

Input to talking points of Ms. Tatiana Valovaya

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at the

**UNECE Ministerial Meeting on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management and 82nd
session of the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management
*Affordable, adequate, and resilient housing in liveable cities
(including cities which face extreme weather conditions)***

Geneva, 6 October 2021, 15:05

Tempus 2

I would like to welcome participants of the Ministerial Meeting under the title “Affordable, adequate, and resilient housing in liveable cities, including cities which face extreme weather conditions”. The meeting is important to support regional exchange of experiences and good practices for promoting access to decent, adequate, affordable and healthy housing as part of the COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery planning.

The [SG’s Common Agenda](#)¹ which was just presented at the General Assembly last month includes several references to local and regional governments and clearly positions cities to spearhead this new social contract. One of its 12 areas of action is **Boosting partnerships** – Where we have to make the United Nations more inclusive and engage with all relevant stakeholders, including regional and sub-regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil society, the private sector, academia, and parliamentarians to ensure an effective response to our common challenges. One of the main proposals is to create an **Advisory Group on Local and Regional Governments** as a standing mechanism for engagement and consultation, consistent with the sovereignty of Member States (§119). Setting up such Group would implement the key proposal to boost partnerships and ensure “*more systematic engagement with parliaments, subnational authorities and the private sector*” (see p. 5).

The United Nations in Geneva are working towards boosting these partnerships by promoting sustainable housing and urban development in the wider Europe area and globally. I would like to remind you for instance about one of the important documents promoting sustainable housing and integrated urban planning, a document which was adopted in Geneva. In 2015, after five years of intergovernmental negotiations, 56 member States of the UN Economic Commission for Europe: **the “Geneva Charter on Sustainable Housing”**, a non-legally binding document which promotes the integrated approach to urban development and housing. The Geneva UN Charter is based on the following four principles as the basis for integrated planning:

- a) Environmental protection;
- b) Economic effectiveness;
- c) Social inclusion and participation;
- d) Cultural adequacy.

The Geneva UN Charter underlines the importance of implementing urban planning and construction in cities in a way which minimizes environmental impact and promotes environmental sustainability.

¹ UNGA res. [A/RES/75/1](#)

Building on the Geneva UN Charter, this Ministerial Meeting is expected to launch a report “#Housing2030: Improving Housing Affordability in the UNECE Region” which was developed by the ECE secretariat in cooperation with its partners, members of the #Housing2030 Initiative, Housing Europe and UN-Habitat, and in consultation with the Committee Bureau.

Based on the recommendations of the study, Ministers and heads of delegation are expected to endorse the regional action plan for the ECE region “Place and Life in the UNECE – A Regional Action Plan 2021: Tackling challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic, climate and housing emergencies in region, city, neighbourhood and homes”.

The UN in Geneva also hosts a secretariat **to a unique intergovernmental body, the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management, which is the only intergovernmental body to address housing, urban and land management challenges across the Pan-European region in its 56 member States.** This Committee is actively involved in supporting cities in promoting urban sustainability through its activities on smart cities, innovative urban financing, capacity building and much more. The Committee plays an important role in supporting national and local governments in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda, the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing and the Geneva Ministerial Declaration on Housing and Urban Development.

There is also a strong connection of the Committee work with activities of the governments working on sustainable housing and urban development both on national and local levels.

The UNECE Committee on Urban Development convened in 2020 the First UN Forum of Mayors, a gathering of city the highest authorities to discuss the most pressing challenges they face in implementing sustainability in cities. The Forum allowed the cities, for the first time, to fully participate in the work of the UN not only by bringing the experience of cities to the table, but also by allowing mayors to make pledges for action and recommendations for the consideration of governments. This way of linking the work of local authorities to the deliberations of governments is leading to a new type of multilateralism, enlarged to include different voices and level of government.

The founding idea of the United Nations that we can address the greatest challenges of our times if we stand united, remains true until this day. But unlike in the past, these challenges can no longer be solved solely by looking to nations – the battlefield has now moved to cities.

The Second UN Forum of Mayors will take place on 4 and 5 April 2022 in Geneva and will again provide a voice to mayors to share practices and engage in focused dialogues with national governments within the UN. The second UN Forum of Mayors organized jointly with the Geneva

City Hub. This is a platform that will help cities around the world to come to Geneva and interact with the United Nations at different levels. The UN cannot work alone to reach out to everybody. The UN can be successful only if its voice is amplified by partners like this new Hub, or like yourself, who will spread principles and successful action in the fabric of cities.

Thus, some final words of encouragement to continue this dialogue and to continue to work together to build smart, sustainable and livable cities of the future.