AFRICA URBAN FORUM

BACKGROUND DOCUMENT

"Sustainable Urbanization for Africa's Transformation: Agenda 2063"

African Union

Contents

INAUGURAL
AFRICA URBAN FORUM

September | Addis Ababa,
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Theme: **"Sustainable Urbanization for Africa's Transformation: Agenda 2063"**

BACKGROUND DOCUMENT

The African continent is at a pivotal moment in history, poised for significant transformations in the years to come. Key among these transformations is the process of urbanization, which is profoundly altering African societies, economies, and environments[1]. Looking towards the horizon of 2063, the African Union's Agenda 2063 provides a roadmap for the continent's developmental goals, envisioning a prosperous, interconnected, and harmonious Africa[2].

At the core of Agenda 2063 lies the necessity for sustainable urban development to drive Africa's evolution[3]. Urbanization transcends mere demographic changes; it encompasses various facets, including economic, social, and environmental dimensions[4]. With urban populations expected to double by 2050, African urban centres are emerging as hubs of dynamism and ingenuity, presenting both opportunities and obstacles for the continent's development trajectory[5].

The Africa Urban Forum serves as a platform for stakeholders from across Africa and beyond to convene, exchange ideas, and chart a path towards sustainable urban growth. Embracing the theme **"Sustainable Urbanization for Africa's Transformation - Agenda 2063,"** the forum underscores the pivotal role of urbanization in advancing Agenda 2063's objectives and shaping the future trajectory of African urban development. Through collaborative dialogue and innovative solutions, the forum aims to address the unique challenges and opportunities presented by rapid urbanization in the continent.

1   UN-Habitat. (2020). Urbanization in Africa: Trends, Promises, and Challenges.
    https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2023/07/strengthen_regional_representation_in_sub-saharan_africa.pdf
2   African Union Commission. (2015). Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.
    https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33126-doc-framework_document_book.pdf
3   African Union Commission. (2014). Agenda 2063 Framework Document.
    https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33126-doc-01_background_note.pdf
4   UN-Habitat. (2016). World Cities Report 2016: Urbanization and Development - Emerging Futures.
    https://unhabitat.org/world-cities-report-2016
5   United Nations. (2018). World Urbanization Prospects 2018.
    https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/files/documents/2020/Feb/un_2018_wup_highlights.pdf

Contextual background

The Assembly of Heads of State and Governments of the African Union held in Malabo in 2014 established the Specialized Technical Committee on Public Service/ Administration, Local Governments, Urban Development and Decentralization (AU-STC.No.8). The AU-STC. No.8 Sub-Committee on Urban Development and Human Settlements (HUD) is the main consultative body in charge of the promotion of sustainable development of human settlements in Africa as well as the continental vehicle for Governments to improve African urban centres enabling them to realize their full potential as centres of hope, development, and prosperity.

The African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development (AMCH20/02/2024UD) was technically backstopped by UN-Habitat before it was integrated into the Specialized Technical Committee of the African Union on Public Service, Local Governments, Urban Development and Decentralization (AU-STC n°8). AMCHDU provided a unique platform for high level discussions on the continent's rapid urban development and housing challenges. Unfortunately, since this integration, these issues have had very little attention and commitment.

The Specialized Technical Committee on Public Service/ Administration, Local Governments, Urban Development and Decentralization (AU- STC.No.8) at its Fourth Ordinary Session held on 31 August 2022 in Cairo, Egypt decided to establish an "Africa Urban Forum". The forum was established as a dedicated platform for high level discussions on the continent's rapid urban development and housing challenges.

The Africa Urban Forum will be held under the auspices of the African Union Commission and technically backstopped by UN-Habitat and UNECA and hosted by a member state. The forum is an important platform that brings together high-level participation at the Heads of Government and Ministerial levels, experts, policymakers, and stakeholders from various sectors to exchange ideas and best practices, and to develop strategies for sustainable urban development. By fostering dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders, the forum will play a critical role in shaping the future of Africa's urban centres and improving the lives of its citizens.

The Urban forum serves as a means for African urban centres to connect with global partners, to learn from one another and to access funding and technical assistance for urban development projects. It provides an opportunity for African urban centres and decisions makers to network and collaborate on common issues, such as urban planning, housing, transportation, and economic development.

The forum will help raise awareness of urban issues and to promote cooperation and coordination among different actors working in the urban sector. It provides an opportunity for urban centres and countries to showcase their successes and best practices, which can serve as inspiration for others. Finally, the forum will also serve as a catalyst for research, policy formulation and implementation, and capacity building in the field of urban development in Africa.

