**Concept Note**

**ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment Side Event**

**Humanitarian Dimension of Urbanisation**

*Organised by UK/DFID with UN-Habitat and participation of the World Bank, UN-OCHA and the International Rescue Committee*

*New York, 25 June, 16:30 – 17.45*

*Room D CB*

**Background**

Rapid and unplanned urban growth, combined with the impacts of climate change, look set to alter the nature of many humanitarian emergencies in the coming decades. Since the middle of the last century there has been a concentration of populations and economic activities in areas at risk of flooding and other extreme weather events. While the humanitarian community has acknowledged that it is now operating more frequently outside of camps or rural areas, this recognition has yet to be matched by a paradigm shift in humanitarian response, moving from away from a focus on managing crises to managing risks. Tailoring humanitarian assistance to the urban context requires much greater engagement with actors that understand how to restore and support city systems: municipal and national governments, development agencies and the private sector

**Objectives**

The objective is to catalyse discussions between humanitarian and development agencies and the private sector, to consider how a greater diversity of actors and new forms of cooperation can increase urban resilience and improve the effectiveness of response to urban humanitarian crises. Given that many urban areas at risk of natural disasters are also affected by urban development challenges, they provide a real opportunity to bridge the development-humanitarian divide, and to develop responses that take into account the vulnerabilities, capabilities and aspirations of urban populations. The event follows up on a first debate held at the World Urban Forum in Medellin in April.

***Outcome of the World Urban Forum Panel Discussion on the Humanitarian Dimension of Urbanisation 8 April 2014***

1. We need to understand better how cities function and their dynamic nature, when responding to a humanitarian crisis.
2. We need to bring the right urban expertise (ex. urban planners) on board to ensure that the humanitarian response plays two roles: saving lives, providing immediate relief, and setting the first steps towards restoring urban systems (incl. government functions) and the ultimate goal of building better and more resilient cities.
3. We need to develop approaches that are more enabling, putting local authorities and communities to the fore and building on the capacities of markets and people’s coping capacity.
4. We need to find a way to link the current sectoral responses with more spatial/area-based approaches.
5. The World Humanitarian Summit and Habitat III offer unique opportunities to think this through structurally and ensure that the humanitarian system is fit for purpose and properly aligned with development actors and the private sector. There is a need to develop a ‘humanitarian’ track towards Habitat III, with key messages to feed into the World Humanitarian Summit.

The session will also emphasise the need for urban issues to be adequately reflected in the debates that inform the Post-2015 Agenda and the World Humanitarian Summit (2016) and that ultimately will help to shape the new urban agenda at Habitat III (2016). The proposed side event will contribute to strengthening the community of practice, moving beyond the humanitarian actors, taking into account the specificity of the urban environment. The proposed event relates to the overall theme of the Segment, through its focus on inclusiveness, coordination and effectiveness, and further reflects the sub themes of partnerships and innovation.

**Panel**

* Filiep Decorte (Chief Technical Adviser, UN Habitat), moderator
* Lucy Earle (Social Development Adviser, Humanitarian Response Group, Conflict, Humanitarian and Security Department, DFID)
* Ciaran Donnelly (Vice President, Programme Quality, IRC)
* Antoine Gerard (Deputy Director, Coordination and Response Division, OCHA)
* Gerard Byam (Strategy and Operations Director, MENA Unit, World Bank).