowledged for its support on the thematic consultations carried out during the report preparation.



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