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WUF9

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HIGH-LEVEL ROUNDTABLE
URBANIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT: INVESTING IN THE TRANSFORMATIVE FORCE OF CITIES

Key words
2030 Agenda; Agglomeration Economies; Competitive Cities; Decent Jobs; Economic Structural Transformation; Income and Prosperity; Industrialization; Innovation and Change; New Urban Agenda; Reliable Infrastructure and Services; Sustainable Development Goals; Urbanization and Living Standards

Objectives of the session
This session aims to:

- Consider how the contribution of cities to national development could be maximized, focusing on the factors determining the economic performance and competitiveness of cities and national city systems;
- Identify and discuss examples of policies that have succeeded in stimulating the contribution of cities to national development;
- Identify and learn from examples of cities and city-regions that have succeeded in contributing significantly to sustainable national development and prosperity, including through industrialization and creation of decent jobs;
- Identify and discuss examples of partnerships among the public, private and civil society sectors that have enhanced the contribution of cities to national development; and
- Propose recommendations that could be implemented at both the national and local levels.

Introduction of the topic
Urbanization is one of the most important global trends of the twenty-first century. Well-planned and managed urbanization is a strong tool to enhance economic growth, productivity and development. The many opportunities of urbanization today could be the basis for harnessing its transformative force and activating a pattern of urban growth that could positively impact other spheres of national development.

When inequalities are addressed and health, education and other social services in urban settings are managed well and coordination with urban planning is maximized, there is a strong potential to achieve other development outcomes.

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IMPLEMENTING
THE NEW
URBAN AGENDA

The positive correlation between urbanization and development was recognised by the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through a stand-alone goal, i.e. SDG 11: "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable". The recognition culminated in the New Urban Agenda, which was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in Quito, Ecuador, in October 2016.

Many observers rated the recognition of the transformative nature of urbanization as the most important paradigm shift of the New Urban Agenda. In fact, the New Urban Agenda, apart from offering a more positive view of urbanization as a positive force rather than a problem, should be seen as a tool for achieving the urban dimensions of the SDGs, especially SDG 11.

In this context, and in order to enhance the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, it is important to determine the factors that underlie the contribution of cities and towns to sustainable national development. It is also important to learn from real world examples of policies, cities and city-regions development as well as partnerships among the public, private and civil society sectors that have succeeded in stimulating the contribution of cities and towns to sustainable national development.

Guiding questions

Q1: What are the main characteristics of cities and national-city systems that are necessary to enable them to contribute fully to sustainable national development, including through industrialization and creation of decent jobs?

Q2: What policies at the national and local levels are necessary for maximizing the contribution of cities and towns to sustainable national development?

Q3: Which cities or city-regions have contributed significantly to national development and poverty reduction in recent decades, and what can be learnt from their experience?

Q4: What kind of partnerships (with examples) among the public, private and civil society sectors have enhanced the contribution of cities and towns to sustainable national development, and what can be learnt from their experience?

Q5: What policy recommendations can be made to national and local governments to enable them to plan and manage cities and towns in ways that maximize their contribution to sustainable national development and prosperity for all?