



CONCEPT NOTE (PUBLIC VERSION, AS OF MAY 2019)

SEVENTH ASIA-PACIFIC URBAN FORUM (APUF-7)

"FUTURE OF ASIA AND PACIFIC CITIES: TRANSFORMATIVE
PATHWAYS TO ACHIEVE THE 2030 AGENDA
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT"

15-17 OCTOBER 2019
PENANG, MALAYSIA

Cities in Asia and Pacific are at the forefront of efforts to secure a sustainable future. With urbanization projected to continue at a rapid pace, Asia and the Pacific's cities will play an increasingly important role in determining the region's development pathways. Already home to 60 per cent of the global urban population, and the majority of the region's residents, cities in Asia and the Pacific face challenges related to increasing demands for natural resources, and to provide basic services, affordable housing, and livelihood opportunities for all. Yet the region's cities are also well positioned to capitalize on their dynamic potential to foster innovation and social inclusion, protect cultural heritage, develop transformative urban solutions, and lead efforts in Asia and the Pacific to transition to a more sustainable future. The possibilities emerging in the region's cities will determine whether the aspirations of the global development agendas, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Climate Agreement and the New Urban Agenda will be achieved. Without increased and accelerated action on implementing sustainable urbanization and strengthened engagement with the region's cities, the objectives of the sustainability agendas will not be realized.

In this context, the Seventh Asia-Pacific Urban Forum (APUF-7) will be held from 15-17 October 2019 in Penang, Malaysia, to mobilize partners from across the region to focus on accelerating implementation to achieve a sustainable future for cities throughout Asia and the Pacific. APUF-7 will bring a diverse array of cities, expert speakers and thought leaders who are shaping the region's urban future. Held every 4-5 years since the first APUF was held in Bangkok in 1993, the Forum is the largest regional gathering of urban stakeholders, engaging policymakers from local and national governments, financial institutions, civil society, the academia, the urban training-research community and private sector to discuss innovative solutions, identify common actions and objectives and strengthen effective partnerships to achieve sustainable urban development.

In 2019 APUF-7 will provide this unique platform to discuss and analyze the status, challenges and opportunities of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the 2030 Agenda in the region. APUF-7 will also be the venue to launch *The Future of Asia-Pacific Cities 2019* report being developed by ESCAP and UN-Habitat in partnership with the European Union, Asian Development Bank, The Rockefeller Foundation, UNDP, Singapore's Centre for Liveable Cities and many others.

Co-Organizers



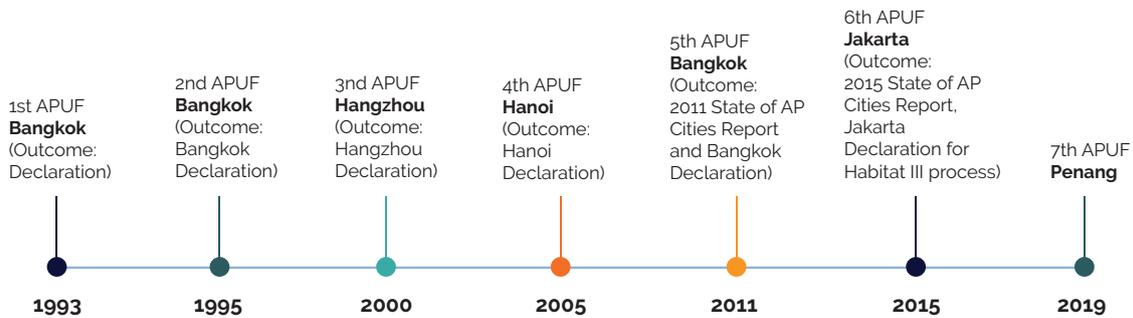
KPKT

Host City



The Future Cities report will focus on the implementation of urban solutions across different typologies of cities against four critical development challenges – natural resource management, climate change, disaster risk, and rising inequalities – through enabling four means of implementation – urban/territorial planning, governance and capacity development, data and technologies for smart cities and urban financing– for the accelerated achievement of sustainable urbanization and sustainable development outcomes for Asia-Pacific cities.

HISTORY OF THE ASIA PACIFIC URBAN FORUM



The organizers and partners seek to engage new actors and non-traditional partners (for example, Parliamentarians, technology firms, etc.) in APUF-7 inviting city, regional and global partners to organize parallel sessions, review status of their commitments or launch new ones and initiatives for cities, showcase exhibition materials in a 'city solutions space', as well as organize associated events back to back with the Forum.

