



ASIA-PACIFIC URBAN FORUM

CONCEPT NOTE

Introduction

Urban areas in Asia and the Pacific are growing at the unprecedented rate of about 137,000 people a day. A majority of Asians (around 2.7 billion) will live in urban areas by 2030. The future of the region will depend on how its cities develop and function.

Producing over 80 percent of the region's GDP, cities are engines of economic growth and centers of social development, culture, creativity and innovation. At the same time, cities and towns are places where poverty and disparities are most concentrated and visible. Over 40 percent of Asia-Pacific's urban residents live in slums, without adequate shelter and basic services. Accounting for 67 percent of all energy use and for 71 percent of all greenhouse gases emissions, cities and towns have an enormous ecological footprint. With over 50 percent of its urban population living along coastlines, climate change will have a significant impact on cities and towns of Asia and the Pacific.

Infrastructure and housing built today are likely to lock cities and towns in development and consumption patterns for the next 20 to 30 years. Making Asian cities ecologically efficient and sustainable on the one hand and equitable and just on the other will require considerable innovative thinking and action. It would also require innovative approaches to financing of urban infrastructure and services to meet the needs and demands of the growing urban populations, particularly the urban poor.

To discuss such critical and emerging issues and to view them from the perspective of different stakeholders and to share innovative practices, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) periodically convenes the Asia-Pacific Urban Forums. Thus far a total of four Forums have been held.

ESCAP will organize the multi-stakeholder Asia-Pacific Urban Forum as a side event of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development (MCED-6) in Kazakhstan in September 2010. It is hoped that holding the Asia-Pacific Urban Forum in conjunction with the Ministerial Conference would enrich the discussions at the Ministerial Conference.

Theme and objectives

As cities have an immense impact on both the built and natural environment it is proposed that the theme of the Forum to be "*Building an Inclusive and Sustainable Urban Future.*" Under this theme the Forum will

review and discuss innovative approaches and strategies for developing sustainable and inclusive cities and towns in Asia and the Pacific between different stakeholders.

The objectives of the Asia-Pacific Urban Forum are to:

- Identify, discuss and prioritise emerging and critical issues in sustainable urban development
- To feed these discussions as inputs to the MCED-6.
- Share experiences on good and innovative practices and approaches on issues related to sustainable urban development.

Organizers

The Asia-Pacific Urban Forum will be organized by ESCAP and its partners within and outside the United Nations system.

The Forum will be hosted by the Government of Kazakhstan at Astana.

Participation

Participants to the Asia-Pacific Urban Forum would include senior policy makers from national and local governments, representatives of non-governmental and community based organizations, academics, research and training institutes, the private sector and international organizations. Approximately 100 to 150 participants are expected to participate at the Forum.

Modalities and structure

The Forum is designed to ensure equal participation by different stakeholders. The Forum will be held concurrently with the Senior Officials Meeting.

The forum will be divided into two sessions:

Opening session and key note presentations where a panel of experts would introduce the theme;

Focus Group discussions, where a number of open multi-stakeholder discussions will be organized by ESCAP and its partners on specific issues. Modalities would be identified to bring the outcomes of the discussions of the Forum to the meeting of the Ministers. It is expected that the Ministerial Conference would be open to representatives of each of the Focus Group discussions as observers. Figure 1 presents a schematic structure of the Asia-Pacific Urban Forum.

Opportunities for collaboration

Partners may wish to consider organizing one of the Focus Group discussions. Focus Group discussions can be organized on different issues under the theme of the Forum. Among others, issues could include sustainable urban transport, financing of sustainable

and inclusive urban development, inclusive cities, urban low-income housing, cities and climate change, resilient cities, urban disaster prevention and management, sustainable urban water and sanitation, planning and development of sustainable cities etc.

Partners organizing a particular focus group discussion are expected to:

- Make all substantive preparations including identification of resource persons and preparation and presentation of discussion papers etc.
- Identify and financially sponsor participants, including resource persons, who would participate in the Asia-Pacific Urban Forum and at the Focus Group itself. Financial sponsorship includes all costs related to travel and stay in Astana. Other costs such as conference venue and equipment rental, coffee breaks etc. would be borne by the host government. At least some of these participants should be representatives of national governments. Partners are requested to encourage their sponsored participants to be part of the

official delegations coming from their countries to MCED-6.

- Make all organizational arrangements with regards the travel of the participants. ESCAP would of course facilitate coordination with organizers in Kazakhstan.

For more information

Please contact:

Mr. Adnan Hameed Aliani
 Chief
 Sustainable Urban Development Unit
 Environment and Development Division
 UN ESCAP
 Rajdamnern Nok Avenue
 Bangkok 10200, Thailand

Tel: +66 2 288 1602
 Fax: +66 2 288 1059

E-mail: escap-essd-sudu@un.org

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC URBAN FORUM						
DAY 1 AM	Plenary Session					
	Opening sessions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome statement by partner organizations • Welcome statement by UN ESCAP • Opening statement by Minister from Kazakhstan Overview session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keynote presentation • Panel discussion 					
	Focus Group 1: Follow-up of Kitakyushu Initiative Network	Focus Group 2: Eco-efficient Infrastructure	Focus Group 3: Pro-poor and Decentralized solid waste management	Focus Group 4: To be decided	Focus Group 5: To be decided	Focus Group 6: To be decided
DAY 1 PM	Focus Group 1: (continued)	Focus Group 2: (continued)	Focus Group 3: (continued)	Focus Group 4: (continued)	Focus Group 5: (continued)	Focus Group 6: (continued)
DAY 2 AM	Plenary Session					
	Concluding session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairpersons' summaries of the Focus Group Discussions • Closing 					