

SUBJECT: LMM 27/09/16 - THE UNITED NATIONS HABITAT III - OCTOBER 2016

Purpose:

As a United Nations City, The City of Newcastle has been invited to participate at the prestigious international United National Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development known as “Habitat III”. The Mayor's Assembly as part of this conference will be held in Quito, Ecuador on 16 October 2016. There are other events associated with Habitat III being held between the dates of 15 to 18 October.

The United Nations has called the conference, which is only the third in a series that began in 1976, to [“reinvigorate”](#) the global political commitment to the sustainable development of towns, cities and other human settlements, both rural and urban.

The product of that reinvigoration, along with pledges and new obligations, is being referred to as the [New Urban Agenda](#). That agenda will set a new global strategy around urbanization for the next two decades.

The conference will be the first time in 20 years that the international community, led by national governments, has collectively taken stock of fast-changing urban trends and the ways in which these patterns are impacting on human development, environmental well-being, and civic and governance systems worldwide.

In turn, Habitat III will also offer a potent opportunity for the international community at all levels to harmonize its understanding of the problems and opportunities posed by current trends in urbanization. This includes poverty, quality of life, environmental degradation, climate change

The gathering in Quito is expected to produce a sweeping but nonbinding global strategy on sustainable urbanization. Known as the “New Urban Agenda,” this strategy will include recommendations for fighting urban poverty, devolving authority to local governments and bolstering streams of municipal finance, among other issues.

Diplomats are still negotiating the details, but once finalized in Quito, the document will join last December’s Paris climate agreement and other recent accords to create a global framework for sustainability.

Motion:

That Council:

1. Accepts the invitation to participate in The United Nations Conference Habitat III in Quito, Ecuador and makes available the appropriate funding to enable this participation.

2. That the Lord Mayor or delegate and Interim Chief Executive Officer, or his nominee, accept the invitation and present a report to Council following Habitat III that outlines the learnings and opportunities presented.

Background:

Habitat III is the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development to take place in Quito, Ecuador, from 16 – 20 October 2016. Council has received a request from Newcastle's CIFAL Centre inviting the Lord Mayor and the City of Newcastle to participate in the United Nations "Habitat III Conference to be held in Quito, Ecuador this October.

www.habitat3.org

www.citiscopes.org/habitatIII/explainer/what-habitat-iii

Details of the Conference can be found at the web-link shown above. Attachment 1 sets out the Conference (at-a-glance) program.

The invitation to the Lord Mayor includes an invitation to the 'invitation only' Mayors' Forum on the first Sunday of the Conference. Attachment 2 shows Habitat III outline.

There is no cost to Newcastle Delegates to register for the Habitat III Conference. The invitation to the Lord Mayor does not include Travel, Conference Registration or Accommodation at the Conference venue.

Council will need to fund all expenses. That is approximately:

- Airfares x 1 - current estimate is \$3,700AUD per person return
- Accommodation x 1 (off site) - current estimate \$1,000 - four nights - (90% of accommodation is currently booked in Quito).
- Meals and Incidentals x 1 - current estimate \$1,000AUD per person.

Payment of Expenses and provision of facilities policy sets out Councillors annual budget to participate in events like this. A current budget has not yet been provided for this Conference; however, a sum of \$10,000AUD would cover all likely expenses.

In order to accept this offer Council would need to consider this at the 27 September 2016 Ordinary Council meeting. Alternatively the LGA and, perhaps Lord Mayoral delegations from Council allow the Lord Mayor and I-CEO to endorse attendance and then report this to the next available Council meeting.

Official Invitation and Habitat III Details

Date: Sunday, 16th October 2016

Time: 3.00pm - 6.00pm

Venue: Ecuadorian House of Culture and The Ecuadoran National Assembly

CIFAL Newcastle invites you and a delegation to Habitat III in Quito, Ecuador.

The Mayors Assembly will take place on Sunday 16 October and it is being convened by the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG).

As part of UNITAR's activities during H3, we will be hosting some workshops on climate change, road safety, urban-rural interlinkages and the Lord Mayor or The City of Newcastle can certainly participate as **Speaker** in any of those.

UNITAR will also participate in special sessions in which the Lord Mayor is invited as **Speaker**.

