

Regional Commissions
report on the progress
on the Implementation of
the New Urban Agenda
(2019-2022)

Summary

The information presented in this paper complements the *Progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda Report of the Secretary-General (A/76/639-E/2022/10)* in reporting implementation progress of the New Urban Agenda by the five UN Regional Commissions (RCs). It reflects the activities arising from paragraph 3 of Economic and Social Council resolution [2017/24](#), in accordance with General Assembly resolution [71/235](#).

The paper is structured in eight sections, similar to the the second Quadrennial Report, and includes a summary of how RCs reflected sustainable urbanization in their respective Regional Forums for Sustainable Development (RFSD). This is annually convened by the respective UN RCs to review implementation progress of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs, fulfilling the mandate in resolution [70/1](#) para 81, as well as resolution [75/224](#) paras 14 and 17.

I. Introduction

The five UN Regional Commissions¹ support national governments and cities to achieve sustainable development, increased policy coherence among member States across their regions, promote improved capacity of institutions, and implement the New Urban Agenda (NUA). This support includes encouraging greater integration of various dimensions (regional, national, local) of the programme by, for example:

- Building the capacity of national- and local-level decision-makers in implementing, monitoring and reporting the New Urban Agenda (NUA) and urban-related SDGs.
- Establishing mechanisms for sharing information and successful practices.
- Facilitating an inclusive process of knowledge generation and dissemination through regional monitoring and reporting on sustainable urbanization.

This section provides a brief overview of the RCs work in the context of the issues covered by the Quadrennial Report.

The urban dimension at **ECA** has been a focus since its inception in 1958. Noting the speed of urbanization as a megatrend in Africa, in 2013 the ECA was repositioned to support African countries to leverage the urbanization process for structural transformation. Later, ECA, UN-Habitat and the African Union Commission provided technical support to African countries in developing the Common African Position (CAP HIII) regarding the NUA. This was adopted by African Heads of State in Kigali. The CAP HIII then informed the adoption of the NUA. Further, ECA and partners supported African countries to develop a Harmonized Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting framework after the adoption of the NUA. The ECA continues to support countries in harnessing the potential of urbanization for structural transforma-

tion. It improves urban productivity and economic development via local economic development strategies linked to priorities in long-term national development plans, and advances comprehensive, comparable and reliable information for evidence-based urban policies and strategies.

Through the work of the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management and its Working Party on Land Administration, **UNECE** has focused on urban development since its establishment. Since the adoption of the NUA it has worked to assist member States at all government levels with implementation. UNECE supports member States' national, regional and local governments and other key stakeholders in reviewing progress achieving SDG 11 as well as 3, 5, 7, 9 and 12. It also builds capacity to accelerate achieving the Goals, through technical assistance projects, thematic studies, training, and exchange of experience and best practices. It offers policy advice about innovative financial mechanisms for smart sustainable cities, affordable climate-neutral decent housing for all, housing finance, and land administration and management including informal settlements. Finally, it provides urban strategies and programmes integrating climate change measures and promoting climate neutrality of buildings.

ESCAP has scaled up its urban development activities, with sustainable cities as one of four integrated priority areas of the Environment and Development Division, along with Climate Action, Protecting Ecosystem Health, and Air Pollution. New initiatives have been launched on localizing SDGs, building the capacity of mayors, air pollution and addressing plastic pollution in urban areas, and smart cities, and guidance to cities continues to be developed, including for the development of Voluntary Local Reviews. In November 2017, ESCAP along with UN-Habitat convened a Regional Partners Forum (@Quito+1), to engage cities, institu-

1 United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA): www.uneca.org; United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE): <https://unece.org>; United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC): www.cepal.org/en; United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP): www.unescap.org; United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA): www.unescwa.org

tions and networks across Asia Pacific to accelerate solutions towards sustainable urbanization. Following this forum, ESCAP, UN-Habitat and partners developed forward-looking policy guidance, captured in *The Future of Asian and Pacific Cities, 2019*, which prioritized four key thematic pillars of sustainable urbanization. These were Urban and Territorial Planning; Urban Resilience; Smart and Inclusive Cities; and Urban Finance. These thematic pillars, which contribute to the New Urban Agenda, provided the structure for the 7th Asia Pacific Urban Forum in 2019 and have guided ESCAP's capacity building work to member States, cities and UN Country Teams.

ESCWA's mandate covers a multidisciplinary programme, bringing together various development-related topics across six clusters² providing well-grounded policy advice in priority areas for the Arab region. The unprecedented urbanization boom in the Arab region presents challenges which require careful management to meet the needs of growing urban populations and achieve sustainable urban development. These challenges include increased vulnerabilities, reduced resilience and urban poverty, overstretched infrastructure, declining environmental quality, rising crime lev-

els, inequality, and violence against women. **ESCWA's** focus on urban development expanded to become one of eight main initiatives within the inclusive development component of the cluster on "Gender Justice, Population and Inclusive Development" which supports Arab countries in achieving justice for all.³

The **ECLAC** mission for Latin America and the Caribbean is to promote more inclusive economic activity with a smaller environmental footprint by contributing to public policies, instruments and institutions. Accordingly, ECLAC addresses the three dimensions of sustainable development. The main challenges faced by urban policies in the area include profound changes in urban population composition, the increasingly important role of cities in national wealth creation, and challenges posed by climate change.

In this context, ECLAC provides policy advice, disseminates knowledge, facilitates technical exchanges and offers recommendations for achieving development in urban areas with a focus on sustainability, inclusivity and equality. ECLAC promotes constant improvement of urban infrastructure and services by translating the sustainable development vision of Latin America and the Caribbean into useful public policies.

2 www.unescwa.org/clusters

3 www.unescwa.org/urban-development

II. Regional Forums for Sustainable Development

The RFSDs coordinated by Regional Economic Commissions are a vital part of the UN's regional architecture to follow up and review for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The New Urban Agenda and localization are priorities for the Regional Commissions in accelerating the SDGs through the RFSDs, contextualizing the New Urban Agenda within regionally-specific agreements, priorities and realities. Local and regional government engagement has steadily become more prominent at the RFSDs, leading to improved local-national coordination of SDG implementation. The rest of this section shows highlights of the RCs building bridges between the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs, bringing local development issues into regional dialogue and facilitating local-national-regional dialogue.

1. The **Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD)**⁴ is an annual multi-stakeholder platform, which was held in Kigali, Rwanda from 3-5 March 2022. It was organized jointly by the United Nations Economic Commission of Africa (ECA), the Rwandan government in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank, and other parts of the United Nations. It brought together ministers, senior officials, as well as experts and practitioners from UN member States, private sector, civil society, academia and UN organizations. The Forum discussed "*Building forward better: A green, inclusive and resilient Africa poised to achieve the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063*". It recognized the role of sustainable urbanization and local implementation as accelerators of the SDGs and Agenda 2063 in Africa.

In particular, the Forum welcomed and extensively considered the role of Voluntary Local Reviews of progress on the SDGs and Agenda 2036. The Forum recommended that member States strengthen institutional mechanisms to engage local gov-

ernments in regional and global agendas, leverage institutionalize national-local partnerships and multi-stakeholder dialogue in the conduct of voluntary local reviews, and enhance the knowledge, skills and financial capacities of local and regional governments. It also recommended member States leverage voluntary local review processes to identify, implement and accelerate interventions for local development. Importantly, member States were requested to strengthen the disaggregation of data relating to Sustainable Development Goal indicators at the subnational level. The use of the Africa VLR Guideline produced by ECA, UN-Habitat and United Cities and Local Governments for such reviews was underscored. The Forum also took note of the Secretary-General's intention to establish an Advisory Group on local and regional governments through Our Common Agenda.

Furthermore, the Forum urgently requested member States to plan and manage urbanization and human settlements for sustainability as part of the New Urban Agenda, taking advantage of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, to be held on 28 April 2022, to galvanize momentum and action. In addition, member States were requested to strengthen engagement in the high-level political forum on sustainable development and put forward strong arguments about the importance of urban and human settlement in the overall implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the critical role of voluntary local reviews. Member States were also asked to place housing and basic services at the core of global and regional commitment implementation and mobilize the power of cities to accelerate implementation of the Paris Agreement.

4 www.uneca.org/events/technology%2C-climate-change-and-natural-resource-management/eighth-session-of-the-africa

2. In the ECE region the second **Forum of Mayors**⁵ held on 4-5 April 2022 reported its outcomes at the **Regional Forum for Sustainable Development**⁶ on 6-7 April 2022. Mayors and city leaders gathered to exchange experiences, present their efforts to tackle challenges in cities, and discuss how to work together in the UN context. It included sessions on sustainable urban transport, shared mobility and safer roads, vibrant public spaces, green cities and nature-based solutions, resilient, healthy and climate-neutral buildings and affordable and adequate housing, sustainable urban planning, the 15-minute city and smart urban development solutions.

The RFSD included a peer-learning roundtable: **Urban Forests for Future Proof Cities**.⁷ Governments discussed national and local policies and the tools currently available to support urban and peri-urban forestry so it can contribute to achieving agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement, and other global, national and local goals. Furthermore, these exchanges focused on financial mechanisms and forms of cooperation implemented by governments to advance sustainable urban forestry as an integrative solution.