ALGIERS, ALGERIA
Crowded street market in the Bab el Oued district of Alger, Algiers, Algeria. Clothes, bags, plastic objects, food for sale.
© Shutterstock/Bruno M Photographie

2

Context and Trends of Urbanization in Africa

Both developed and developing nations are experiencing an increase in urbanization. Today, approximately 56% of the world's population—4.4 billion people—reside in more than double by 2050, resulting in nearly 7 out of 10 people living in urban areas. (WB, 2023) Large cities in developing nations especially in Africa will be responsible for more than 90% of population growth in the future. With an average annual urban growth rate of 3.5% in the last 20 years, Africa has seen the largest urbanization in the developing world, and this trend is anticipated to continue until the year 2050. According to projections, major African cities will house up to 85% of the continent's population between 2010 and 2025 (AfDB,2012).

The percentage of Africans living in urban areas was around 36% in 2010 and is expected to rise to 50% and 60% by the years 2030 and 2050, respectively. The demographic makeup of the continent has changed because of this fast expansion. However, urbanization in Africa has not been successful in generating inclusive growth, which can be attributed to the growth of slums, urban poverty, and rising inequality. With an average Gini coefficient of roughly 0.58, far higher than the global average of 0.4, African cities continue to have the second-highest levels of inequality. The main factors contributing to Africa's increasing rate of urban growth and slum spread are rural-urban migration and natural population growth rates in cities. (WB, 2015)
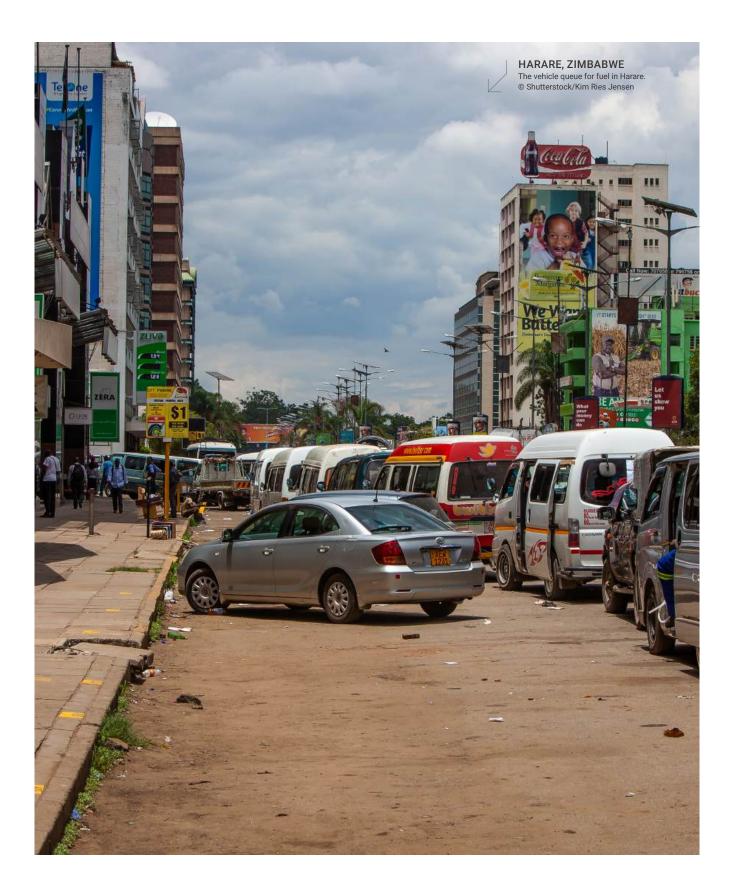
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Challenges Related to Urbanization

Urbanization in Africa has generally resulted in an increase in slum populations, poverty, and inequality. The patterns of urbanization throughout African regions do, however, vary greatly. Compared to Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), where the urban population is less than half the size it is in North Africa (47.8%).

Due to the lack of education and skills of most rural migrants informal employments is the main source of employment in Africa, accounting for 85.8% of all employments and 93% of all new jobs are in the informal sector. (International Labour Organization, 2020). Most migrants naturally look for refuge or settle down as tenants of slum landlords because revenues from the informal sector are by their very nature poor and irregular. As a result, many African urban centres must contend with the growth of slums as well as rising crime and instability. Weak institutions have aided in poor urban policing, which has led to dysfunctional housing and land markets, which in turn has led to the growth of informal settlements. Additionally, the governments of Africa have ignored the main factors that affect productivity, such as the growth of small and medium-sized businesses, the development of human resources and skills, and technical innovation. These elements are crucial for advancing primarily informal, subsistence-based, and low-value trading activities.