OBJECTIVES

APUF-7 will reinforce how the transformative potential of cities can be harnessed and enhanced to serve as the drivers of sustainable development to achieve the interrelated goals and commitments of the New Urban Agenda, 2030 Agenda, Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

The main goal of APUF-7 is to accelerate the implementation of sustainable urban development to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in the Asia-Pacific region. To accomplish this, the Forum has three principle objectives:

- 1. Increase concrete actions and partnerships for sustainable development between different countries, cities and stakeholders to advance the implementation of sustainable urbanization;*
- 2. Raise awareness on sustainable and inclusive urban solutions and opportunities among stakeholders, constituencies and the general public;*
- 3. Improve the collective knowledge base on sustainable urban development through inclusive multi stakeholder debates, sharing lessons, and exchange to support future policies and practices.*

In order to achieve these objectives, APUF-7 aims to be a platform to:

- **Serve as a launching pad for concrete actions for cities** among local and national governments, international organizations, civil society and private sector solution providers;

- **Present solutions** that will assist cities to "think out of the box" to strengthen the means of implementation to deliver the New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and
- **Strengthen dynamic partnerships and regional cooperation**, to support joint action and city to city learning for sustainable urban development.

OUTCOMES

The event is expected to result in five key outcomes as follows:

1. Supporting and increasing concrete commitments and initiatives for implementation of sustainable urban development at the local, sub-national, national and regional level, amongst a diverse array of actors in the region which can be followed up at subsequent APUFs, World Urban Forums, as well as other key regional and global fora;
2. Facilitating joint implementation and initiatives among diverse actors to support the implementation of sustainable urbanization, including through integrated and sustainable city solutions;
3. Enhancing knowledge products, research, tools, innovative practices, solutions and methodologies for enhancing the role of cities and sustainable urbanization for implementing the New Urban Agenda and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
4. Increasing capacity at the national and sub-national levels on sustainable urban development and management, promoting inclusive and participatory decision-making processes.
5. Strengthened network/alliance building and action-oriented partnerships, including with new actors; as well as regional and sub-regional cooperation for integrated sustainable urban development

THEMATIC FOCUS

The suggested theme of APUF-7 is "Future of Asia and Pacific Cities: Transformative Pathways to Achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". APUF-7 is the first forum following adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement in 2015 and the New Urban Agenda in 2016. The Forum, its preparations, structure and substantive content are intended to focus on the means of implementation or enabling conditions for cities to achieve these global development agendas. The suggested theme represents a forward-looking aspiration for the region's cities to establish pathways towards innovation and lead efforts by cities to more actively contribute to the 2030 Agenda through sustainable urbanization.

Fundamentally, the sustainability of Asia-Pacific's cities will determine the future development pathways for the region and the prospects for shared prosperity for all. Social, environmental, and economic changes are played out locally in urban areas throughout Asia-Pacific. If well-planned and well-managed, urbanization can be a powerful driver for sustainable development, including through social inclusion, cultural heritage and reduced inequalities. Actions in cities can lead transitions to a more sustainable future and are key to scaling up implementation in the region. More strategic approaches to implementation are needed to overcome disconnect between short-term planning horizons and long-term environmental change.

Cities need to make critical decisions about how they want to develop and the means of implementation to do so – how they govern, finance, leverage data and smart technologies, and make planning decisions within the context of competing political, environmental and

economic interests in their country, region and globally. Several tested, feasible tools to help cities in evidence and knowledge-based decision-making exist along with promising new innovations taking place in the region which have the potential to scale up city sustainability actions. Cities must take advantage of these to enhance the effective implementation in the vital thematic areas covered, and to develop compelling future policies and visions. Increased political leadership is necessary to advance these goals, and citizens need a means of holding their governments accountable for their (in)action.

Four 'Leader's Dialogues' spotlighting innovative policy and technical solutions for a sustainable urban future in Asia-Pacific are proposed. Each Leader's Dialogue will be followed by a 'Deep Dive Session' on the same thematic area which will provide a more detailed seminar style dialogue on implementation of specific solutions and innovative approaches:

- **Urban and Territorial Planning:** Will present effective options for how urban land use and territorial planning policies and systems can be implemented and accelerated for the achievement of sustainable urbanization, engaging both private and public actors.
- **Urban Resilience:** Aims to identify actions to strengthen city and multilevel governance and capacities to address rising vertical and horizontal inequalities, rising climate emissions and adaptation needs, as well as increase resilience against shocks and stresses of all kinds in Asia-Pacific cities.
- **Data and Technologies for Smart Cities:** Explores new forms of open data and innovative technologies being implemented for accelerated smart city development in the region. This includes analysis of ICT and data systems for improved resilience to climate-responsive basic service sectors, smart governance which addresses the digital divide in many cities and countries, and related policy options.
- **Urban Finance:** To promote solutions for financing inclusive socio-spatial development, shared prosperity for cities and regions, and responses to climate and environmental challenges through investing in key urban infrastructure, service systems and communities. This includes enabling institutional structures, improved spatial connectivity and productivity of cities and regions, local financial frameworks, investment opportunities and new partnerships with communities.

All sessions will strive for sub-regional, gender and stakeholder balance in speakers, content and attendance. Integrated across these four themes will be the cross-cutting social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable urban development, including the perspectives of people with special needs.

Additional thematic areas, sectoral topics and formats will be agreed upon by the Steering Committee so that APUF-7 is comprehensive, yet focused in its delivery.

PROGRAMME

The Forum is designed to encompass all aspects of urban development sphere to ensure that comprehensive and equitable interests are reflected. To maximize discussions to allow all constituents to play roles and can have equal opportunities to share their experiences, the Forum will provide multiple platforms.

