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**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**  
Committee on Environment and Development

**Fourth session**

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Items 5 (c) and (d) of the provisional agenda\*

**Outcomes of key regional dialogues on sustainable development:**

**Sixth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum**

**High-level Regional Preparatory Meeting to Habitat III for Asia-Pacific**

**Outcomes of the sixth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum and the High-level Regional Preparatory Meeting to Habitat III for Asia-Pacific**

**Note by the secretariat**

*Summary*

In accordance with resolution 70/12 of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific on strengthening efforts on human settlements and sustainable urban development for the Asia-Pacific region, the sixth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum was convened in Jakarta, Indonesia, from 19 to 21 October 2015, back-to-back with the High-level Regional Preparatory Meeting to Habitat III for Asia-Pacific, held on 21 and 22 October 2015. The Forum brought together more than 900 participants, including ministers, mayors and other government officials, representatives from academia, urban professionals, grassroots leaders, older persons, youth and representatives from the private sector, civil society and international organizations. The participants discussed persistent and emerging issues related to sustainable urban development in Asia-Pacific and in particular priority issues for the region to be considered in the “New Urban Agenda” to be adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) as well as in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Forum adopted the APUF-6 Jakarta Call for Action on sustainable, inclusive and resilient urban development, which was presented at the High-level Regional Preparatory Meeting to Habitat III for Asia-Pacific and reflected in its declaration.

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\* E/ESCAP/CED(4)/L.1.

## **I. Introduction**

1. In accordance with Commission resolution 70/12 on strengthening efforts on human settlements and sustainable urban development for the Asia-Pacific region, the sixth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum was convened from 19 to 21 October 2015 in Jakarta, Indonesia, back-to-back with the High-level Regional Preparatory Meeting to Habitat III for Asia-Pacific, held on 21-22 October 2015.
2. The sixth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum was organized by the secretariat in partnership with the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and allowed developing recommendations from a multi-stakeholder perspective which provided substantive inputs to the deliberations of the High-level Regional Preparatory Meeting to Habitat III for Asia-Pacific.

## **II. The sixth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum**

3. The Asia-Pacific Urban Forum is a multi-stakeholder forum organized periodically every 4-5 years by the secretariat with the aim to provide a regional platform for urban actors to: (i) discuss emerging and critical urban development issues from the perspectives of different stakeholders; (ii) share experiences on good practices and approaches; and (iii) explore cooperation opportunities and links to regional and global processes and development objectives.
4. The first Asia-Pacific Urban Forum was held in Bangkok in 1993, immediately preceding and feeding into the Ministerial Conference on Urbanization in Asia and the Pacific. Recognizing both the significance of its outcomes as well as the value of a multi-stakeholder forum on regional urban issues, the Ministerial Conference requested the secretariat to periodically organize such forums from time to time to discuss emerging and critical urban issues.
5. The sixth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum (APUF-6) was held from 19 to 21 October 2015 in Jakarta, Indonesia. The Forum was organized by the ESCAP secretariat in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Works and Housing of Indonesia together with more than 30 partners. APUF-6 was guided by the theme “Sustainable Urban Development in Asia-Pacific: Towards a New Urban Agenda” and held back-to-back with the High-level Regional Preparatory Meeting to Habitat III for Asia-Pacific convened by the Government of the Republic of Indonesia on 21-22 October 2015.
6. APUF-6 brought together more than 900 participants, including ministers, mayors and other government officials, representatives from academia, urban professionals, the private sector, civil society, grassroots leaders, older persons, youth, and international organizations, to discuss persistent and emerging issues related to sustainable urban development in Asia-Pacific, and in particular priority issues for the region to be considered in the “New Urban Agenda” to be adopted at Habitat III, and in implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
7. APUF-6 served as a multi-stakeholder regional platform for participants to share best practices in critical, emerging urban development issues such as governance, planning, financing, land management, housing, resilience, social inclusiveness, gender equality and women’s empowerment, climate change, transport, safety in public spaces, waste management and integrated resource management. The Forum adopted the APUF-6 Jakarta ‘Call for Action’ on sustainable, inclusive and resilient urban development,

which was presented at the High-level Regional Preparatory Meeting for Habitat III for Asia-Pacific and is enclosed in annex.