The pressure that urban people are putting on the environment and natural resources in Africa is another issue brought on by the continent's rapid urbanization. Most often, city growth comes at the expense of destroying forests and other natural ecosystems, increasing pollution (particularly air pollution), and the diseases it causes.

HARARE, ZIMBABWE
The vehicle queue for fuel in Harare.
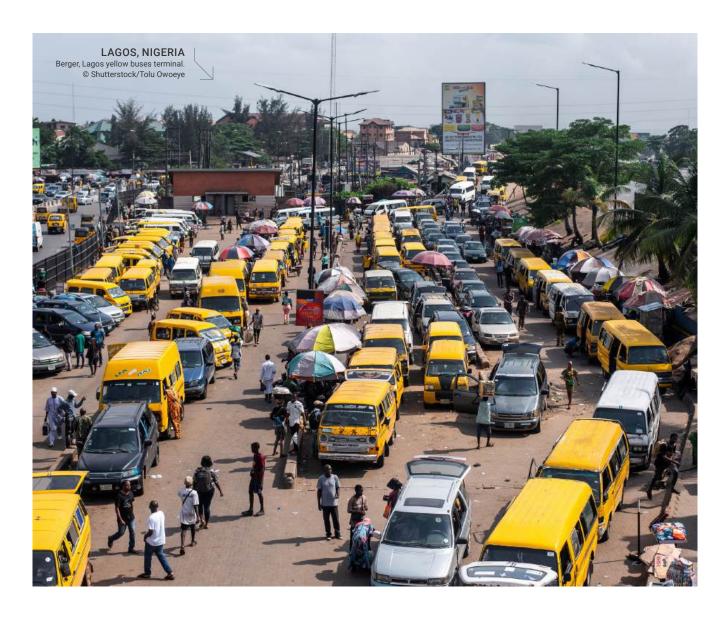© Shutterstock/Kim Ries Jensen

4

Opportunities Related to Urbanization (Economic, Social, Environmental)

There are several opportunities related to urbanization and they can be categories into economic, social, and environmental.

Economic transformation

Capitalizing on economic growth is one of the chances that urbanization offers. Building the required infrastructure is vital as more people move into the urban centres. The governments must actively pursue town planning for this reason in order to assist the populace. This is accomplished by growing the city and building facilities like new hospitals, schools, roads, etc. Experts predict that in places like Masdar City in Abu Dhabi and Migaa in Nairobi, spending on smart cities might reach $1 trillion. If successfully implemented, this will serve as a standard for the construction of upcoming cities.

Precisely, as more people around the world move into metropolitan areas, they bring a fresh set of problems with them. If these issues are not resolved, they will negatively impact peoples' quality of life and spark a chain reaction of more issues. Given that in today's capitalism and dependent globe, the country's trade with one another, with the 300 largest cities contributing to the majority of the world's economy, they will also have a devastating impact on the economy and as a result, the global economy. However, these difficulties also present a chance to be inventive and offer more enhanced solutions.

LAGOS, NIGERIA
Berger, Lagos yellow buses terminal.
© Shutterstock/Tolu Owoeye

Reducing Social inequality

Urbanization, like certain other megatrends, can positively impact every facet of sustainable development, including the lowering of inequality. Urbanization can lessen poverty and inequality when it is planned for and managed effectively. It does this by enhancing work possibilities and quality of life, including bettering education and health. However, if urbanization is not well planned, it can result in social exclusion, greater inequality, pollution, traffic jams, and crime rates. Urban inequality has economic, spatial, and social components. Social and economic inequality is typically higher in urban than rural areas. In general, larger cities are wealthier but also more unequal than smaller ones. The opportunities that cities offer are spatially unequally distributed, making it difficult for entire communities and populations to obtain services like good schools, sanitation, piped water, employment prospects, and suitable housing,

among other things. The most prominent example of the spatial concentration of urban poverty and disadvantage is found in slums.

Unchecked urban growth has led to poor public service delivery and a failure to ensure a minimal standard of living for all city dwellers. Urban governance and sufficient planning are becoming more critical due to the speed at which urban centres are growing in developing nations. If we don't put measures in place to alleviate inequality, it will probably get worse as urban centres grow.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to eliminating urban inequality, but some governments have been successful in addressing the geographical, economic, and social components of the urban divide and promoting inclusive urbanization, even in fast expanding urban centres. Their winning tactics have four components. First, they established

property and land rights, paying close attention to the security of tenancy for those who are poor. Second, they have increased access to basic services, infrastructure, and housing that is affordable, as well as the availability of these services, since strong transportation systems, including those between residential and commercial areas, are essential for both economic inclusion and spatial connectivity. Thirdly, they have made it easier for all urban people to acquire quality education and employment.