The type of sessions will lend themselves to multi-stakeholder dialogue and partnerships as well as provide a space to launch concrete actions and initiatives across a range of themes. These include:

- **Assemblies:** Self-organised meetings of stakeholder groups which serve as an opportunity for each constituency to share their experiences and perspectives, as well as prepare their actions and overall interventions in the Forum.
- **Opening Session:** A 90-minute high energy inauguration which kicks off the Forum engaging participants with host city fanfare and celebrity keynotes, artistic impressions

of Penang, and the launch of the Future of Asia-Pacific Cities Report, including with statements by community/grassroots and youth leaders from North and Central Asia, South Asia, South East Asia and the Pacific islands.

- **High-level Roundtable:** Sets the scene substantively for the Forum on Day 1 in a 60-minute interactive dialogue with representatives from diverse constituencies to focus on integrated multi stakeholder actions for accelerating local progress on global sustainable development agendas.
- **Leader's Dialogues:** Four 90-minute events spaced out throughout the three-day official programme. These sessions help identify more specific topics for technical 'Deep Dive Discussion' sessions.
- **Deep Dive Discussions:** 3-4 parallel seminar style 90-minute technical discussions which help unpack and define future policy actions across a range of pathways linked to the theme of the solution showcase and highlight new evidence and resources for enabling implementation across different actors and/or in specific contexts. They convene more specific, practitioner-orientated discussions, which unpack implementation under a theme held in the leaders' dialogue.
- **Urban Innovation Sessions:** Happen in parallel to the four 'Deep Dive Discussions' across all three days of the Forum and are for showcasing joint initiatives and projects, including on themes less directly related to the four main ones of the Forum, from 60 to 90 minutes in length. Urban Innovation Sessions topics will be based on an open call.
- **City Solutions Pavilion (exhibition space):** Individual organizations can showcase their projects, knowledge products and initiatives in a free flow interactive environment which supports bilateral networking. The Forum will stop on Day 1 morning to allow all participants to view the pavilion. Depending on the size of the booth, organizations can also hold smaller scale events at the space and larger exhibitions can be accommodated in the arena.
- **Urban Breakfasts:** Morning receptions on Days 2 and 3 of 60-minutes in length to promote specific knowledge or technical assistance products and experiences from different actors based on demand.
- **Hosted Receptions:** Evening get togethers of up to 120 minutes to launch publications and other resources in a relaxed atmosphere conducive to further networking.
- **Declare Your Actions!:** A 60-minute session in the afternoon of the final day/Day 3 which synthesizes the various high-level commitments made at the Forum from different actors and regions, sets out the follow up and review to jointly monitor progress and consolidates the regional viewpoint for upcoming fora.
- **Closing Session:** A 30-minute final session on Day 3 which summarizes the main outcomes of the Forum possibly through a video montage and acknowledges the support from the host city organizers and Steering Committee members.



All sessions will actively promote diversity across speakers and participants from different institutional backgrounds, experiences, Asia-Pacific subregions and genders. Associated and back-to-back events for constituency assemblies to meet as well as training events, symposia, workshops, city events, field visits, etc., will be made available on Saturday 12 October; Sunday 13 October; Monday 14 October; and Friday 18 October.

PARTICIPANTS

The Forum is a multi-stakeholder event that attracts diverse interest groups and constituents interested in the common goal of sustainable urban development in Asia-Pacific. Participants to APUF-7 would include distinguished guests, senior-level policy decision makers from both national and local governments, civil society representatives, community-based organizations, academic institutions, financial development institutions, private sector, bilateral agencies and international organizations.

The Forum will seek both in-kind contributions and funding from partners to sponsor the participation of urban stakeholders and government representatives from the various sub-regions of Asia-Pacific.

The Forum is expected to attract close to 3,000 participants.

TIME AND VENUE

APUF-7 will take place from 15 to 17 October 2019 at the Setia SPICE Convention Centre, Penang, Malaysia. Other associated and follow-up events to be organized by sponsoring partners will take place back-to-back before and after the Forum dates.

STEERING COMMITTEE

The role of the Steering Committee is to support the strategic orientation of APUF-7 to ensure an impactful, well-attended and highly visible event with the other Steering Committee members and other partners. The Steering Committee is Chaired by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and Co-chaired by Urbanice Malaysia and UN-Habitat. The APUF-7 Steering Committee is composed by:

- United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Chair)
- Urbanice Malaysia (Co-Chair)
- United Nations Human Settlements Programme (Co-Chair)
- City of Penang Island (Host City)
- Asian Development Bank
- Asian Coalition for Housing Rights
- Bloomberg Philanthropies, Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy
- C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group
- Centre for Liveable Cities, Singapore
- Commonwealth Local Government Forum
- European Union / International Urban Cooperation Programme
- Huairou Commission
- ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability
- Ministry of Housing & Local Government, Malaysia
- The Rockefeller Foundation
- United Cities and Local Governments Asia and the Pacific

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- United Nations Development Programme
 - United Nations, Malaysia Country Team
 - World Business Council for Sustainable Development

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