There were also many related side events during the Forum of Mayors and the Regional Forum for Sustainable Development. These featured events that delved deeper into the issues raised during the sessions, and included:

- Localizing the SDGs: Voluntary Local Reviews in the UNECE region, experiences and good practices.
- #Housing2030: effective policies for affordable housing in the UNECE region.
- Scaling-up financing for Sustainable Urban Infrastructure – experiences from the UNECE Region.
- Urban Pandemic Preparedness – City contributions to international processes on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response.

- UN Regional Commissions work with mayors: good practices, present and future perspectives.
- City diplomacy by the city of Bari and City Diplomacy Lab at Columbia Global Centres.
- Local Resilience to climate change and COVID-19 – no one left behind in building urban resilience.
- Plan, deliver on and monitor the 2030 Agenda in cities with the Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities (RFSC tool): experiences from the URBACT Global Goals for Cities (GG4C) network.

3. At the **Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development 2022**⁸ held in Costa Rica from 7-9 March 2022, issues related to sustainable urban development, human settlements and the New Urban Agenda were addressed. Among these, the side event “Reviewing the potential of the New Urban Agenda as an accelerator of the SDGs in territories and cities” focused on addressing how the implementation of the NUA is unfolding in the region and in identifying key areas of action. Some of the issues included the importance of bringing local actors to the table in national planning exercises to ensure development plans and policies respond to local realities and needs. Also addressed was the need to promote vertically and horizontally integrated urban policies to break sectoral silos that continue to prevail, and mainstreaming the concept of resilience into all urban planning processes.

The side event “Making cities resilient: Integrating multidimensional tools for local planning” presented experiences of integration of climate adaptation tools, disaster risk reduction, territorial planning, and resilience-building to strengthen and promote local sustainable development. Furthermore, case studies were presented about integration of topics included disaster risk reduction, adaptation to climate change, management of environmental systems, and land use planning.

5 <https://forumofmayors.unece.org/events/second-forum-mayors-2022>

6 <https://regionalforum.unece.org>

7 <https://regionalforum.unece.org/events/session-7-sdg-15-ii-urban-forests-future-proof-cities>

8 <https://foroalc2030.cepal.org/2022/en>

The event “Cities as a Space for a Big Push for Sustainability” hosted a discussion on the role of the transport and mobility sector in addressing city environmental sustainability. As regional population and economic activity is concentrated in urban areas, these produce the most greenhouse gas emissions. The environmental commitments of local and national governments will require a structural change in their economy which will need forceful action within the transport sector. Investment in sustainable mobility must consider impacts beyond financial return, due to the diverse positive externalities that may be generated. Finally, event highlighted the importance of rethinking mobility planning as part of an integrated set of urban development policies, such as housing and land use policies.

Finally, the *Intergovernmentally Agreed Conclusions and Recommendations of the fifth meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development*⁹ made specific reference to the importance of accelerating the implementation of New Urban Agenda. In the context of the ever rising human and financial costs associated with disasters which trap countries in cyclical patterns of emergency response, thus inhibit the ability of government to achieve sustainable development. The Forum recognized that improving environmental quality in cities is one of the challenges that lies ahead and that measures required to address this (related to water scarcity and sanitation, sustainable transportation, sustainable production and consumption, energy efficiency, waste management, among others) take into consideration the New Urban Agenda and its promotion of the right to adequate housing and standard of living without discrimination. The Forum further welcomed the outcome of the first session of the UN Habitat Assembly held in 2019 and noted that it looks forward to the high-level

meeting of the GA on the implementation of the NUA in 2022.

4. The **Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD)**¹⁰ is an inclusive intergovernmental platform ESCAP organizes which has focused on sustainable urban development in the region. This annual forum is part of the formal follow-up and review process for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and has incorporated the voices of local authorities, including through presentation of VLRs in the intergovernmental process and through the Asia-Pacific Local Government Coordinating Body (APLG) established by ESCAP and composed of all local government associations and partners in the region. The 2018 APFSD included a focused review and roundtable on regional progress on SDG11, and engaged representatives of local government and city networks. ESCAP also produces an annual SDG Progress Report, and also maintains the SDG Helpdesk, which has a dedicated thematic portal on ‘sustainable urbanisation’. The 2022 APFSD was held on 28-31 March 2022, with a pre-meeting on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda on 21 March 2022 to consolidate inputs for the APFSD. The pre-meeting was attended by line ministries, NGOs and civil society, and UN organizations. UCLG-ASPAC delivered a statement during APFSD emphasizing the role of local and regional governments to contribute to the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda.

The Government of Indonesia delivered a statement¹¹ at the APFSD endorsed by participants at the pre-meeting.¹² The report of the 9th APFSD¹³ referenced the pre-meeting while the Chair’s Summary noted the need to translate international and regional development priorities and frameworks into national actions, and highlighted support to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. The Chair’s Summary emphasized the need for platforms to support local governments, such as

9 <https://foroalc2030.cepal.org/2022/en/documents/intergovernmentally-agreed-conclusions-and-recommendations-fifth-meeting-forum-countries>

10 www.unescap.org/events/apfsd9

11 <https://unhabitat.org/asia-pacific-states-send-strong-message-of-commitment-to-the-new-urban-agenda-process>

12 https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2022/03/nua_pre-meeting_apfsd_final_statement_21032022_1.pdf

13 www.unescap.org/events/apfsd9

the Asia Pacific Mayors Academy, and welcomed the development of voluntary local reviews, highlighted in the statement from the pre-meeting.

5. The Arab Forum for Sustainable Development held (AFSD)¹⁴ organized annually by ESCWA in collaboration with the League of Arab States and other United Nations entities operating in Arab countries, was held 15-17 March 2022. It brought together Arab governments and a broad range of stakeholders to address sustainable development priorities from a regional perspective, discuss progress, review national experiences, and enhance the region's voice.

This year, AFSD listened to local authorities highlighting urban issues through plenary and thematic sessions, including a roundtable on “Voluntary National Reviews: subnational follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and tackling inequality”. This roundtable showcased recent experiences in con-

ducting Voluntary Local Reviews and other sub-national reviews in the Arab region. It discussed how sub-national follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda can support national planning and commit to leaving no one behind and tackling inequality.

Urban issues were also tackled through a Special Session on “Urban resilience to COVID-19 and climate change” and a Virtual Knowledge Fair¹⁵ that included a course: on the NUA – Promotional Video included in the ESCWA Learning Platform and knowledge products: Diagnostic and Planning Tool for Building Resilience; Technical Paper on Smart cities, Global compendium of Practices on urban economic resilience, and the Illustrated handbook on the NUA in Arabic.¹⁶ In addition, the first Annual SDG Review,¹⁷ a report published annually for the AFSD, which focuses on a number of regional priorities, in 2022, it focused on Social Protection; Green Economic Recovery; and Digital Transformation.

14 <https://afsd-2022.unescwa.org>

15 <https://afsd-2022.unescwa.org/knowledge-fair-escwa.html#1>

16 <https://unhabitat.org/ar/the-new-urban-agenda-illustrated>

17 <https://publications.unescwa.org/projects/sdgs-review-2022/index.html>

III. Progress on transformative commitments for sustainable urban development (2018-2022)

Following Quito, a regional Harmonized Framework for the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda was endorsed in 2018, under the AU STC No.8. This was intended to enhance effective agenda implementation by facilitating coordination and synergy as well enabling the incorporation of key Agenda 2063 priorities. It defined six transformative outcomes:

1. **End all forms and dimensions of poverty and leave no one behind:** This outcome integrates key priorities including improved affordable and adequate housing access, basic physical and social infrastructure for all, security of tenure, and public space promotion.
2. **Foster peace and security:** Key priorities include ensuring safety and security, addressing causes of conflict, resolving disputes, and promoting a culture of peace within the urban context and through urbanization.
3. **Consolidate sustainable and inclusive urban prosperity:** Core priorities include promoting full and productive employment and decent work for all, harnessing the productive potential of cities, and promoting investments, innovation and entrepreneurship.
4. **Promote and accelerate structural transformation:** This focuses on promoting transition of employment and output to higher productivity through high value-added sectors and economic diversification.
5. **Foster environmental sustainability, and enhance resilience and risk reduction:** Key priorities include protecting ecosystems and biodiversity, promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, and strengthening resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters.

6. **Promote regional integration:** This focuses on leveraging Africa's rapid urban growth to enable greater regional integration, while using this integration to promote more sustainable urbanization.

Over the last four years **UNECE** has worked to foster thematic multi-stakeholder alliances to better leverage knowledge and financing capital to improve livelihoods and sustainability, which is at the core of the New Urban Agenda. To review the achievement of urban related SDGs, UNECE started annually convening the roundtable "In Focus: SDG 11"¹⁸ which brings together UN agencies, city networks, and other international organizations and networks. All of these exchange experiences in supporting national and local governments to achieve urban-related SDGs. The event is a platform for dialogue on how cities and their networks, as well as relevant organizations and stakeholders, address global challenges that are traditionally discussed by States in multilateral forums. In Focus: SDG 11 aims at better linking intergovernmental debates on issues related to SDG11 with what cities and their networks are actually doing.