Promoting Environmental sustainability

It is traditional knowledge that urbanization harms the environment. This viewpoint has prompted many emerging nations to restrict rural-to-urban migration and restrain urban growth. But this viewpoint is untrue. If correctly managed, urbanization can benefit the environment for several ways. First, thanks to positive externalities and scale economies associated with urbanization, it also enhances productivity. More than 5.5 times as much is produced in urban environments in Africa as compared to rural areas. (International Labour Organization, 2020)

Secondly, the high urban density is advantageous for the environment for any given population. Compactness is a significant factor in determining energy use, according to

the theories of urban economics. High density can shorten travel times and improve the viability of public transportation. Driving is discouraged in urban areas in favor of walking and bicycling. Third, it is considerably simpler and more affordable to build, maintain, and run environmentally friendly infrastructure and public services like piped water, sanitation, and waste management in an urban setting. More individuals now have access to cheap, environmentally friendly facilities and services because to urbanization.

Fourth, urbanization spurs the development of new technologies, particularly green ones. The future of the green economy will ultimately be determined by environmentally friendly machinery, cars, and utilities. The enormous market in the region will promote green technologies in Asian cities because the billions of people who will purchase energy-efficient items will provide chances and incentives for business owners to invest in creating such products.

Finally, the improved living conditions brought on by urbanization give people access to better housing, health care, food, and education. Urban development produces income that is used to finance infrastructure improvements that lessen traffic and enhance public health. Property owners and the middle class are more pro-environment because of urbanization, which is essential for the introduction and implementation of environmental laws and regulations.

MANYARA, TANZANIA
The catastrophic debris flow destroyed a road between national parks Manyara and Ngorongoro.
© Shutterstock/Vadim Petrakov

5

Stakeholders' Engagements and Format of the Forum

Stakeholders of the forum include experts from various fields, including governments, academia, urban planners, economists, architects, developers, community leaders, residents, civil society, the private sector (developers), policymakers, United Nations, NGOs, and practitioners from across Africa and around the world to discuss and share knowledge and best practices related to urban development and planning in Africa.

The engagements and format of the African Urban Forum varies depending on the specific event, but generally includes a combination of plenary sessions, panel discussions, workshops, and exhibitions.

6

Main Theme:
Sustainable Urbanisation for Africa's Transformation - Agenda 2063

Urbanization in Africa is accelerating at an unprecedented pace, presenting both opportunities and challenges for the continent's development trajectory[6]. With urban populations projected to double by 2050, African cities are poised to become the epicenters of economic growth, innovation, and social transformation[7]. However, rapid urbanization also exacerbates existing inequalities, strains infrastructure and services, and poses significant environmental challenges.

Against this backdrop, the main theme of the Africa Urban Forum, "Sustainable Urbanization for Africa's Transformation - Agenda 2063," underscores the critical importance of harnessing the potential of urbanization to drive inclusive and sustainable development across the continentt. At its core, the theme reflects a commitment to realizing the vision outlined in Agenda 2063, which envisions an Africa that is prosperous, integrated, and peaceful, with empowered citizens and strong institutions[8].

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6   United Nations. (2018). World Urbanization Prospects 2018. https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www. un.org.development.desa.pd/files/files/documents/2020/Feb/un_2018_wup_highlights.pdf

7   African Union Commission. (2014). Agenda 2063 Framework Document. https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33126-doc-01_background_note.pdf

8   African Union Commission. (2015). Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview

MANYARA, TANZANIA
The catastrophic debris flow destroyed a road between national parks Manyara and Ngorongoro. Car traffic was restored on the same day, on November 28, 2011 in Tanzania.
© Shutterstock/Vadim Petrakov

Key Objectives of the Main Theme:

Promoting Inclusive Growth: Sustainable urbanization offers a pathway to inclusive economic growth by creating opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship, and investment. The forum will explore strategies for ensuring that the benefits of urbanization are equitably distributed across society, with a particular focus on addressing the needs of vulnerable and marginalized populations.[9]

Enhancing Environmental Sustainability: Urbanization places immense pressure on natural resources and ecosystems, exacerbating issues such as pollution, deforestation, and climate change. The forum will examine approaches to promoting environmentally sustainable urban development, including green infrastructure, renewable energy, and sustainable transport solutions.

