



INTERNATIONAL **G**UIDELINES ON **U**RBAN AND **T**ERRITORIAL **P**LANNING

UN  **HABITAT**
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning

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**INTERNATIONAL
GUIDELINES ON
URBAN AND
TERRITORIAL
PLANNING**

Foreword

With the world's urban population having crossed the fifty per cent threshold of global population, it has become increasingly clear that the future is urban. Urbanization is progressing rapidly, particularly in developing countries, and has been accompanied by both opportunities and challenges.

Agglomeration provides significant economies of scale for cities and regions, but can also lead to costs and externalities such as those associated with noise, congestion and pollution. Global challenges such as climate change and resource depletion affect different areas in various ways and require new and innovative responses.

In order to deal with these challenges, different approaches to planning have been tested and implemented worldwide. While there are valuable lessons learnt from these diverse efforts, the *International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning (Guidelines)* are designed to fill a critical gap by providing a reference framework for planning that is useful across a range of scales and adaptable to distinct regional, national and local contexts.

As a response to Resolution 24/3 of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat, these *Guidelines* have been developed through a wide consultative process and built upon a range of experiences. The *Guidelines* present twelve principles that could guide decision-makers in developing or revising policies, plans and designs through an integrated planning approach.

The *Guidelines* were approved by the Governing Council in Resolution 25/6 of 23 April 2015. Moreover, this Resolution calls upon "international financial institutions, development agencies, and UN-Habitat to assist interested member States in using and adapting the *Guidelines* to their territorial and



national contexts, where appropriate, and further developing tools and monitoring indicators".

The *Guidelines* have been designed to complement the International Guidelines on Decentralisation and the Strengthening of Local Authorities (2007), as well as the International Guidelines on Access to Basic Services for All (2009), which were previously adopted by the UN-Habitat Governing Council and which have been referenced in a number of countries. Furthermore, the *International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning* are designed to support the implementation of the forthcoming Post- 2015 Development Agenda, and the New Urban Agenda of the third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in 2016.

The *Guidelines* are relevant for a variety of users: national governments, local authorities, civil society and professional planners. They emphasize the role that these actors have in shaping both the form and function of human settlements. It is my sincere hope that these *Guidelines* can provide inspiration and direction to help build more compact, socially inclusive, better connected and integrated cities and territories.

Dr. Joan Clos
Executive Director, UN-Habitat

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I

BACKGROUND

A. Objectives

Since 1950, the world has been changing rapidly. The urban population grew from 746 million in 1950 (29.6 per cent of the world population) to 2.85 billion in 2000 (46.6 per cent), and it has reached 3.96 billion in 2015 (54 per cent). It is expected to total 5.06 billion by 2030 (60 per cent of the world population). In response to that transformation, the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning (the Guidelines) are intended to be a framework for improving global policies, plans, designs and implementation processes, which will lead to more compact, socially inclusive, better integrated and connected cities and territories that foster sustainable urban development and are resilient to climate change.

The goals of the Guidelines are captured hereunder:

- To develop a universally applicable reference framework to guide urban policy reforms;
- To capture universal principles from national and local experience that could support the development of diverse planning approaches adapted to different contexts and scales;
- To complement and link to other international guidelines aimed at fostering sustainable urban development;
- To raise the urban and territorial dimensions of the development agendas of national, regional and local governments.

Aerial view of Paris, France © Flickr/Mortimer62



B. Definition and Scope

Urban and territorial planning can be defined as a decision-making process aimed at realizing economic, social, cultural and environmental goals through the development of spatial visions, strategies and plans and the application of a set of policy principles, tools, institutional and participatory mechanisms and regulatory procedures.

Urban and territorial planning has an inherent and fundamental economic function. It is a powerful instrument for reshaping the forms and functions of cities and regions in order to generate endogenous economic growth, prosperity and employment, while addressing the needs of the most vulnerable, marginalized or underserved groups.

The Guidelines promote key urban and territorial planning principles and recommendations that can assist all countries and cities to effectively guide urban demographic changes (growth, stagnation or decline) and improve the quality of life in existing and new urban settlements. Taking into account the principle of subsidiarity and the specific governance arrangements of each country, the Guidelines should be used through the multiscale

- **At national level**, national plans could take advantage of existing and planned economic poles and large infrastructure in order to support, structure and balance the system of towns and cities, including in urban corridors and river basins, to fully unleash their economic potential;
- **At city-region and metropolitan level**, subnational regional plans could foster economic development by promoting regional economies of scale and agglomeration, increasing productivity and prosperity, strengthening urban-rural linkages and adaptation to climate change impacts, reducing disaster risks and intensity in the use of energy, addressing social and spatial disparities and promoting territorial cohesion and complementarities in both growing and declining areas;
- **At city and municipal level**, city development strategies and integrated development plans could prioritize investment decisions and encourage synergies and interactions between separate urban areas. Land-use plans could contribute

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