During 2018-2021, the urban development work of **ECLAC** focused largely on supporting national and local authorities involved in urban development, including those related to housing, mobility, climate action planning, in building promoting and building capacity for sustainable urban development. Urban-related work takes place under ECLAC's umbrella strategy of promoting a 'big push' for sustainability. This is an articulated intervention of multiple actors and coherent policy to simultaneously promote: economic growth, adoption of technological innovations, creation of employment, reduction of emissions, and greater equality. Work has focused on promoting local economic development, resilience building, climate change adaptation, and supporting policy making in developing

18 <https://unece.org/info/Housing-and-Land-Management/events/358326>

an intersectoral, integrated urban policy. Increasingly, more attention is being paid to building capacity and boosting participation of local authorities in urban planning processes, to promote the inclusion of local perspectives in national planning exercises.

ECLAC has also become more heavily involved in the intergovernmental processes surrounding urban development, particularly since taking on the role of co-technical secretariat to the Forum of Ministers and high level Authorities for Housing and Urban Development for Latin America and the Caribbean in 2020. This role is shared with UN-Habitat.

The Asia-Pacific Urban Forum (APUF), convened by ESCAP is a regional platform for policy makers and stakeholders at all government levels held every four years to exchange information on urban solutions. At the 7th APUF held in Penang, Malaysia in October 2019, organizations and partnerships made a number of voluntary commitments. These included the Asian Development Bank (ADB) providing US\$2.5 billion annual financing for urban infrastructure projects from 2020 to 2024, and United Cities and Local Governments Asia Pacific (UCLG ASPAC) supporting at least 50 cities and provinces to develop SDG aligned local plans. Other commitments included climate change action plans, local disaster plans and participatory design and construction of public spaces by 2022, the European Union International Urban Cooperation programme to support cooperation on sustainability in 30 cities by 2023, and the Pacific Island Forum Partners to achieve the outcomes of the Pacific Urban Forum by 2023.

The **Penang Platform for Sustainable Urbanization (PPSU)** was established in 2019 at APUF-7. PPSU brings together an alliance of partners, led by ESCAP, Urbanice Malaysia and UN Habitat, to address multi-faceted issues through a holistic CITI pathway: *Collaborates* to accelerate implementation of the SDGs in cities, *Integrates* the use of tools, models, research and evidence of good practices, *Transforms* access to innovative sources of urban financing through new partnerships, and *Increases* political commitments for sustainable urbanization. The Platform supported the development and implementation of regional VLR guidelines and co-convening the 2019 Regional Partners Forum (Quito+5).

The **Asia-Pacific Mayor's Academy** launched at APUF-7 supports newly-elected or appointed mayors with access to expertise, greater awareness of regional resources, and a support network, to assist in the acceleration of urban sustainability initiatives across all aspects of NUA. The Academy has brought together partner institutions to deliver a comprehensive curriculum on urban development to fellow mayors. These include ESCAP, UN-Habitat, the UN University Institute for Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS), UCLG ASPAC, the Association of Pacific Rim Universities, and the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES).

The **ASEAN Mayors Forum (AMF)** is an annual event co-organized by UCLG ASPAC and the ASEAN Secretariat to discuss local actions for sustainable and inclusive growth, exchange experiences and share urban solutions. Participants include mayors, representatives of local governments and local government associations from all ASEAN member States. The 5th ASEAN Mayors Forum, Driving Local Actions for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth, was held in August 2019 co-organized in Bangkok with ESCAP. In 2021, the AMF Virtual Special Event on Enabling Environment on Climate Resilience: Local Governments and Cities Commitment to Tackle Climate Change was hosted by the City of Jakarta, Indonesia.

The **UCLG ASPAC** organizes a biennial Congress engaging key development actors around relevant themes. The 7th Congress was held in September 2018 in Surabaya, Indonesia with the theme of Innovation-Driven Development for Sustainable Cities. The 8th Congress, From Steady Recovery to Sustained Prosperity in Post COVID-19 Asia Pacific, was a hybrid event hosted by the City of Zhengzhou in April 2021.

The **Asia Low-emissions Development Strategies Partnership (LEDS) Partnership** is a regional network comprised of individuals and organizations from the public, private, and non-governmental sectors who are active in designing, promoting, and implementing low-carbon development in their countries and cities. The partnership, a regional platform of the LEDS Global Partnership, shares solutions and has delivered training to local and national stakeholders. ICLEI serves as the secretariat for the partnership, ensur-

ing that low-carbon solutions are accessible to local authorities, including through the network's comprehensive knowledge platform.

CityNet is an association of urban stakeholders committed to sustainable development in the Asia Pacific region. Established in 1987 with the support of UN-ESCAP, UNDP and UN-Habitat, this network of cities has grown to include over 173 municipalities, NGOs, private companies and research centres, to exchange knowledge and build commitment to establish more sustainable and resilient cities. CityNet manages the Urban SDGs Knowledge Platform¹⁹ in partnership with ESCAP, to share knowledge and solutions.

During the reporting period, particularly in 2019, **ESCWA** studied the importance of inclusive urban safety, and the role of technology²⁰ in achieving it, and introduced this in the recommendations of its two committees on technology and women. ESCWA reported on sustainable urban development in the 13th session of the Committee on Social Development²¹ and the 10th session of the Committee on Women.²² ESCWA also explored the fourth industrial revolution and the potential of smart technologies for addressing challenges and creating opportunities in the region to achieving sustainable development, including sustainable urban development.²³ In 2020, ESCWA further explored the area of Technology and Innovation for the Development of Land Transport in Arab Countries.²⁴

Since the end of 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly altered urban life, and highlighted the need

to explore city resilience. Accordingly, ESCWA expanded its focus to cover urban resilience, particularly urban economic resilience and recovery during and after the COVID-19 pandemic in the Arab region, noting that safety and resilience are two complementary concepts lying at the core of the 2030 Agenda through Goal 11 and the NUA (Articles 53 and 66).

The *Smart Sustainable Cities and Smart Digital Solutions for Urban Resilience*²⁵ paper was developed in partnership with UN-Habitat, and focuses on urban economic resilience of cities – a central focus area in the NUA. It explores the status of smart sustainable cities in the Arab region and explores the smart digital solutions that could help achieve both resilience and inclusion during pandemics. It highlights how such solutions would assist in reducing existing vulnerabilities in Arab cities, while maintaining and improving local resilience.

Building on the momentum of local-sub-national and national communication for sustainable development, ESCWA's focus on urban development has expanded to supporting Arab cities in developing their voluntary local reviews since 2021, to inform the Voluntary national reviews and ensure this national-local dialogue. ESCWA has been advancing sustainable urban development in the Arab region²⁶ following an inclusive process. Two major programmes are the "Interregional Cooperation for the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda (NUA)" and "Building Urban Economic Resilience During and After Covid-19".

19 www.urbansdgplatform.org

20 www.unescwa.org/publications/technology-tool-make-cities-safe-and-combat-violence-against-women

21 www.unescwa.org/events/committee-social-development-13th-session

22 www.unescwa.org/events/committee-women-tenth-session

23 www.unescwa.org/publications/impact-fourth-industrial-revolution-development-arab-countries

24 www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/pubs/pdf/technology-innovation-development-land-transport-arab-countries-english_1.pdf

25 English: www.unescwa.org/publications/smart-cities-digital-urban-arab-region; Arabic: www.unescwa.org/ar/publications/مدن-ذكية-رقمية-حضرية-منطقة-عربية

26 www.unescwa.org/events/building-urban-economic-resilience-during-and-after-covid-19

IV. Effective implementation

A. Building a governance structure and establishing a supportive framework

The Harmonized Framework for the Implementation of the NUA in Africa defines six key transformative outcomes that are aligned to the region-specific priorities defined in Agenda 2063. While a comprehensive review of the status of African NUA has already been undertaken through the global Quadrennial report on the NUA, it is important to highlight some broad trends in the transformative outcomes defined by the region. The emerging trend confirms slow progress in all six outcomes.

The region has made considerable progress in outcome six **Promoting Regional Integration**. The landmark agreement has been to establish the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).²⁷ Currently, 54 of 55 AU member States have signed the agreement, and 36 have ratified it, demonstrating record speed for the AU ratification process. Official trading began on 1 January 2021. This priority outcome emphasizes directing urban and human settlements to serve as key levers for integration. While several urban-related interventions for achieving this commitment have been cited, more emphasis is needed on mainstreaming the integration function of urban and human settlement development.

The New Urban Agenda advises that urban planning practice should put humans and human rights at the forefront of urban sustainable development. A national housing strategy is a key part of a broader national urban policy and should be formulated alongside other relevant policies to sustainably create more affordable and inclusive housing outcomes. The **#Housing2030 initiative**²⁸ and **Regional Action Plan 2030**²⁹

are two initiatives from 2020-2021 that seek to provide guidance on how to create these policies.

*#Housing2030: Effective policies for affordable housing in the UNECE region*³⁰ was developed within a joint international initiative of UNECE, UN-Habitat and Housing Europe. It explores housing affordability challenges and existing policy instruments for improving housing affordability, and facilitates exchange and dissemination of good practices in improving housing affordability among countries and cities of the UNECE region.

By aiming to progressively realize the right to adequate and affordable housing, the #Housing2030 partnership fulfils the vision of NUA, paragraph 13.a, which envisages that cities and human settlements “fulfil their social function [...], with a view to progressively achieving the full realization of the right to adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living”.

#Housing2030 also support the principles and call to action of the NUA, particularly:

- **14.a:** “leave no one behind”.
- **15.b:** Recognize the leading role of national Governments, as appropriate, in the definition and implementation of inclusive and effective urban policies and legislation.
- **15.c:** Adopt sustainable, people-centred, age and gender responsive, and integrated approaches to urban and territorial development.
- **31 and 35:** commitment to the right to adequate housing.