Additionally, African cities are increasingly vulnerable to various environmental and socio-economic risks, including natural disasters, rapid population growth, and economic shocks. The forum will explore strategies for building resilience and enhancing adaptive capacity at the local, national, and regional levels, with a focus on disaster risk reduction, climate adaptation, and social protection measures.[10].

Strengthening Governance and Planning: Effective urban governance and planning are essential for managing the complex challenges of urbanization and ensuring that cities are well-equipped to meet the needs of their residents. The forum will highlight the importance of participatory decision-making, transparent governance structures, and integrated urban planning processes[11] towards a fit for purpose planning model for African cities, especially in secondary cities where rapid population growth is occurring[12].

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9   United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. (2017). Transformative Industrial Policy for Africa.
     https://archive.uneca.org/sites/default/files/PublicationFiles/tipa-full_report_en_web.pdf
10   United Nations Environment Programme. (2020). Cities and Green Recovery.
     https://www.unep.org/resources/publication/are-we-building-back-better-evidence-2020-and-pathways-inclusive-green
11   World Bank. (2019). Governance for Development.
     https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/governance
12   United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. (2015). Making Cities Resilient: My City is Getting Ready.
     http://www.undrr.org/publication/making-cities-resilient-my-city-getting-ready-campaign-kit

Fostering Innovation and Collaboration: Innovation is a driving force behind sustainable urban development, offering new solutions to age-old challenges and unlocking opportunities for growth and prosperity. The forum will provide a platform for stakeholders to share innovative approaches, best practices, and lessons learned, and to forge partnerships for collective action.[13]

By focusing on the main theme of sustainable urbanization within the context of Agenda 2063, the Africa Urban Forum aims to catalyze action towards building cities that are inclusive, resilient, and sustainable looking into African solutions. Through dialogue, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing, the forum seeks to empower stakeholders to play an active role in shaping the urban future of Africa and advancing the continent's transformational agenda.

BISSAU, REPUBLIC OF GUINEA-BISSAU
Group of people at a community meeting at the Missira neighborhood in the city of Bissau, Guinea Bissau.
© Shutterstock

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13   World Economic Forum. (2020). The Future of Urban Development and Services.

7

Sub-themes of the forum

Financing Urbanization for Socio-Economic Transformation

Rapid urbanization in Africa presents a significant financing challenge, requiring substantial investments in infrastructure, services, and social amenities to accommodate growing urban populations. However, traditional financing mechanisms such as government budget allocations, tax increment financing , loans from multilateral development banaks and international aid grants often fall short of meeting the scale and complexity of urban development needs. This sub-theme explores innovative approaches to financing urbanization, including public-private partnerships, development finance, and community-based financing models.

Comprehensive financing mechanisms are necessary to address the multifaceted challenges of urbanization in Africa. These challenges include the provision of basic infrastructure such as water and sanitation systems, transportation networks, energy facilities, and affordable housing. Additionally, financing is required for implementing innovative solutions to urban problems, promoting economic diversification, and fostering resilience to environmental and economic shocks.

People buying and selling in a local african market. © Shutterstock

Key areas of focus include:

Investment Priorities: Identifying priority areas for investment, such as housing, transportation, water and sanitation, and energy infrastructure, to drive socio-economic transformation and improve quality of life in African urban centres.
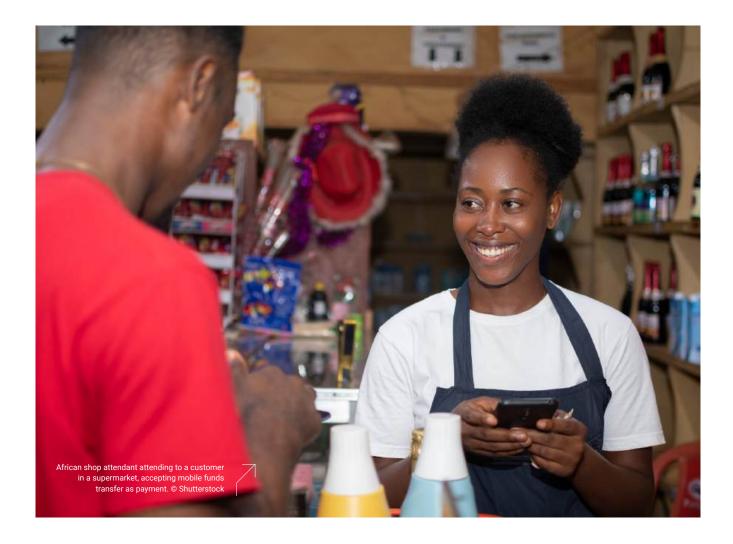
Financial Instruments: Exploring a range of financial instruments and mechanisms, including municipal bonds, impact investment funds, and green finance initiatives, to mobilize capital for urban development projects.

