



ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment 2016:

Urban Crises and the New Urban Agenda

Organized by the United Kingdom Permanent Mission to the United Nations
& UN Habitat

Wednesday, 29 June, 13:30 - 14:45
Conference Room 12, United Nations Secretariat, New York

This is one of the side-events to be convened during the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment, in keeping with this year's theme: *Restoring Humanity and Leaving No One Behind: Working together to reduce people's humanitarian need, risk and vulnerability.*

Background and objectives

This side event will focus on the importance of incorporating the urban aspects of humanitarian action, including those elaborated by the Global Alliance for Urban Crises (formally launched at the World Humanitarian Summit) in to the New Urban Agenda, which will be agreed in Quito during the Habitat III conference, in October 2016. Urban areas are increasingly the sites of humanitarian crises, from natural disasters to conflict and displacement. The growing frequency and severity of natural disasters associated with climate change, the risk of technological disasters, and the significant impact of conflict-related crises are critical concerns which have precipitated the establishment of the Global Alliance for Urban Crises (www.urbancrises.org). For the ECOSOC HAS, Alliance members and other stakeholders will outline the critical intersections between urbanisation and humanitarian action, and set out recommendations for improved collaboration between urban development and humanitarian actors in order to better anticipate, prepare for and respond to urban crises, saving lives as well as reducing loss of livelihoods and infrastructure.

Of the world's total population, 54% currently lives in urban areas – a proportion that is expected to increase to 66% by 2050 – with close to 90% of the increase concentrated in Asia and Africa. Much of this growth is rapid and unplanned. At the same time, urban areas are ever more frequently the sites of humanitarian crises, with natural disasters, conflicts, technological disasters and displacement challenging the capacity of urban development and humanitarian actors to meet the needs of affected populations. For instance, protracted armed conflicts affect millions of people living in urban areas, and decades of violence can fundamentally undermine the provision of urban services and infrastructure.

Yet we must also take into account the specificities—the particular strengths and vulnerabilities—of urban as compared to rural areas, which call for adapted humanitarian responses. Urban areas concentrate disaster risk due to the aggregation of people, infrastructure, and assets and this can result in greater economic losses and more deaths in an acute crisis, as well as an erosion of resilience when recurrent shocks, such as protracted conflicts or multiple natural disaster risks, affect urban communities. At the same time, urban areas concentrate expertise and administrative power, and it is possible to anticipate collectively and prepare for known risks and build resilience through improved and more inclusive long-term planning, design, financing and through legal and

regulatory frameworks. This involves a range of institutions, including governments, local authorities, communities and other local actors.

Discussion points

Against this backdrop, the side-event will focus on the following suggested questions:

1. How can humanitarian actors, including frontline responders, engage with legal and regulatory frameworks and incorporate inclusive long-term planning, design and financing in to their work, so as to better anticipate and prepare for urban crises, and strengthen resilience during response?
2. How does armed conflict impact upon essential urban services, directly, indirectly and cumulatively? How can support to these services during conflict mitigate an overall reversal in sustainable urban development?
3. How can urban planning expertise contribute to an effective, participatory and relevant response to urban crises? In what ways can this help to build overall resilience to future shocks?

Intended outcomes/conclusions/recommendations

Achieving the 2030 Agenda and realizing the commitment to leaving no one behind requires recognition of the impact of humanitarian emergencies in urban areas. Likewise, the call made in the WHS to unite around our shared humanity, take action to end the suffering of women, girls, boys and men affected by conflict and disasters and promote greater protection of affected people, requires us to look at how we can together improve prevention of urban crises, ensure effective, relevant response and promote resilience. The session thus speaks directly to Core Responsibilities 2, 3 and 4 as outlined in the Secretary General's report for the World Humanitarian Summit.

A further contribution of the session will be to ensure that the New Urban Agenda, which also takes 'leave no one behind' as a guiding principle, gives due regard to humanitarian issues, helps to prevent urban crises and pays particular attention to cities in protracted crises or at high risk. To date, there have been very limited opportunities for humanitarian actors to engage in debates on the content and scope of the New Urban Agenda. This side-event will highlight the link between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, outcomes of the WHS and the New Urban Agenda, and will provide input in the lead-up to HABITAT III (this event falls between the second and third informals on the New Urban Agenda).

Format

(Co-)Chair(s): Mr. Dylan Winder (DFID) and Ecuador Permanent Mission to the UN (tbc)

Moderator: Dr. Lucy Earle, IRC/DFID

Panel composition:

- Mr. Michael Talhami, Regional Water & Habitat Advisor for the Near and Middle East, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
- Mr. Mostafa Mohaghegh, Manager for Partnerships in Urban DRR, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)
- Dr. Shipra Narang Suri, Vice-President, General Assembly of Partners towards Habitat III (GAP) and Vice-president, International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP)

Closing remarks from Dr. Joan Clos, Executive Director of UN Habitat

Background Material

<https://www.icrc.org/en/document/urban-services-protracted-conflict-report>
www.urbancrises.org

Contact

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