27 <https://au.int/en/cfta>

28 More information available at the following link <https://unece.org/housing/affordablehousing> and www.housing2030.org

29 More information available at the following link <https://unece.org/hlm/documents/2021/08/session-documents/place-and-life-ece-regional-action-plan-2030-tackling>

30 More information available at the following link <https://unece.org/housing-and-land-management/publications/housing2030-study-e>

- **33:** commitment to provide a variety of adequate housing options that are safe, affordable and accessible.
- **107:** development of policies, tools, mechanisms and financing models that promote access to a wide range of affordable, sustainable housing options.
- **111** commitment to development of adequate and enforceable regulations in the housing sector.

#Housing2030 also recognized the crucial role of private sector and civil society, international, and regional organizations, as well as development partners and financial institutions in achieving affordable housing for all and encourages the effective participation of all stakeholders, as prescribed in paragraph 48 and 82.

Based on the analysis in the #Housing2030 study, the *Regional Action Plan 2030* proposes a series of aims, policies, goals and targets for sustainable urban development and affordable housing in the ECE region and identifies a series of actions to achieve these. The Action Plan is intended to inspire action and provide the basis for plans and activities focusing on the contribution of affordable housing to sustainable urban development in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and in the face of the climate emergency. It was endorsed by the UNECE Ministerial Meeting in October 2021.

The launch of the Urban and Cities Platform of Latin American and the Caribbean³¹ presents qualitative and quantitative data on the current urban development context, including analysis of planning tools, urban financing mechanisms, urban legislation, and city-level data. This tool was designed in response to a request from the Forum of Ministers and High Level Authorities of Housing and Urbanism (MINURVI). It was an important milestone intended to centralize regional information, supporting decision makers in evidence-based policy making. The platform is in continuous development, adding new content on urban data at country and city level, as well as publications and resources related to the global agendas: SDGs, Regional Action Plans and New Urban Agenda.

The platform develops methodologies designed to support policymakers in conducting gap analyses in national and local urban policy. This involves carrying out exercises to evaluate coherence, pertinence, and adequacy of urban policy in the context of the existing international agendas, namely the NUA and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in the context of broader national development plans and policies. It is also involved in designing integrated urban policies at all levels of government.

It provides technical assistance to both national level governments and local level governments to identify gaps in policy and develop national urban policy, such as the development account project. A project has also been started to accelerate the implementation of urban climate action plan in partnership with the Global Covenant of Mayors.

In October 2021, **ESCAP**, UN-Habitat and the Penang Platform for Sustainable Urbanization convened the 2nd Regional Partners Forum (@Quito+5). This Forum discussed developments in the region, including national reporting, Voluntary Local Reviews, progress against commitments made at APUF-7 and to collect relevant case studies contributing to the thematic pillars in *The Future of Asian and Pacific Cities* report. ESCAP produced a publication, *The Transition of Asian and Pacific Cities to a Sustainable Future: Accelerating Action for Sustainable Urbanization*³² to document the forum outcomes, including best practices and implementation efforts from across the region. The following two highlights are relevant to the implementation of the NUA.

Mainstreaming climate action through urban and territorial planning with the Urban Sustainability Assessment Framework (USAF) in India is designed as a decision support tool for municipal commissioners and urban practitioners to support sustainable and resilient urban planning policy and governance of cities across India. This framework supports urban territorial planning while prioritizing climate adaptation and mitigation at all stages of the process. The framework monitors progress with standardized indicators in twelve sectors: governance and data management, finance and economy, housing and property, water,

31 <https://plataformaurbana.cepal.org>

32 (www.unescap.org/kp/2022/transition-asian-and-pacific-cities-sustainable-future-accelerating-action-sustainable#)

sanitation, waste management, clean energy, resilience, environment, public space-safety-urban form, transport, and social infrastructure.

Sihanoukville for all: promoting a Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive City, Cambodia. This project conducted a comprehensive assessment to launch Sihanoukville as a smart sustainable and inclusive city, with strong governance and policy foundations. The initiative positions people at the heart of the smart city vision, especially women, girls, persons with disabilities and marginalized groups. It aims to promote an alliance between citizens and local authorities through 13 initiatives in three groups:

- People-focused Smart Planning & e-governance through innovative digital participation.
- Smart services through crowdsourced data and information.
- Digital empowerment to reduce the digital divide and foster human rights.

An inclusive approach to getting the smart city governance foundations right is vital for public and private sector driven smart city solutions to flourish in Sihanoukville.

Examples from the Arab region show an increased awareness about the need for strengthened coherent policy frameworks. For example, in 2020, Egypt produced the semifinal version of its National Urban Policy (NUP). The draft consultation included the Ministry of Housing (GOPP), Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Local Development, Ministry of Planning, as well as experts in different fields. In 2021, a related inclusive public consultation programme was designed. The development of the NUP was recognized during the feasibility phase as vital for directing efforts towards achieving sustainable urban development, and to localize the NUA. The NUP of Egypt focused on five areas: managing urban growth, connectivity within and between cities, balanced urban and territorial development, urban governance, land management, and local economic development.

In Lebanon, the 2018 National Urban Policy diagnosis report recommended developing two thematic guides

on housing and transport to help formulate the Lebanon NUP and develop national housing and transport strategies. It was essential to raise relevant stakeholder awareness about the NUP development process, and target urban planning experts, practitioners, academia, and civil society and representatives from different local authorities. This ensured multi-level governance and dialogue in formulating the NUP. This multi-level governance, particularly consultation processes, is core to policy formulation.

During WUF10, held in February 2020, the Future Saudi Cities Programme launched the *State of Saudi Cities Report 2019* (SSCR2019) which explains the overall strategy guiding Saudi Cities to achieve the Saudi Vision 2030 and the National Transformation Programme (NTP2020) as well as the NUA and SDGs, especially Goal 11. The report was informed by bottom-up evidence-based reports (Profiles and CPI reports for 17 Saudi Cities) highlighting multi-level governance and dialogue about urban-related policies and strategies.

ESCWA partnered with UN-Habitat in Lebanon to organize the first national urban forum: **National Urban Forums leading the Way to the World Urban Forum**.³³ The objective of Lebanon's first NUF is to discuss the increasing urban challenges amid multiple ongoing crises in Lebanon. The event set a precedent in partnering with UN-Habitat on urban development and "delivering as one" on the New Urban Agenda at the local, national, and regional level. In addition, the first *State of Lebanese Cities Report*³⁴ was launched at the National Urban Forum and was applauded by the Mayor of Beirut and the Minister of Environment.

B. Planning and management of urban and territorial spatial development

In the ECA region the broad scope of the Abidjan Urban Transport Project (PTUA) covers the development of 87.9 km of rapid urban roads, six interchanges, and the rehabilitation of traffic lights at 89 intersections. It also covers assessment of air quality, urban waste management and the strengthening of existing capacities in traffic regulation, urban planning, local revenue improvement and road safety. The Project integrates

33 www.unescwa.org/events/first-national-urban-forum-lebanon

34 www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/event/materials/un-habitat_escwa_state_of_the_lebanese_cities_2021_web.pdf

a holistic strategy for adaptation and reduction of greenhouse gases in Abidjan, starting from an inventory of the impacts of climate change and a study for the protection of natural ecosystems. It includes a component for participatory management and conservation of the Banco National Park, on the city outskirts.³⁵

In the LAC region, urban mobility is considered one of the key driving sectors of a *Big Push for Sustainability*, a combined and coordinated set of policies aimed at transforming the development model of the region. COVID-19 epidemic recovery is an opportunity to implement the 'big push' in the mobility sector because of the importance of cities in the region's economy, urban needs triggered or accelerated by the pandemic, the increasingly ambitious energy-transition commitments of local and national governments, and the social impacts of better-connected cities. Due to its industrial component, the project is based on case studies for four large Latin-American metropolises: São Paulo, Ciudad de México, Buenos Aires and Bogotá. Its final goal is to foster a regional transformation of the mobility systems, through the desire for cleaner mobility patterns. The project contributes to strengthening technical capacities for the Region by supporting national agencies and government officials, with the aim of adopting long-term and sustainable policies to introduce electrification to the public transport system.

In the ESCAP region there are the following highlights:

Liuzhou, China: Managing the transition from an industrial to an environment-focused city

Liuzhou's recent urban development represents an integrated, inclusive and ecological transition from an old machinery and automobile industrial city, into an innovation-based economy. Long-term efforts in the areas of environment (green and blue infrastructure), mobility (affordable public transport and e-vehicles), and culture (museums and cultural heritages) have been integrated via the city's spatial planning.

Improving equitable land tenure via the Secure Access to Land and Resources (SALaR) in Lao PDR

Challenges related to land tenure in Lao PDR include pressure on land from population growth and expanding urban areas, and limited land registration and titling. A further challenge for equitable land policy is a male-dominated decision-making process due to cultural norms regarding women's participation. The SALaR project, implemented by UN-Habitat, aims to promote tenure security improvement, especially for women and marginalized groups, at the village level. Three major interventions were included: implementation of land tools, capacity building and enhancing partnerships among land stakeholders.