Risk Management: Addressing financial risks associated with urban development, including project financing risks, currency and exchange rate fluctuations, and political and regulatory risks, to attract private sector investment and ensure project sustainability.

Capacity Building: Strengthening institutional capacity at the local, national, and regional levels to effectively manage urban finance, improve financial governance, and enhance transparency and accountability in resource allocation and expenditure.

Sustainable and Resilient Urban Development in Africa:

Sustainable and resilient urban development in Africa is not merely an aspiration but an imperative for the continent's future. As Africa undergoes rapid urbanization, characterized by unprecedented population growth, rapid urban expansion, and increasing environmental pressures, the need for sustainable and resilient urban development strategies becomes ever more urgent. This sub-theme, "Sustainable and Resilient Urban Development in Africa," encapsulates the multifaceted challenges and opportunities associated with urbanization on the continent, while also charting a course towards inclusive, environmentally sustainable, and economically vibrant cities.

African shop attendant attending to a customer in a supermarket, accepting mobile funds transfer as payment. © Shutterstock

Key areas of focus include:

Environmental Sustainability: Promoting sustainable land use planning, green infrastructure development, and eco-friendly urban design to minimize environmental impact, mitigate climate change, and enhance urban resilience to natural disasters.

Social Inclusion: Addressing social inequalities and promoting inclusive urban development by ensuring equitable access to basic services, affordable housing, healthcare, education, and employment opportunities for all urban residents, including marginalized and vulnerable groups. Inclusive urban development fosters stronger, more cohesive communities. When all residents, including marginalized and vulnerable groups, have access to essential services and opportunities, communities are better positioned to collectively respond to recover from environmental and socio-economic shocks.

Also Inclusive urban policies that offer education and employment opportunities empower individuals and communities to adapt to changing environmental conditions. Education enhances awareness and understanding of climate risks,

Resilience and Adaptation: Enhancing urban resilience and adaptive capacity to withstand and recover from shocks and stresses, including natural disasters, economic downturns, and public health crises, through improved disaster risk management, urban planning, and infrastructure development.

Innovative Technologies: Harnessing the power of technology and innovation to develop smart cities and digital solutions that improve urban governance, service delivery, and quality of life, while promoting sustainability, efficiency, and transparency in urban management.

8

Critical Issues to be considered during the forum

Fostering African Urban Solutions, Building Prosperous Africa: Agenda 2063

Urbanization in Africa presents both opportunities and challenges for sustainable development. As African urban centres continue to grow rapidly, it is imperative to foster innovative urban solutions that address the unique challenges faced by urban areas while promoting prosperity and advancing the objectives of Agenda 2063.[14]

Key Issues:

- **Informal Settlements and Slums:** Addressing the challenges posed by informal settlements and slums, including inadequate housing, lack of basic services, and social exclusion.

- **Infrastructure Deficits:** Bridging the infrastructure gap in African urban centres, including transportation, water, sanitation, energy, and digital infrastructure.

- **Environmental Sustainability:** Enhancing environmental sustainability through green infrastructure, climate-resilient urban planning, and sustainable resource management.

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14   United Nations. (2018). World Urbanization Prospects 2018. https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www. un.org.development.desa.pd/files/files/documents/2020/Feb/un_2018_wup_highlights.pdf

- **Urban Leadership:** Promoting transformative Leadership in Africa is a fundamental to the good governance, institutional reforms and sustainable urban development

Key Questions:

- How can African urban centres effectively address the challenges of informal settlements and slums while promoting inclusive development?

- What strategies can be implemented to bridge the infrastructure deficit in African urban centres and promote sustainable urban development?

- How can urbanization be leveraged to promote inclusive economic growth and prosperity for all urban residents?

- What measures can African urban centres take to enhance environmental sustainability and resilience in the face of climate change and other environmental challenges?

- Cases studies to show good practices in taking actions to improve slums, infrastructure, inclusiveness and environmental sustainability in Africa?

Urbanization Trends and prospects of Africa towards Agenda 2063

Urbanization lies at the heart of Africa's development agenda, playing a pivotal role in shaping the continent's future. The Analysis of urban trends seeks to underscore the centrality of urban areas in driving socio-economic transformation and advancing the overarching goals of Agenda 2063.[15] By placing urban issues at the forefront of the Africa Agenda, its important to explore the multifaceted dimensions of urbanization and its profound implications for Africa's development trajectory[16].

