



# World Habitat Day 2020

## Statement

5 October 2020

1. In 2020 we celebrate the World Habitat Day in a particularly difficult time: The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has demonstrated the fragility of our urbanized world. The pandemic comes at a time, when urbanisation is already facing enormous challenges, primarily due to the effects of the current economic development model that makes cities less affordable and unsustainable. Precarious urban informality is increasing at a fast pace due to inadequate legislative, regulatory, institutional and financial frameworks. The territorial management of towns, cities and metropolitan areas is a main challenge for governments, urban professionals and civil societies. The implementation of the Agenda 2030 - including the Sustainable Development Goal 11 to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable - is off track.
2. On top of social, economic and environmental challenges, the coronaviral pandemic marked the year 2020 with one of the biggest public health crises of all time, taking away already more than one million of lives. It is instigating a massive economic crisis, triggering further negative consequences for human life, wellbeing and lifestyle. With 95 per cent of the confirmed cases, urban areas are at the epicentre of the pandemic. We have seen hospitals overflowing, jobs are disappearing, schools closed and movements restricted in cities around the world.
3. Urban and regional planning professionals are yet to be recognized as key enablers of a green urban recovery. They support both decision-makers and civil society to build the essential frameworks and make large cities affordable, inclusive, resilient, sustainable and safe. Urban and regional planning has a history of more than 100 years of integrating policies, plans and designs do find solutions for complex problems and to adapt the physical environment of our cities and territories. Based on this rich experience, the Governing Council of UN-Habitat adopted in 2015 the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning IG-UTP, followed in 2016 by the New Urban Agenda (NUA) of the United Nations. This treasure of experience and knowledge should now be used with much more vigour in response to the global pandemic as it is already used to implement the Agenda 2030 and NUA.
4. Since 1965, the International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP) brings together highly qualified planners from more than 85 countries worldwide, who work in the public, private and non-profit sectors. Members of the Society share a common interest in cooperation and international networking in order to facilitate the improvement of our cities and territories through planning practice, training, research, and education. While dealing with the pandemic crisis, we need to plan ahead to be more health resilient as a largely urban species. This needs to be combined and aligned with our imperative planning challenge to halt and reverse global warming and critical loss of biodiversity.
5. ISOCARP fully supports the World Habitat Day's theme which calls this year for 'Housing for All: A Better Urban Future'. We agree with UN-Habitat that housing is now widely recognised as a frontline defence against COVID-19, with residents across the world being told to stay at home and wash their hands. But these simple measures are impossible for the 1.8 billion people living in inadequate housing conditions, informal settlements, overcrowded homes, homelessness, and unstable housing conditions, often lacking access to clean water.

6. Cities and towns have moved quickly to provide emergency housing solutions and shelter for the homeless, quarantine spaces, to postpone evictions and truck in water. These temporary measures need to lead to long term policy changes. At the same time, we must recognise that providing adequate housing is a shared responsibility, which depends on national and local governments, civil society, businesses, and local communities working together.
7. We advocate that good urbanisation and sustainable cities are the engines of prosperity, health, wealth and better quality of life for all people and their nations. Planning e.g. in line with the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning (IG-UTP) and its 12 key planning principles should be a prominent concern for all city and political officials and at the forefront of their agenda, especially as cities are at the epicentre of the pandemic while they are at the same time significant contributors to the economic development of their country.
8. In search for better policy coordination across policy levels, we recall that national urban policies can provide a coherent set of decisions derived through a deliberate government-led process of coordinating and rallying various actors for a common vision and goal that will promote more transformative, productive, inclusive and resilient urban development for the long term. Such policies can be tremendously supportive also in response to the current pandemic and multiple crises.
9. We call upon all national and local governments to assist other countries in embracing good and sustainable urbanization, the promotion of carbon-neutral urban development and the care of natural resources. To respond to multiple crises and to build back better and greener requires high level urbanization expertise in national and local governments, in academia and on the side of other stakeholders. Therefore, we call for a sufficient funding of planning institutions and capacity building for all stakeholders.
10. We call upon all members and partners of ISOCARP to support the process to recover better and greener after the pandemic in their own professional activities. We invite all urban stakeholders to take part in our upcoming 56<sup>th</sup> (and first virtual) World Planning Congress on 'Post-Oil Cities/Planning for Urban Green Deals', spread out between 8 November 2020 and 4 February 2021, co-hosted by UN-Habitat and Urban Economy Forum.

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