Adopting a territorial approach to sustainable development based on multilevel governance participation and inclusion is vital to reinforce the capacities of local and regional governments, advance SDG localization and implement the NUA in the Arab region. Good practice in the region fosters territorial spatial development by establishing urban observatories to provide urban knowledge needed for evidence-based urban planning, management, monitoring and decision-making. Two examples are Amman and Beirut Urban Observatories, managed respectively by Greater Amman Municipality and the Beirut Urban Lab.³⁶

The Beirut Urban Observatory is a shared information platform covering municipal Beirut, supporting, coordinating and monitoring damage and repairs in the areas most affected by the August 2020 Beirut blast.³⁷ It provides lessons on inclusive and participatory recovery efforts that can benefit other post-disaster contexts. Building on the Beirut Built Environment Database,³⁸ a platform of shared geolocalized information was developed to provide visibility to damage assessment and recovery efforts within historical development trends. It also provided layers of information about the neighborhoods surrounding the Beirut Port. The Amman Urban Observatory (AUO) is part of the GAM organizational structure and is responsible

35 African Development Bank Group. 2019. Infrastructure and Urban Development – AfDB_annual_report_2018 pp.16-17

36 www.beiruturbanlab.com/en/Details/814

37 e.g., Mar Mikhail, Gemmayzeh, Geitawi, Karantina, Badawi, and Bachoura

38 www.beiruturbanlab.com/en/Details/561/built-environment-database

for collating and analyzing city data for reporting purposes in line with global development agendas.³⁹

C. Promoting green, climate resilient and healthy cities, including through COVID-19 recovery efforts

Some projects implemented over the review period focus on helping local governments to overcome the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. **UNECE** has implemented the project on “Post COVID-19 Recovery in Informal Settlements in the ECE Region”⁴⁰ and a “Rapid response project on building urban economic resilience during and after the COVID-19 pandemic”. These support several cities in developing economic recovery plans related to the pandemic, particularly supporting the most vulnerable groups living in informal settlements.

The project which builds urban economic resilience during and after the COVID-19⁴¹ pandemic focuses on strengthening the capacities of local governments in two UNECE region cities⁴² to design, implement and monitor sustainable, resilient and inclusive COVID-19 economic and financial responses, as well as recovery and rebuilding plans. The immediate impact of the project is a compendium of good global practices from other cities which will inform the pilot cities in developing and implementing their immediate response and recovery plans to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The *Regional Policy Brief on Building Urban Economic Resilience during and after COVID-19 in the UNECE Region*⁴³ aims to provide an overview of the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in the UNECE region and gain a better understanding of urban economic resilience challenges during and after the pandemic. This policy brief also identifies the broader urban economic resilience needs of cities arising from the multidimensional impact of the pandemic in the context of recovery plans. It offers policy

recommendations, best practice examples, tools and mechanisms for sustainable urban economic recovery.

As a response to the onset of the pandemic, **ECLAC** built the COVID-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean, to assess the impact on its 33 member countries. The Observatory tracks the public policies implemented in the region to limit the impact of the pandemic and offers analyses of the economic and social impacts that these policies will have at national and sectoral levels. The observatory will continue to review and follow-up policies over the medium and long term. It contains a section that compiles the publications produced by ECLAC on a wide range of topics affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as development goals, trade, economic growth, health and financing of actions.

During 2021, **ECLAC** carried out a pilot project in cooperation with the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, which analyzed the climate action plans of three Latin American cities. This aimed to develop an analytical methodology to assess plan completeness and conformity with global agendas such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda. It also developed tools to prioritize adaptation and mitigation actions. The pilot was a first step in a longer-term approach whose objective is to provide tools and guidelines to effectively implement climate action plans, applicable to any city in the region, regardless of its size or data availability.

The project on “Building Urban Economic Resilience During and after Covid-19” is being implemented in three LAC region cities: Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic), Guayaquil (Ecuador) and Lima (Peru). It has provided technical assistance and capacity development in applying analyses of COVID-19 epidemic local impact. Through workshops and consultations, cities have defined strategies that promote recovery with a sustainable focus.

39 www.amman.jo/site_doc/Observatory.pdf

40 <https://unece.org/housing/post-covid-19-recovery>

41 More information is available at the following link and on the project web page <https://unece.org/housing/urban-resilience-after-covid19> – <https://urbaneconomicresilience.org>

42 Kharviv, Ukraine & Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

43 More information is available at the following link <https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/ECE%20HBP%202021%20INF.5%20Regional%20Policy%20Brief.pdf>

In 2020, in the midst of the global pandemic, ESCAP produced a discussion paper entitled *Future of Asia and the Pacific Report: Transformative Pathways Towards Sustainable Urban Development – post Covid-19*.⁴⁴ This paper adds an urban health focus into the framework developed in the *Future of Asia and the Pacific Cities” Report (2019)*.⁴⁵

The **Building urban economic resilience during and after COVID-19** project in the Asia-Pacific region, covered four cities in Pune (India), Hoi An (Vietnam), Subang Jaya (Malaysia), and Suva (Fiji). Through this project, ESCAP supported project cities to focus recovery strategies based on resilience diagnostics which highlighted opportunities in prominent sectors, such as eco-tourism. Cities have been able to identify strengths and weakness of their urban resilience and are working on drafting recovery plans that promote green, sustainable recovery.

The Arab region during the reporting period witnessed various initiatives aimed at transitioning into climate resilient, green and healthy cities; Amman city is a leading example of this. It has launched a resiliency strategy which includes major areas of intervention, allowing the implementation of its vision through five main pillars of resiliency⁴⁶ identified through stakeholders’ engagement and a participatory approach to ensure that no one is left behind.

As a follow-up on the second pillar, an environmentally proactive city, the Amman climate action plan was prepared and launched in 2019, setting the city on the path for climate neutrality by 2050. The plan identifies projects in sustainable mobility, solid waste management, green buildings, renewable energy, and energy efficiency. The city has joined the framework for green cities, enabling them to receive financing for projects identified under the green city action plan.

Qatar⁴⁷ has been witnessing a major shift towards green buildings in the context of promoting green develop-

ment and in line with the role of Qatar National Vision 2030. The Qatar Green Building Council (QGBC), affiliated to its Qatar Foundation, was established in 2009 to rally and involve all sectors, stakeholders and the local community to support green environmental issues and the shift towards green buildings.

The project on “Building Urban Economic Resilience During and after Covid-19” is being implemented in three cities from the Arab region: Alexandria (Egypt), Beirut (Lebanon) and Kuwait (Kuwait). It assists cities and their local governments in becoming more economically resilient by drawing a baseline for their performance on urban economic resilience and designing recovery plans that tackle the challenges identified in these areas. The project generates knowledge products, including the Regional Policy Advocacy on Building Urban Economic Resilience during and after COVID-19 in the Arab Region, as well as tools to assist global, national, sub-national and local communities in achieving urban economic resilience.⁴⁸

D. Financing the implementation of the New Urban Agenda

The ECA region has several good examples addressing housing deficits in Africa through financing. These include how in South Africa the public sector continues to scale housing delivery through the Housing Development Agency (HDA) with plans to construct 500,000 houses between 2019 and 2024. The National Department of Human Settlements has a target to deliver 270,000 social housing units, formalize 300 informal settlements each year, deliver 180,000 serviced sites, provide 18,000 affordable rental units, and develop innovative financing systems and modality for land acquisition. In Mauritius, the Finance Act of 2009 makes it mandatory for companies to devote two percent of their profits to corporate social responsibility; these funds can be used for approved programmes which can include social or subsidized housing.

44 ESCAP (2020) *Future of Asia and the Pacific Report: Transformative Pathways Towards Sustainable Urban Development – post Covid-19* ([Link](#))

45 UNESCAP & UN-Habitat (2019) *The Future of Asian and Pacific Cities 2019: Transformative Pathways Towards Sustainable Urban Development* ([Link](#))

46 The main pillars are the following: 1. An Integrated and Smart City; 2. An Environmentally proactive City; 3. An Innovative and Prosperous City; 4. A Young and Equal City; 5. A United and Proud City.

47 Qatar VNR 2021

48 <https://urbanresiliencehub.org/economicresilience>

UNECE and the Cities Development Initiative for Asia (CDIA) established a partnership with local and national government and academia for the development of a pre-feasibility study on the integrated development of five informal settlements in Bishkek, covering a total of 75,000 beneficiaries. This was based on recommendations in the Bishkek Smart Sustainable City Profile. The project aims to plan for and identify downstream financing job creation opportunities based on informal workers' skills. These will be in water supply, sanitation, stormwater management, drainage, district heating, power supply, solid waste management, paved roads, green open spaces, schools, medical facilities and green buildings. In addition, the project prioritizes tailored capacity-building to operate and maintain such infrastructure. There is the potential to leverage USD55 million, which would massively contribute to socio-economic, governance, environmental, health and climate mitigation benefits.

UNECE continues to implement the sustainable development project and develop Smart Sustainable City Profiles (SSCPs) in Tbilisi, Georgia, Almaty, Kazakhstan and Podgorica, Montenegro. In Podgorica, the UNECE is currently planning the development of a local housing needs assessment in Montenegro, Podgorica through a partnership with the Council of Europe Development Bank, as well as local and national government, local NGOs, the private sector and academia. UNECE's approach, both in Bishkek and Podgorica, prioritizes listening to local needs, not solely limited to local authorities. It is vital to ensure that a wide variety of local actors are included in development programming. This is particularly important in the UNECE region because local authorities in the region do not always have structural communication channels and governance frameworks ensuring participatory planning and decision-making.