### **III. The High-level Regional Preparatory Meeting for Habitat III for Asia-Pacific**

8. The High-level Regional Preparatory Meeting for Habitat III for Asia-Pacific was convened by the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Habitat III secretariat on 21-22 October 2015.

9. The Executive Secretary provided opening remarks and the Chair of APUF-6, Ms. Mary Jane Ortega, presented the APUF-6 Jakarta Call for Action. The Declaration adopted at the meeting recognized the outcomes of APUF-6 and reinforced many of the recommendations included in the APUF-6 Jakarta Call for Action.

## Annex

### APUF-6 Jakarta Call for Action

1. The region's urban transformation requires an urgent response. United Nations projections show that in 2018 more people in the Asian and Pacific region will be living in urban rather than in rural areas. While considerable progress has been made in the last two decades, there is broad recognition that there are growing gaps between current patterns of urban development and what is required to make cities inclusive, productive and sustainable. In this context the sixth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum (APUF-6) was held, in order to deliberate and contribute action-oriented recommendations to the region's leaders, focused strongly on an implementation agenda, including scaling up existing successful practices.

2. APUF-6 brought together more than 900 participants, including ministers, mayors and other government officials, representatives from academia, urban professionals, the private sector, civil society, grassroots leaders, older persons, youth, and international organizations, to discuss persistent and emerging issues related to sustainable urban development in Asia and the Pacific. In particular APUF-6 considered priority issues for the "New Urban Agenda" to be adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), and for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

3. Participants, engaged in a multi-stakeholder dialogue through thirty plenary and parallel sessions and side events, formulated the following key recommendations in the form of a 'Call for Action'.

a) A people-centred urban future is integral to the transformation of cities and human settlements in the Asian and Pacific region. This requires a radical shift in the way cities are conceived, planned and developed, with people, particularly women and youth, as well as older people, indigenous people and ethnic and other minorities seen as change agents rather than just beneficiaries.

b) Progressive national legislation and policy; innovative financing mechanisms; the use of technology for barrier-free information access and greater engagement in decision-making; and a stronger, more united and representative civil society are critical enabling factors in realizing people-centred cities.

c) To achieve implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the outcomes of Habitat III, it is essential to re-focus attention on the building of effective partnerships spanning national and local government, as well as private sector and civil society.

d) Greater balance needs to be found on the responsibilities and roles of different levels of government in the management of urban areas and surrounding towns. Partnerships must be based on the principle of subsidiarity. While national government plays an important role, including in creating an effective legal framework, partnerships must also acknowledge and better accommodate local government and community needs.

e) Women are significantly underrepresented in leadership positions at all levels of government in most countries of the region. All levels of government must take action to improve female representation in elected administrative and appointed office, in particular at the local level.

f) Urban and territorial planning, based on universal principles, led by sub-national government visions and needs, enshrined in national

urban policy and financing frameworks, working towards locally-adapted solutions and implemented through genuine collaboration, can be an effective instrument in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda.

g) Actions should be taken to boost productivity and create opportunities for urban-rural connectivity to support new regional spatial configurations that will underpin faster and more balanced economic and social development. Such actions should enable the creation of stronger linkages between urban and rural areas to reduce the vulnerability of the urban and rural poor, and enhance prospects for more equitable development.

h) Accountable, transparent and inclusive urban governance, policy making and city planning is essential for long term sustainable futures. To support policy for sustainable urban development, it is important that all levels of government, including relevant ministries, work effectively together in order to develop coherent and mutually supportive approaches.

i) Local governments and national governments should harness density and spatial economies, use participation and awareness building in partnership with local pro-poor partners, and involve the poor in urban policymaking in order to achieve sustainable urban development that effectively eradicates poverty and ends marginalization of the poor.