Attachment 1 - 2016 Habitat III Condensed Program, For Lord Mayor or Delegate 16-20 October 2016

- October 15-16: 5 Assemblies taking place
 - Youth Assembly
 - Children Assembly
 - Women Assembly
 - Business Sector Assembly
 - Mayors Assembly (16 October)
- October 17-20: Habitat III Conference
 - October 17:
 - Opening
 - High level roundtables
 - October 18-19:
 - Plenaries
 - High level roundtables and Principal's meetings
 - October 18-20
 - Side Events (1 hour)
 - Networking Events (2 hours)
 - Training Events
 - Parallel Events
 - 10 Dialogues (led by Policy Unit)
 - 22 Special Sessions on issue papers (organized by UN Task Team)
 - Urban Talks
 - October 17-21
 - One UN pavilion
 - Habitat III Film Festival
 - October 15-20
 - Exhibition (National Assembly)
 - Free of charge for LDCs
 - Cost: \$295 + 12% VAT for raw space and 395 + 12% VAT for shell booth
- Habitat III Village
 - Interventions that can be applied in the City of Quito
 - 70 projects submitted. Approved projects to be announced.

WEDNESDAY, 19 OCTOBER					
TIME	ACTIVITY				
12:30 - 13:30	SIDE EVENTS				
13:00 - 15:00	SPECIAL SESSION Urban Land	SPECIAL SESSION Safer Cities	SPECIAL SESSION Informal Sector	STAKEHOLDERS ROUNDTABLE Indigenous People Roundtable	STAKEHOLDERS ROUNDTABLE Farmers Roundtable
14:00 - 16:00	NETWORKING EVENTS				
15:00 - 16:00	PLENARY SESSION 6	HIGH-LEVEL ROUNDTABLE Implementing the New Urban Agenda at All Levels and with All Actors	DIALOGUE Urban Economic Development Strategies	DIALOGUE Urban Spatial Strategies, Land Market and Segregation	
16:30 - 18:30	NETWORKING EVENTS				
19:00 - 20:30	URBAN TALK				
THURSDAY, 20 OCTOBER					
08:00 - 10:00	STAKEHOLDERS ROUNDTABLE Children and Youth Roundtable	STAKEHOLDERS ROUNDTABLE Women Roundtable	SPECIAL SESSION Urban Culture and Heritage	SPECIAL SESSION Urban Ecosystems and Resource Management	SPECIAL SESSION Jobs and Livelihood
09:00 - 12:00	TRAINING EVENTS				
10:00 - 13:00	PLENARY SESSION 7	HIGH-LEVEL ROUNDTABLE Financing Sustainable Urban Development	DIALOGUE Urban Services and Technology	DIALOGUE Housing Policies	
12:30 - 13:30	SIDE EVENTS				
15:00 - 16:00	PLENARY SESSION 8 (OFFICIAL CLOSING)				

The United Nations, through its agency the United National Institute for Training and Research, established the 15th and final international training centre in its CIFAL network (Centre International de Formation des Autorites et Leaders) in Newcastle, in order to service - in the first instance - the city itself and the region within which it is located, as well as the Australasian and Pacific Region.

Habitat III will offer a potent opportunity for the international community at all levels to harmonize its understanding of the problems and opportunities posed by current trends in urbanization. This includes poverty, quality of life, environmental degradation, climate change and other concerns on the one hand, as well as the economic, social and creative boons provided by cities on the other. Global actors will be able to use the run-up to Habitat III to work toward agreement on a broad and collective approach to start to both address and capitalize on these issues.

A significant part of the potential opportunity comes exactly from this breadth of discussion. At the table in making this decision will be the nearly 200 national governments that make up the U. N. General Assembly. Yet they will be buttressed by a broad variety of crucial actors, including cities, the private sector and civil society. Still, the exact roles of these latter entities remain tenuous. While they will be able to offer formal recommendations, officially they are considered mere observers to the process.

What exactly is sustainable development?

There are many ways to define sustainable development. Indeed, for better and worse that number of definitions has only risen as the term itself has moved to the centre of the international development discussion.

One touchstone in defining sustainable development was offered in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development. This was a body mandated by the U. N. General Assembly due to mounting concerns over deteriorating human and natural environments. In the commission's final report, these experts defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

That definition does suggest a staggeringly broad swath of concerns, touching on national sovereignty and policymaking, international governance around natural resources, private-sector profit motives and consumer trends. It is important to note that sustainability in the development context is not limited to natural resources and environmental concerns but also takes into account economic and social issues of equality.

For its part, the commission's report placed particular priority on meeting the essential needs of the poor. It also warned that current development priorities weren't paying adequate attention to the limits of natural resources to supply human communities — and that poor countries were not going to be able to follow the same resource-heavy path to development trod by much of the West.

How does this definition of sustainable development fit into Habitat III?

The World Commission on Environment and Development did much to mainstream a recognition that economic and social development needs to be seen in the context of an interconnected system of balances — that progress in one area can, and often does, mean deterioration in another.