The recently ECLAC platforms, including the Urban and Cities Platform of Latin America and the Caribbean,⁴⁹ the SDG Gateway,⁵⁰ COVID Observatory⁵¹ and

Regional Observatory on Planning for Development,⁵² are examples of ECLAC's efforts to strengthen member States' access to adequate decision-making information, supporting global agenda implementation. ECLAC has increasingly prioritized making urban and city related information and data available to support both national and local authorities in evidence-based decision making. It also enables them to benefit from peer to peer learning opportunities, comparing strategies, policies and plans in different countries and cities in the region.

Specific projects are underway to support cities in ensuring the financial viability of plans. For example, support is provided to select cities in developing Climate Adaptation Plans, including analysis of their financial viability. To finance implementation of the new Urban Agenda, technical assistance is being provided in Ecuador, Costa Rica and Cuba, supporting authorities in implementing tools for land value capture to obtain financing for urban projects.

In 2019 ESCAP convened with NITI Aayog, Government of India a subregional municipal finance dialogue for South Asia to identify specific financing strategies for cities. In the ESCAP region, The Penang Platform for Sustainable Urbanization is an important forum for sharing knowledge and building partnerships related to municipal financing as well as other aspects of NUA implementation. The Asian Development Bank also plays an important role in catalyzing finance in the region, as demonstrated by its commitment to provide US\$2.5 billion annually for urban infrastructure projects from 2020 to 2024. Several other case studies highlighted during the recent Regional Partners Forum provide insights into aspects of NUA financing the region:

Rediscovering Land Pooling to help Finance Urban Infrastructure in Nepal. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) carried out a 2020 study into the potential for reinvigorated and strategic land pooling in Nepal,⁵³ and observed that the use of land pooling for planned

49 <https://plataformaurbana.cepal.org/en>

50 <https://agenda2030lac.org/en>

51 www.cepal.org/en/topics/covid-19

52 <https://observatorioplanificacion.cepal.org/en>

53 Faust, A. et al (2020) Land Pooling in Nepal: From Planned Urban 'Islands' to City Transformation. Asian Development Bank SE Asia Working Paper Series ([Link](#))

urban development has stagnated since the early 2000s. The recent municipal government decentralization in Nepal gives an opportunity to improve the enabling environment for land pooling. This would include updating and strengthening the legal and regulatory framework, integrating it with urban and regional planning, building consensus, resolving disputes early, and developing mechanisms for non-consenting landowners.⁵⁴

Air pollution is at crisis levels across many cities in the Asia Pacific and must be addressed in conjunction with efforts to reduce GHG emissions. ESCAP, supported by the Republic of Korea, is developing methodologies and deploying tools including machine learning to identify sources of urban air pollution and assisting cities to develop local air quality action plans. The *Breathe Better Bond* is a debt instrument with potential for local governments to finance air pollution reduction projects in emerging market cities that also reduces GHG emissions – for example in clean energy, waste management, transportation and fuel switching.⁵⁵

E. Strengthening capacities to promote sustainable urbanization

Urbanization, if well planned and managed, is an accelerator for prosperity in Africa through structural transformation, and the quest for regional integration. Its effective implementation complements national and regional strategies and provides a harmonious framework for obtaining optimum social, economic and environmental outcomes. Urban and economic growth increase in tandem, while evidence shows improved social indicators in urban settings. It is thus critical to strengthen capacities for urban planning, management and governance in Africa, not just for service delivery, but for economic growth, improved social outcomes and enhanced environmental sustainability.

Addressing key urban barriers such as transport, housing, energy and digital access are not only about serving urban communities but are also vitally nec-

essary to expand productive sectors of the economy and provide decent jobs, attracting investments and financing and accelerating economic growth. An example in promoting environmentally sustainable urbanization, Kampala has developed its first energy and climate change action plan, which aims to accelerate deployment of renewables, support the green economy and promote more environmentally friendly public transport. Similarly, in June 2019, the South Africa's Carbon Tax Act came into effect, placing specific levies on greenhouse gases from fuel combustion and industrial processes and emissions.

UNECE supports local governments in assessing the achievement of SDGs and development of evidence-based policies. It does this by applying key performance indicators on smart sustainable cities, indicators on urban economic resilience and the other UN system-wide urban monitoring frameworks, and in the preparation of smart sustainable cities profiles and SDG Volunteer Local Reviews (VLRs) based on the assessments. UNECE has developed *Guidelines for the Development of Voluntary Local Reviews in the UNECE Region*.⁵⁶ These support local regional governments in the UNECE region in promoting shared value creation for cities and other human settlements.

In 2020, UNECE and UN-Habitat published *Guidelines on evidence-based policies and decision-making for sustainable housing and urban development*. This is a practical reference for policymakers and other experts involved in the development, review and implementation of policies on sustainable housing and urban development, with a focus on disaggregated granular data production.

ECLAC emphasized strengthening engagement with local and city level actors through participation in networks such as *MERCOCIUDADES* and *FLACMA*. It also organized side events during regional events such as the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, to emphasize to national level actors the importance of involving local authorities in planning exercises. Furthermore, specific projects financed by the develop-

54 C40 Finance Facility (2017) Explainer: How to Finance Urban Infrastructure ([Link](#))

55 Climate Finance Lab – Breathe Better Bond ([Link](#))

56 More information is available at the following link https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/ECE_HB-P_2021_4-2109985E.pdf

ment account promote engagement of national level authorities with city level actors.

In the ESCAP region partners have played a significant role in encouraging countries in the region to prepare voluntary national reports on NUA. In September 2021, UN Habitat hosted a Quadrennial Report Update session, to enable speakers from Lao PDR and Turkey, who had submitted reports at that stage, to share their insights and experience. In October 2021, at the 2nd Regional Partners Forum @Quito +5, partners discussed progress on implementation of the NUA across the region and learned more about reporting the implementation of urban agendas. A deep dive session was held during the Forum, to provide national government representatives and other stakeholders with practical advice on how to prepare their voluntary national report submissions. Recently, there has been a greater uptake on national report preparation; Indonesia has since submitted its national report, and Thailand is in the advanced stages of drafting one.

The progress on Voluntary Local Reviews in Asia Pacific. Following the seventh Asia Pacific Urban Forum (APUF-7) in 2019, a need was identified to provide cities with guidance on the development of VLRs. ESCAP, together with the Penang Platform for Sustainable Urbanization (PPSU) developed the *Asia-Pacific Regional Guidelines on Voluntary Local Reviews*⁵⁷ as a practical framework for local policy makers to review progress on the SDGs. The Guidelines provide practical tools, checklists, and templates that local governments and other stakeholders can use when conducting a VLR alongside a country's VNR reporting. ESCAP was the first Regional Commission to include a review of VLRs in the formal intergovernmental segment of the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, and has also developed an e-learning portal, the VLR Journey⁵⁸ to provide tailored guidance on VLRs. The portal also acts as a platform for local and national stakeholders to engage and share experiences and lessons learnt from their VLR journey with their peers.

Following the launch of the regional VLR guidelines in October 2020, Subang Jaya city in Malaysia applied the guidelines to develop its own VLR which was shared at the 2021 High Level Political Forum (HLPF). Subang Jaya's efforts, along with other Malaysian cities undertaking their first VLRs, was also acknowledged in the country's second VNR report. In Indonesia, Surabaya city completed the country's first VLR report. Indonesia's third VNR report accommodates results from the VLR report and notes how the process has been encouraged by the integration of SDGs into the mid-term development planning of the city government. Other cities including Dhulikhel (Nepal), Singra (Bangladesh), Naga (Philippines), and Nakhon Si Thammarat (Thailand) are in the process of completing their first VLRs.

In support of the capacity building efforts, **ESCWA** translated the "Illustrated Handbook on the NUA" into Arabic.⁵⁹ It also translated the crash course on the NUA, consisting of two modules: Core dimensions of the NUA and Means of Implementation.⁶⁰ These learning materials, the learning toolkit and the E-Learning Portal⁶¹ will be used as part of the capacity building workshops the NUA conducts for the region. For capacity building on the urban monitoring framework, ESCWA in partnership with UN-Habitat organized the first regional webinar on the NUA and its urban monitoring framework in 2021.

F. Use of technology to support sustainable urban development

From a statistical perspective, **ECLAC** has emphasized increasing the availability of disaggregated geospatial urban data driven by the understanding that the region needs more location-specific data to be available in order to carry out evidenced-based policy and decision making. Therefore, work has been done on supporting alternative strategies for data collection such as via satellite imaging.

ESCAP has an air quality monitoring programme which analyzes satellite data from South Korea's GEMS sat-

57 www.unescap.org/resources/asia-pacific-regional-guidelines-voluntary-local-reviews

58 <https://vlr.unescap.org>

59 <https://unhabitat.org/ar/the-new-urban-agenda-illustrated>

60 <https://learn.unescwa.org/course/urban-development>

61 <https://afsd-2022.unescwa.org/knowledge-fair-escwa.html#1>; <https://youtu.be/ezXff8Kowys>

ellite, in tandem with Pandora ground sensors, to triangulate the data. Working with several municipalities in Thailand and other countries, the programme is providing much needed evidence on air pollution sources, which can then be addressed by government action. Satellite data is also used in ESCAP's Closing the Loop programme to reduce and tackle marine plastic pollution and to protect marine resources.

