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Arab NGO Network for Development
شبكة المنظمات العربية غير الحكومية للتنمية

Making Arab Cities Sustainable, Safe and Inclusive

13 July 2018
20:00–18:30

Conference Room B, UN Conference Building



Organized by:

- * Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND)
- * Habitat International Coalition (HIC)
- * Transparency International,
- * Center of Arab Woman for Training and Research (CAWTAR)
- * United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA)



Context:

More than half of the world's population lives in urban areas. Sustainable development cannot be achieved without significantly transforming the way we build and manage our urban spaces. Extreme poverty is often concentrated in urban spaces, while national and local governments and authorities struggle to accommodate the rising population. The Arab region is one of the most-urbanizing regions in the world, with 56% of its 357 million people living in cities in 2010, and a 12% increase in urbanized population by 2050.

Demographic processes made the urban population quadruple in the past 40 years, and rural-urban migration, as well as refugee flows caused by conflicts and natural disasters, have brought even more people to the cities. However, many those who were seeking a better quality of life, decent work, stability and safety in the region's cities did not actually find it. Arab cities host extreme poverty, unemployment and socio-economic disparities, amid unsustainable patterns of consumption and production.

Urban and human settlement issues have attracted political attention at the global level and have been included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goal 11, aimed at making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. The Arab states already have demonstrated their commitment to realize this Goal, not least by endorsing the League of Arab States Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urbanization in December 2015.

On the other hand, the New Urban Agenda adopted at Habitat III in October 2016 provides a global policy and strategy for sustainable cities and other human settlements, but was unable to establish clear guidelines for the "review and follow-up" (implementation, monitoring and evaluation) of its commitments. Nor did it specify how to harmonize appropriately with other global policies and processes, particularly the SDGs, the Paris Agreement on climate change (FCCC), the Addis Ababa Action Agenda or the principles of the longer-term position of the UN Development System.

In addressing some of these gaps, the Human Rights Council resolution adopted in June 2007 on human rights in cities and other human settlements, rekindling hope for greater policy coherence by focusing on human rights and the corresponding obligations of States with respect to the urban dimension of the 2030 Agenda implementation, in particular Goal 11. The Council emphasized the importance of sustainable urban development as a critical step for realizing sustainable development in an integrated and coordinated manner in the global, regional, national, subnational and local spheres, with the participation of all relevant stakeholders.

Approach:

- The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development necessitates localization of the global policy. That is the process by which local authorities and local stakeholders will first adapt the Agenda to their needs and capacities, then work toward implementing it through clear plans and public policies, and finally monitor the progress based on the pre-defined goals, targets and indicators.

- An integrated and comprehensive approach to the 2030 Agenda at the local level provides local authorities with a roadmap for more socially and environmentally responsible urban development that ensures equitable distribution of economic benefits, social cohesion, affordable housing and health facilities and services, an adequate education system, effective social protection schemes, adequate food and nutrition and affordable and safe means of transport.

- Responsibility sharing among the various government departments and spheres—especially the responsibility of local governments, where they exist, and local authorities, in general—in carrying out their national and international obligations, while and implement the global agendas to ensure sustainable community cohesion and reverse mass and long-term displacement.

- A participatory and coherent government vision that reconciles private-sector interests with the interests and needs of civil society, ensuring that human settlements, including cities, are inclusive of all inhabitants—not only citizens. Local governance must pursue spatial justice and equitable administration and use of public resources, especially land, water, urban planning, infrastructure and property.

The side event: during the high level political forum aims at highlighting the main urbanisation challenges in Arab cities, discussing the CSOs roles and methods to advocate a human-right based approach to managing urban spaces? The side event will propose policy recommendations from civil society organizations working in the Arab region that can contribute to "policy coherence" and integration of norms across the UN System, including the HLPF.

Moderator:

Maisaa Youssef, Sustainable Development Officer, Unit on the 2030 Agenda, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Speakers:

- Joseph Schechla, Coordinator, Housing and Land Rights Network - Habitat International Coalition (HIC-HLRN)
- Ziad Abdel Samad, Executive Director, Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND)
- Dany Haddad, Executive Director, Lebanese Transparency Association (LTA).