There are arguably few contexts in which these tradeoffs can be seen more readily than in today's urban areas, where notable human progress is fueled by natural resources extracted from rural areas. This overarching process offers a very robust engine for human betterment.

But it is also one that affects different communities very differently, and one that has quickly made large parts of our towns and cities increasingly uninhabitable, with ramifications for the well-being of the entire planet.

Bringing these concerns and opportunities into better — and long-term — balance is a fundamental goal of sustainable development broadly and of the **Habitat III conference** more particularly. In fact, this balance is all the more relevant following the September 2015 adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, a 15-year guideline to tackle the global development agenda. It includes a landmark standalone Sustainable Development Goal on cities and human settlements, which has given the concerns of Habitat III extra impetus within the U. N. system.

Who's putting Habitat III on?

As a formal conference in October 2016, Habitat III and its intended outcomes have been requested by the U. N. General Assembly, the United Nations' most representative body. It is the nation states of the General Assembly, too, that defined the conference's parameters, scope and intended results.

Habitat III is thus a U. N.-wide initiative, and that's a very key distinction. Further, close observers note that even well before the conference, interest levels throughout the U. N. system and beyond have been notably high, suggesting that Habitat III could see some of the broadest participation ever for a U. N. summit.

This process is being closely shepherded by the United Nations' lead agency on urban development, the Human Settlements Programme, more commonly referred to as UN-Habitat.

The conference's secretariat is based at UN-Habitat's headquarters in Nairobi, and the event's secretary-general is also the agency's executive director, Joan Clos. Further, one of the key goals of the conference will be to introduce reforms to UN-Habitat's own mandate in order to position the agency to oversee the development goals that come out of Habitat III.

In turn, the Habitat III Secretariat is receiving formal input from a variety of increasingly active alliances. This includes the World Urban Campaign, a broad global network of urbanists — from civil society, city and business groups — aligned with UN-Habitat and its agenda. The World Urban Campaign has launched a temporary initiative, the General Assembly of Partners, to harness civil society energy ahead of Habitat III. In addition, local officials have coalesced under the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, which will host the Second World Assembly of Local and Regional Authorities in the days leading up to Habitat III.

Why is Habitat III being held in Quito?

Quito officially offered to host the Habitat III conference in early 2013, on the initiative of the city's then-mayor. Quito's bid ultimately went uncontested, and the U. N. General Assembly decided to accept the offer in December 2014.

Quito has received accolades in the past for being a leader in planning for climate change-related adaptation, while the current government has put housing and quality of life at the centre of its development approach. In 1978, Quito was also singled out to receive formal accolade from the United Nations for the city's success in preserving its historical core. Along with Krakow, Poland, it was dubbed an inaugural World Heritage City by UNESCO.

Quito's clear interest in historical preservation could result in strengthened importance being placed on this issue at Habitat III. More broadly, the Ecuadorian government says it

sees the New Urban Agenda as an opportunity to bring the views of Latin America and the Global South together with a new international commitment to sustainable development.

Why does the Habitat III process matter?

Habitat III will not be the first time that the world has gathered to consider and debate a collective approach to current trends impacting on towns, cities and other urban areas. Yet while such summits have taken place twice in the past, this third conference has a weight of responsibility and expectation never before experienced.

Recent years have seen a historic shift in where the world's communities are living and working. Starting around 2009, more people around the globe began living in urban rather than rural areas. Further, these trends are only picking up speed, with nearly three-quarters of the world's population expected to live in towns and cities by the middle of this century.

Given the problems of equity, energy consumption and environmental degradation that can already seem intractable in many urban areas, the effects of this shift are confounding for everyone. Cities occupy less than a tenth of the world's land area yet they suck up three-quarters of all energy use. Metro areas also account for the vast majority of carbon emissions.

Further, historically high levels of inequality are today being felt most prominently in urban areas, where two-thirds of people are thought to experience worse inequity than they did two decades ago.

Habitat III will now offer a major opportunity for the international community to substantively engage with and strategize around these complex issues and many others.

How does Habitat III fit into broader international discussions?

The conference's timing could function as a powerful energizer to several external processes. These include a pair of the highest-profile international discussions currently taking place, negotiations that together will impact on a historically broad spectrum of humanity. Both are expected to result in global agreements during the course of 2015.

The first is an international climate accord aimed to replace the Kyoto Protocol, negotiations towards which took place as the particular impacts of climate change for urban areas and the poor have become increasingly understood. The agreement in December 2015 set the global agenda around both mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change for the crucial decades to come.