Key Issues:

- **Urban-Rural Linkages:** Exploring the interconnectedness between urban and rural areas and promoting integrated approaches to development that bridge the urban-rural divide.

- **Urban Governance and Citizenship:** Strengthening urban governance structures and processes to improve transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in decision-making.

- **Sustainable Urban Infrastructure:** Promoting sustainable infrastructure development in urban areas, including transportation, water, sanitation, and energy systems.

- **Urbanization and Inclusive Growth:** Ensuring that urbanization contributes to inclusive economic growth by creating opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship, and social mobility.

Key Questions:

- How can African urban centres leverage their connections with rural areas to promote integrated and inclusive development?

- What governance reforms are needed to improve transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in urban decision-making processes?

- What are the key challenges and opportunities in promoting sustainable urban infrastructure development in Africa?

- How can urbanization be harnessed to create opportunities for inclusive economic growth and social mobility in African urban centres?

Managing African Rapid Urbanization for Positive Structural Transformation

Urbanization in Africa presents an opportunity for positive structural transformation, with the potential to drive economic growth, social development, and environmental sustainability[17]. This segment focuses on strategies for managing African urbanization in ways that promote inclusive and sustainable development, while addressing the challenges posed by rapid urban growth.

Key Issues:

- **Urban Planning and Land Use:** Ensuring effective urban planning and land management to accommodate urban growth while protecting natural resources and promoting equitable access to land.

- **Housing and Basic Services:** Addressing the shortage of affordable housing and basic services in African urban centres, including water, sanitation, electricity, and healthcare.

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15   United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. (2017). Transformative Industrial Policy for Africa.
16   World Bank. (2019). Governance for Development.
17   United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). (2016). World Cities Report 2016.

- **Employment and Livelihoods:** Creating opportunities for decent employment and livelihoods in urban areas, particularly for youth and vulnerable populations.

- **Governance and Institutional Capacity:** Strengthening urban governance structures and building institutional capacity to effectively manage urbanization and coordinate development efforts.

Key Questions:

- How can African urban centres effectively manage urbanization to promote positive structural transformation?

- What are the key challenges and opportunities in urban planning and land management in Africa?

- What strategies can be implemented to address the housing and basic services deficit in African urban centres?

- How can urban governance structures be strengthened to better manage urbanization and coordinate development efforts?

Financing Urbanization for the Socio-Economic Transformation of Africa

Effective financing is critical for supporting the sustainable urbanization of Africa and achieving socio-economic transformation[18]. Exploring innovative financing mechanisms and strategies to mobilize resources for urban development projects in Africa, with a view to promoting inclusive growth, reducing poverty, and enhancing the quality of life for urban residents[19].

Key Issues:

- **Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs):** Exploring the role of PPPs in financing urban infrastructure and service delivery projects in African urban centres.

- **Municipal Finance:** Strengthening municipal finance systems to enable local governments to raise revenue and finance urban development initiatives.

- **Climate Finance:** Mobilizing climate finance to support climate-resilient urban infrastructure and low-carbon development in African urban centres

- **Innovative Financing Mechanisms:** Identifying and promoting innovative financing mechanisms, such as green bonds, impact investing, and crowdfunding, for urban development projects.

Key Questions:

- What are the key challenges and opportunities in financing urbanization for the socio-economic transformation of Africa?

- How can public-private partnerships be leveraged to mobilize resources for urban development projects in African urban centres?

- What measures can be taken to strengthen municipal finance systems and enhance the capacity of local governments to finance urban development initiatives?

- What role can climate finance play in supporting climate-resilient urban infrastructure and sustainable development in African urban centres and Towns?

Institutional and Political Reform in African Urban Development

Institutional and political reform is pivotal in shaping the trajectory of urban development in Africa. With rapid urbanization and demographic shifts, African urban centres are at a crossroads, requiring robust governance frameworks and political will to harness urban growth sustainably. This segment will delve into the critical aspects of institutional and political reforms necessary to drive effective urban development, focusing on creating inclusive, resilient, and sustainable urban environments.

Key Issues

- **Governance and Institutional Capacity:** Many African urban centres suffer from weak governance structures and insufficient institutional capacities. This impedes the effective implementation of urban policies and management practices, leading to unplanned urban growth and inadequate service delivery.

- **Political Will and Leadership:** The success of urban development initiatives heavily depends on the political commitment and leadership at both local and national levels. The session will explore the role of political will in driving urban reforms and ensuring policy continuity.