In Malaysia, the Iskandar Regional Development Authority (IRDA) recently launched a new central body responsible for data gathering, management, monitoring and analysis, known as Iskandar Malaysia Urban Observatory (IMUO). This will be a 'single window' that integrates data from various sources to create actionable information for better policy making and well-informed decision making.

Throughout the "Localizing the 2030 Agenda in Asian & Pacific Cities" Project implemented by UN ESCAP and UN-Habitat, the city government in Battambang, a partner in the ASEAN Smart Cities Network, has been gathering information, analyzing data, and disseminating knowledge to sustainably managing solid waste. Digital solutions can have a great impact in improving the effectiveness of such data management, and the use of social media can improve community awareness on effective solid waste management (SWM) approaches through outreach programmes on recycling. It was therefore decided by the municipality that a mobile application, called Green Cambodia, should provide a digital platform to map waste collection routes, act as a marketplace for trading recyclable materials, and flag problems with waste collection service delivery.

D-Agree – An AI-based solution to support participatory urban planning in Afghanistan

In 2019, the Nagoya Institute of Technology and Kyoto University, in partnership with Kabul Municipality, developed an Artificial Intelligence (AI) powered platform. This was called D-Agree, and supported

information-centric participation in urban planning and provided support for stakeholders to reach consensus in urban development decisions across several Afghan cities. From September 2019 until the fall of Kabul in August 2021, more than 15,000 citizens participated in planning activities hosted by D-Agree and generated more than 71,000 opinions related to urban-related thematic areas.

ESCWA has been focusing on the role of technology in achieving sustainable development, particularly sustainable urban development on different fronts. Below are normative examples:

In 2021, ESCWA organized a webinar on "Geographic information systems for population and housing census in Iraq". This assessed the infrastructure of geographic information systems (GIS) which facilitate the adoption of such technology in planning for the Population and Housing Census (PHC) in Iraq, and foster the implementation of the NUA.⁶²

In 2019, ESCWA studied the importance of inclusive urban safety and the role of technology⁶³ in achieving it, introducing it in its two committees' recommendations on technology and women. ESCWA also explored the fourth industrial revolution and the potential of smart technologies to address regional challenges and opportunities for achieving sustainable development, including sustainable urban development.⁶⁴

In 2019-2020, ESCWA and the Islamic Development Bank in cooperation with UNECE organized a training workshop on GIS for the Integrated Transport System in the Arab States.⁶⁵ They tested the applicability and maneuverability of GIS for officials representing the Ministries of Transport in the Arab region. This test was in terms of data filling, updating and analyzing, and displays of query results, and sought participant feedback on approach feasibility. In 2020, ESCWA further explored Technology and Innovation for the Development of Land Transport in Arab Countries.⁶⁶

62 www.unescwa.org/events/webinar-7-geographic-information-systems-population-and-housing-census-iraq

63 www.unescwa.org/publications/technology-tool-make-cities-safe-and-combat-violence-against-women

64 www.unescwa.org/publications/impact-fourth-industrial-revolution-development-arab-countries

65 www.unescwa.org/events/2nd-training-gis-integrated-transport-system-arab-states; www.unescwa.org/events/training-gis-integrated-transport-system-arab-states

66 www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/pubs/pdf/technology-innovation-development-land-transport-arab-countries-english_1.pdf

G. Facilitating engagement and participation of development partners

In 2020-2021, UN-Habitat, in close collaboration and coordination with UNCDF and the UN RCs, developed a *Diagnostic and Planning Tool (DPT)*⁶⁷ which provided a framework for the concept of urban economic resilience. This allows policy advocacy for building urban economic resilience at global and regional levels. The DPT has a twofold objective. First, it will help cities understand the strengths and weaknesses of their institutional and operating arrangements from the perspective of economic recovery and resilience building. It will also assess the structure and function of city economies to clearly understand the economic performance and standing of each city and how this defines vulnerability and resilience. Second, it will define a process for design and implementation of recovery plans to address identified gaps, accelerate better recovery and improve longer-term resilience.

ECLAC has also implemented the Regional Observatory on Planning for Development,⁶⁸ which is a dynamic space for analysis, information and collective production of knowledge. It is to be used by governments, academia, private sector and civil society for development planning in Latin America and the Caribbean.

It is important to note the role of United Cities and Local Governments Asia Pacific (UCLG ASPAC) as a regional stakeholder for local governments for the ESCAP region, helping channel local authority feedback and input into development programming. A number of studies highlighted at the recent Regional Partners Forum demonstrate additional progress in this regard:

Surabaya's innovations in waste management, Indonesia. The Jambangan Recycling Centre in Surabaya processes organic and inorganic waste. The city is also developing former landfill and informal dump sites into eco-parks to promote eco-tourism and green in-

itiatives. Former landfills and unmanaged areas have been transformed into Harmoni Park, the Urban Forest of Gunung Ayar, and Wonorejo Mangrove Forest. This has turned bleak polluted areas into family-friendly spaces and green landscapes, important for recreation, health, biodiversity and natural systems. They also contribute to carbon sequestration and resilience to disasters such as flooding. To implement these measures, cooperation between the community and the project implementers was vital. Some projects are explicitly community-led, bringing wider ownership and understanding of environmental concerns.

Turkey's commitment to linking urban and territorial planning to municipal budgeting. The linkage between urban and infrastructure planning and municipal budgeting is an important part of meeting the NUA and turning sustainable urban development plans into reality. In Turkey, there is a clear target to increase the alignment between the priorities of the local administrations' strategic plans and resource allocations. Practical guidance is provided by "Institutional Strategic Planning Guidelines for Municipalities", published to assist municipalities through the stages of preparing and implementing as well as monitoring and assessing these plans. Municipalities are therefore better able to base their budgets and project resource allocations on their institutional strategic plans.

Through its various urban development projects, **ESCWA** and its partners has ensured the full engagement and participation of local authorities. In the project on building urban economic resilience, local authorities in Alexandria, Beirut and Kuwait were fully engaged in the performance diagnosis on their cities' urban economic resilience. Local and national authorities along with experts in the field contribute to urban recovery plans. These projects empower local authorities and provide them with tools and knowledge, enabling them to lead sustainable development within their cities and communities.

67 More information is available at the following link <https://urbaneconomicresilience.org/resources/uncdf-urban-economic-recovery-and-resilience-diagnostic-and-planning-tool/>

68 <https://observatorioplanificacion.cepal.org>

V. The New Urban Agenda as accelerator of global development agendas

The Geneva Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Housing and Urban Development⁶⁹ was adopted in 2017. It reiterates the importance for all levels of government, and relevant stakeholders, to promote the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing, as well as other global and regional frameworks.

Most of whom recently endorsed Place and Life in the ECE – A Regional Action Plan 2030 – Tackling challenges from COVID-19 pandemic, climate and housing emergencies in region, city, neighbourhood and homes (RAP). This supports UNECE member States in tackling the challenges from the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as climate and housing emergencies in the region, city, neighborhood and home. In 2021, cities, city networks and other stakeholders provided their perspectives on the RAP and shared how they contributed to achieve sustainable urban development through adequate, safe and affordable housing in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic and in the face of the climate emergency.

ECLAC provides technical assistance to member States and cities, increasing capacity to implement global and regional agendas coherently and comprehensively, providing capacity building in integrated policy making. Specifically, the project underway since 2020 in Ecuador, Cuba and Costa Rica supports policy makers and authorities in strengthening urban policies. This enables them to achieve an integrated

approach to policy making, incorporating objectives of major agendas such as the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, New Urban Agenda, Regional Action plan for the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda, and the Paris Agreement.

In the Asia Pacific region there has been a range of activities and events to support the follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda (NUA). For example, the Eighth UGLC ASPAC congress took place in Zhengzhou, China in 2021, to convene a broad range of partners to discuss localization of the SDGs, municipal financing options and many other relevant topics.⁷⁰

ESCAP and the Penang Platform for Sustainable Urbanization will support collaboration to take forward the development pathways identified in *The Future of Asia Pacific Cities* report, which will lead to more safe, inclusive, resilient and sustainable cities across the region. It will connect cities with tailored technical assistance, generating action-oriented research on urban solutions, and enhancing access to innovative financing models.

The ASEAN Smart Cities Network (ASCN) catalyzes innovation and partnerships The ASCN⁷¹ was set up in 2018 to synergize regional smart city development and facilitate smart city projects, with the first batch of 26 cities nominated by national Governments. In the light of the opportunities and challenges posed by rapid urbanization and digitalization, the primary goal of the ASCN is to improve the lives of ASEAN citizens, using technology as an enabler. The networking of Smart Cities across ASEAN also contributes to enhancing mutual understanding across cultures.⁷²

69 <https://unece.org/info/Housing-and-Land-Management/pub/2910>

70 Material from the UCLG ASPAC Congress can be found here ([Link](#))

71 <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/ASCN-Concept-Note.pdf>

72 ASEAN Smart Cities Network homepage ([Link](#))

The ASCN aims to facilitate cooperation on smart city development, catalyze bankable projects with the private sector, and secure funding and/or technical support from ASEAN's external partners, which includes ESCAP.

