



STATE OF LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN CITIES 2012

Towards a new urban transition

UN HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

THE STATE OF LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN CITIES 2012

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United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)
P.O. Box 30030, GPO Nairobi 00100, Kenya
Tel +254 20 762 3120
Fax +254 20 762 3477 /4266/4267
habitat.publications@unhabitat.org
www.unhabitat.org

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Foreword

The Latin American and the Caribbean region is considered the most urbanized in the world. It is also one of the regions where intense effort has gone into finding innovative solutions to the different challenges involved in managing cities. This report is a review of the urbanization processes and innovations in Latin America and the Caribbean, and that is what makes it especially relevant to those interested in analysing the challenges and opportunities of sustainable urban development.

The production of this report was supported by several partners, including the Cities Alliance; CAF; Development Bank of Latin America; the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); The Government of Norway; the Latin American Federation of Cities, Towns and Associations of Local Governments (FLACMA); and Ministers and High-Level Authorities of Housing and Urban Development of Latin America and the Caribbean (MINURVI), among others. Our sincere thanks go to all of them for their invaluable contributions to making this project a reality and for investing in the promotion of knowledge at such difficult economic times for the whole world.

The first urban transition in Latin America and the Caribbean is now completed. With almost 80 per cent of the population living in cities, change is now needed to the current models of urbanization. We need to set a new challenge to make urban centres more inclusive, more sustainable, with more and better-designed public spaces for

people. Cities are human creations, centres of opportunity, and sources of economic, social and political development. Our future lies in them and in the spaces that we plan today for our future generations.

In this context of new urban realities, in Latin America and the Caribbean the conditions for a new urban transition are taking form, including the resources, capabilities, creativity and political will at both local and national government level. To move towards more sustainable and more compact city models that bring our urban areas improved mobility and energy-saving efficiencies, it is necessary to reaffirm our common interest in urban planning, working on social and regional cohesion policies, national urban policies, and implementing reforms to the legal and institutional frameworks.

This State of Latin American and Caribbean Cities 2012 report brings together information about the main urban centres in the region in a single document, resulting in a tool to approach public-policy making and allowing for a move towards 21st century cities that enjoy higher quality of life. This report also features many innovations and interesting approaches. From a thematic point of view it shows the renewed interest in municipal finance, urban planning and mobility, among others. From a methodological perspective, this report brings together for the first time urban data in a synthesized and accessible way and it is hoped that it contributes to improvement of monitoring systems, such as the creation of a regional



observatory with updated and relevant information for developing appropriate urban policies.

Urban planning is a first step towards guaranteeing economic, social and environmental sustainability of the very urban areas where most of the population will live in the coming decades. Now is the time to take positions and decide what sort of urban future we want.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Joan Clos'.

Dr. Joan Clos

Under-Secretary-General and
Executive Director of the
United Nations Human Settlements
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The following took part in the Editorial Board Meeting for the review of the final draft report: Claudia Acosta (Consultant, Colombia), Soraya Azan (CAF, Colombia), Alioune Badiane (UN-Habitat, Headquarters), Julio Calderón (Lincoln Institute, Peru), Fernando Carrión (FLACSO, Ecuador), Diego Erba (Lincoln Institute, Argentina), Ana Gerez (Consultant, Spain), Alain Grimard (UN-Habitat, LAC), Diego Hernández (Consultant, Uruguay), Mariana Kara José (Cities Alliance, Brazil), Eduardo López Moreno (UN-Habitat, Headquarters), Pablo López (CAF, Argentina), Jos Maseland (UN-Habitat, Headquarters), Asad Mohamed (University of West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago), Alberto Paranhos (Consultant, Brazil), Augusto Pinto (DNP, Colombia), Martha Schteingarth (Colegio de Mexico), Frédéric Saliez (UN-Habitat, LAC), Raquel Szalachman (CEPAL, Chile), Guillermo Tapia (FLACMA, Ecuador), Jorge Torres (CENAC, Colombia) and Nuria Torroja (Presidency, INURVI, Mexico).

Also contributing with comments were Patricia Acosta (University of Rosario, Colombia), Irene Campos (Minister MIVAH, Costa Rica), Nora Clichevsky (CONICET-UBA, Argentina), Edesio Fernandes (International Consultant, Brazil), Salvador Gomila (INV, Cuba), Paola Jirón (University of Chile), Marco Kamiya (CAF, Venezuela), Robin King (EMBARQ, United States), Jorge Maguñía Ramírez (MIDUVI, Ecuador), Daniel Rodríguez (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Colombia) and Julio Villalobos (Consultant, Chile).

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