j) Local economic development should engage coalitions of local actors including informal workers and enterprises, in a manner that is transparent and considers the equity of development outcomes. This means recognizing the contribution of informal workers, enterprises and service delivery mechanisms as key actors and agents in local economies, and strengthening organizations of informal workers.

k) Leaders at all levels of government should commit to participatory planning frameworks responding to local needs. Poverty cannot be eradicated and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will not be met if evictions of those living in informal settlements or other forms of discrimination continue.

l) The realization of safe cities through the improvement and promotion of public spaces in the Asia-Pacific region remains a challenge. Making cities inclusive, including for people with disabilities, free of sexual harassment and sexual violence at all times, is connected to the interventions needed to achieve gender equality and to uphold the rights of women, as well as children, who are most affected by low quality and unsafe public spaces and infrastructure. Partnership strategies, good practices, approaches and innovations that have made positive impacts in cities around the region should be supported and receive more investment.

m) Government at all levels should implement fit-for-purpose programmes that improve land governance, including recording and recognizing people-to-land relationships in all its forms.

n) Local government needs to be more effectively supported and empowered to carry out its mandate and responsibilities, including those derived from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Without concrete actions, gaps in capacity, finance and power-sharing threaten to undermine effective responses to the region's urban transformation.

o) Cities and their regions face a significant data deficit. In order to support urban planning, greater attention needs to be paid to the information base, including standardized collection, analysis, monitoring, and dissemination. Availability of information for all stakeholders can also strengthen governance through better-informed stakeholders. Academia and think tanks have an important role to play in this regard.

p) Reducing the vulnerability and contribution of cities to climate change and natural hazards calls for a reconsideration of the way cities are planned, transformed and infrastructure is developed. This includes through adopting compact, mixed-use urban form, green urban growth and green city development models, as well as resilience strategies that are people-centred, pro-poor and inclusive. These measures, supported by integrated technology and information and respecting heritage, have the potential to improve the health, liveability and competitiveness of the region's urban areas.

q) All levels of government have a responsibility to facilitate and safeguard the building of resilience. Resilience is a long-term participatory process that must engage all stakeholders, including women, children, older persons, people with disabilities and those in the informal sector – not just as beneficiaries, but as actors working towards equitable social and economic development.

r) Meeting current and future natural resource demands in cities, in particular for energy, water and food, as well as housing and basic services, requires the adoption of a nexus approach and a shift from sectoral to integrated and ecosystem-based planning. It also requires a shift from competitive to collaborative governance among neighbouring municipalities and across departments, including financing mechanisms.

s) Governments need to urgently usher in a paradigm shift in waste management, from downstream and end-of-the pipe to upstream waste-to-resource, by forging partnerships with communities, waste pickers, academia, civil society organisations and the private sector.

t) Implementation of water- and sanitation-related development goals requires the adoption of a systems-based framework established on integrated urban water management, inclusive of policy regulations, diverse technologies and financing sources, water and sanitation markets, and with community participation.

u) As part of the New Urban Agenda, countries should develop, adopt and implement national sustainable urban transport policies, as an integral part of development strategies, through participatory processes. Cities should ensure greater coordination and coherence of implementation of national, local and city level urban transport plans backed up by financing and strong institutional setups.

v) Financing is a universal issue across the Asian and Pacific region. Finance is a supply (sourcing) and demand (bankable projects) challenge for both national and sub-national government. In considering urban finance needs, a broad agenda including green infrastructure and social inclusion is necessary. Financing options for cities require a coherent intergovernmental financing base and must provide for a range of mechanisms such as land-based financing, revolving funds of various kinds, community financing, private sector financing, and public-private partnerships (PPPs).

w) Sub-national governments should be more proactive in the financing of sustainable urban development by strengthening the enabling framework required to prioritize, prepare and finance their urban infrastructure investments.

4. Participants concluded by urging all levels of government and key stakeholders to take collective action in implementing the outcomes of the Forum as represented through its 'Call for Action'.

Jakarta, Indonesia, 21 October 2015