The NUA, and its follow-up and review, provide opportunities to better understand and implement the urban and territorial dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals. It accelerates achievement of global development agendas. Accordingly, **ESCWA** is generating evidence-based practical guidance for implementation of the New Urban Agenda and related

dimensions of the 2030 Agenda. ESCWA is also fostering national, subnational, and local dialogue. It also developed the Arab SDG Monitor⁷³ which provides a comprehensive overview on the performance of Arab countries with regard to all SDGs, and the SDG Knowledge and Learning platform which provides many online courses and training materials related to agenda 2030 and specific SDGs. The Arab SDG Monitor is a user-friendly regional reporting platform dedicated to statistical monitoring and reporting on progress towards the SDGs, aimed at enhancing planning and decision-making at national and regional levels.

73 <https://arabsdgmonitor.unescwa.org>

VI. Growing importance of cities and local authorities

UNECE convenes the Forum of Mayors which provides a platform for mayors from the UNECE region to exchange information on experiences and best practices in city level policies and practices, and provides a platform for cities to define a new vision for urban sustainability. In 2020, the Geneva Declaration of Mayors⁷⁴ was endorsed by the UNECE region Mayors.

Beyond their reporting role, VLRs are powerful accelerators of the SDG localization process worldwide. VLRs can enhance data innovation, stakeholder inclusion and participation, policy coherence, strategic planning and multilevel governance. Interaction between the local and national levels is also strengthened through VLR-VNR interlinkages. The emergence of Voluntary Local Reviews has also provided the opportunity to integrate NUA in strategies and progress reviews. For example, Subang Jaya, Malaysia's VLR, completed in 2021, highlighted the integration of both NUA and SDGs in a systemic approach. The mayor has been one of a number of advocates for city-level action in regional and global events on the role of cities in promoting sustainable urban development.

Cities have become more visible and have played an active role in sustainable development. Through the Asia Pacific Local Government Coordination Group, which includes all regional city networks, inputs are now offered to the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development through a Local Government Statement. Countries such as Malaysia and Cambodia have convened national urban forums strengthening the role of cities and local authorities, and bringing together national and local actors in formulating national urban policies in support of NUA and the 2030 Agenda.

ESCWA produced knowledge products such as performance diagnosis reports for selected Arab cities, regional policy papers, local briefs and recovery plans, reaffirming the leading role of cities and local authorities in sustainable development. With the growing importance of cities and local authorities, the AFSD has again extended its platform to local authorities this year. ESCWA is also supporting the development of the first VLRs in the Arab region to further highlight the leading role of cities and local authorities, and reaffirm the need for local priorities and needs to inform national ones. ESCWA in close coordination with UN-Habitat is supporting Amman⁷⁵ and Agadir⁷⁶ in developing their Voluntary Local Review (VLR), making them the first cities in the Arab region to undertake VLRs, joining the global momentum in advocating for local reviews to inform national reviews.

74 <https://forumofmayors.unece.org/geneva-declaration-mayors>

75 www.unescwa.org/events/voluntary-local-review-amman#:~:text=ESCWA%20is%20implementing%20the%20global,United%20Nations%20Human%20Settlements%20Program

76 www.unescwa.org/events/new-urban-agenda-implementation-project-agadir

VII. Progress and challenges of advancing an incremental and inclusive NUA reporting system

In 2015, the **UNECE**, together with 16 other UN agencies created the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Smart and Sustainable Cities. The KPIs are the starting point for the development of Smart Sustainable City Profiles (SSCPs): data-driven assessments measuring smartness and sustainability. Currently this methodology has been tested in over 150 cities worldwide. These are well-coordinated with the SDGs indicators and therefore allow measuring SDGs and the NUA achievements at local level. The KPIs proved to be a useful tool during the COVID-19 pandemic; the responsiveness, preparedness, and capacity of municipal health systems proved to be a key measure of smartness. The KPIs include key indicators such per capita public and private hospital beds, time taken for emergency services to respond, number of inhabitants covered by health insurance, or the percentage of city dwellers whose health records are registered with the public administration.

Through the Smart Sustainable Cities for the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda in the UNECE Region (2020-2023) project,⁷⁷ UNECE is developing data-driven urban assessment and sustainable urban infrastructure planning and financing strategies in five cities⁷⁸ across Central Asia and the Western Balkans. Partnerships have been established with local authorities, national ministries, multilateral development banks and agencies, local and international NGOs, the private sector, think tanks, academia and civil society at large. It is thanks to this that in 2021, the subprogramme successfully developed and launched three SSCPs: Nur-Sultan (Kazakhstan), Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) and Grodno (Belarus). Multi-stakeholder alliances, such as

those mobilized by the development of SSCPs, have a higher chance to deliver tangible quality of life increases, as the Bishkek example later showcased.

ECLAC continues to implement projects focused on improving the availability of regional statistical data. Amongst recent main actions is the relaunching of CEPALSTAT,⁷⁹ the commission's main statistical portal, which now presents a more user-friendly design that facilitates search for indicators and specific topics. The statistics and indicators dashboard allows for filtering indicators which were tagged with "cities", easing the monitoring of sustainable urban development. The renewed website contains features such as an Open Data/API section and a geoportal.

Specifically related to the Sustainable Development Goals, ECLAC also released the SDG Gateway website, named 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean – Regional knowledge management platform⁸⁰ which is a regional data bank for statistical follow-up to each of the SDGs in each country of the region. It provides easy access to urban-related SDG indicators. The platform also publishes the latest Voluntary National Reviews.

Finally, in the framework of the project "*Inclusive, sustainable and smart cities in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean*" implemented by ECLAC under the ECLAC-BMZ/GIZ Cooperation, relevant data is being collected in topics related to urban mobility. This is one of the key driving sectors of a 'big push' for Sustainability. This project will create a concrete set of tools and policies aimed at improving urban mobility in the region as well as social, environmental and

77 <https://unece.org/housing/innovativefinancing-sustainablesmartcities>

78 Grodno (Belarus); Nur-Sultan (Kazakhstan); Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan); Tbilisi (Georgia); Podgorica (Montenegro)

79 <https://statistics.cepal.org/portal/cepalstat>

80 <https://agenda2030lac.org>

economic aspects. This has involved a combination of research, data collection and analysis on the transport sector, energy production, digitalization, and regional industrial capacity as well as the transport system financial situation in selected cities.

ESCAP collects information from the global SDG database to inform the annual SDG progress report for the Asia and Pacific region. The 2022 SDG report shows there is insufficient data and indicators across all of the SDGs, especially for SDG 11.⁸¹ The report states that the region has made almost no progress on sustainable cities and communities since 2000, and is likely to miss all targets by 2030 if it stays on its current trajectory. Furthermore, few cities and national governments across the region are currently collecting data under the Global Urban Monitoring Framework. Among the biggest challenges for the region are the impacts from disasters on people, local economic development and resilient infrastructure, air pollution, urban mobility and the lack of access to basic services and affordable housing for a region that is home to the world's largest number of slum dwellers. However, only 50 percent of targets could be measured under this goal and it is very important to implement more specific and measurable indicators and in data collection.

The *Arab Sustainable Development Report* offers a situation analysis of sustainable development in the Arab region and the state of implementation of 17 SDGs with all their interlinkages. It quantitatively and qualitatively analyses where the region stands in relation to the global targets, and identifies the structural barriers to transformative change. Some of the indicators being collected and analyzed for Goal 11, which is the main goal for sustainable urban development, are: 11.1.1; 11.5.1; 11.5.2; 11.6.2.

In addition, ESCWA led data collection to capture urban economic resilience in selected Arab cities, which can be found in the SDGs data portal.⁸² This focused on: Business environment; Labor market conditions; Economic Governance; Basic service infrastructure and connectivity; and Financial environment.

81 ESCAP (2021) Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2021 (www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/ESCAP_Asia_and_the_Pacific_SDG_Progress_Report_2021.pdf)

82 <https://data.unescwa.org>

VIII. Recommendations for accelerating the implementation of the New Urban Agenda

Multilevel governance is vital to effective implementation of the NUA. Cities are locally responsive and well positioned to prioritize communities' specific needs for response and development, and are also channels for local implementation of national priorities. National governments set national policy agendas, but their effective implementation depends on localization mechanisms such as listening to cities, planning along with them, and systematically including communities in decision-making.

In this regard, further capacity building for NUA reporting, supported by regional funding mechanisms, similar to regional commissions' assistance in national reporting on the 2030 Agenda, could enhance countries' national reporting on the NUA. Regional stock-taking to assess progress and improve reporting on implementation of the NUA could also highlight best practices and build momentum for reporting in respective regions.

With their intergovernmental mechanisms, the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development is well-suited to strengthen better vertical coordination of urban policy implementation. Urban planning should be used as a horizontal tool to tackle environmental sustainability, with coordination and integration among different governance levels. There is a clear need for stronger multilateralism at international and country levels regarding the green transition, rethinking managed systems.

The Regional Commissions reiterate once again that to implement the NUA, Regional Commissions have the mandate to reach out to Member States directly using their experience of working with, for example, UN Country Teams, Resident Coordinators, Regional Coordination Platforms on relevant projects. Building on our experiences in directly supporting various UN intergovernmental processes the RCs can use existing institutional mechanisms to strengthen engagement of local governments in intergovernmental processes.

Website addresses:

Economic Commission for Africa: www.uneca.org

Economic Commission for Europe: <https://unece.org>

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean: www.cepal.org/en

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific: www.unescap.org

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia: www.unescwa.org

Regional Commissions New York Office (RCNYO): www.regionalcommissions.org