18   United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. (2019). Economic Report on Africa 2019: Fiscal Policy for Financing Sustainable Development in Africa.
     https://www.uneca.org/economic-report-africa-2019
19   World Bank. (2018). Financing African Cities: The Role of Municipal Finance.
     https://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/10.1596/978-0-8213-9455-7

MIGORI, KENYA
Members of the public following proceedings at a public meeting locally known as barazas. © Shutterstock

- **Decentralization and Local Governance:** Decentralization is essential for empowering local governments to manage urban growth effectively. This includes financial autonomy, capacity building, and clear delineation of responsibilities between national and local governments.

- **Regulatory Frameworks and Legal Reforms:** Outdated or ineffective regulatory frameworks often hinder urban development. There is a need for comprehensive legal reforms that support modern urban planning, land use management, and sustainable development practices. Public Participation and Accountability: Engaging citizens in the urban development process ensures that their needs and aspirations are addressed. This session will highlight the importance of transparency, accountability, and inclusive participation in urban governance.

Questions

1. What are the most significant institutional and political challenges hindering urban development in African urban centres?

2. How can local governments be empowered through decentralization to manage urban growth more effectively?

3. What role does political will play in driving urban development reforms, and how can it be cultivated and sustained?

4. What legal and regulatory reforms are necessary to support sustainable urban development in Africa?

5. How can we enhance public participation and ensure accountability in the urban development process?

9

Components/Parameters of the Outcome Document

Institutional Framework and Policy Alignment

To ensure effective implementation of the African Urban Forum's declaration, a robust institutional framework is essential. This involves the establishment of central coordinating bodies at both continental and national levels. At the continental level, the AUSTC-8 subcommittee on Urban development and Human Settlements would oversee the implementation and provide strategic direction. In addition, each member state would create national urban task forces to localize and coordinate efforts, ensuring that policies are adapted to local contexts and effectively executed. This dual-layered approach aims to enhance coherence, accountability, and efficiency in driving sustainable urban development across Africa. To ensure effective implementation, it is crucial to align national urban policies with the declaration's goals and objectives, facilitating the integration of these urban development goals into national development plans and strategies.

Strengthen political commitment

At the continental level, the AUSTC-8 subcommittee on Urban Development and Human Settlements will engage with the African Union and other regional bodies to elevate the importance of sustainable urban development on the political agenda. Each member state will be encouraged to establish national urban task forces focused on securing high-level political buy-in, advocating for the integration of urban development goals into national policy frameworks, and aligning national urban policies with the declaration's objectives. Effective communication strategies, including regular dialogues with political leaders and leveraging media to raise awareness, are essential for fostering political commitment. Providing incentives and recognition for leaders who champion sustainable urban development can motivate others to follow suit. By highlighting the economic, social, and environmental benefits of urban development, both the AUSTC-8 subcommittee and national task forces can gain the necessary political will to drive the declaration's goals forward. Demonstrating the tangible benefits of urban policies through pilot projects best practices and success stories, along with active engagement with national governments, will further solidify political support. Through a combination of advocacy, alignment, accountability, and recognition, we can ensure that the goals of the African Urban Forum's declaration are prioritized and effectively implemented, leading to sustainable urban development across Africa.

Resource Mobilization and Financial Planning

Leverage both domestic and international funding sources, including public-private partnerships (PPPs), to finance urban development projects and establish an African Urban Development Fund to support key initiatives and provide grants or loans to urban centres implementing innovative solutions. Encourage urban centres to develop comprehensive financial plans that include long-term budgeting for infrastructure and social services, promoting transparency and accountability in the utilization of funds through regular audits and reporting mechanisms.

Capacity Development and Knowledge Management

Implement training and capacity-building programs for urban planners, local government officials, and community leaders by partnering with academic institutions and international organizations to develop curricula and certification programs focused on sustainable urban development. Foster a culture of knowledge sharing through regional workshops, conferences, and online platforms, and create an African Urban Knowledge Hub to compile and disseminate best practices, case studies, and research findings.

KIGALI, RWANDA
A view towards town and some university buildings in Kigali.
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SOUTH AFRICA
Aerial of township and wealthy houses in divided
South Africa. © Shutterstock/fivepointsix

Reporting, Monitoring and accountability

Develop a comprehensive set of performance indicators to track progress towards the objectives of the declaration, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative metrics to measure outcomes related to urban infrastructure, social inclusion, economic growth, and environmental sustainability. Mandate annual progress reports from member states and urban centres detailing the achievements and challenges encountered in the implementation process and facilitate peer reviews and independent evaluations to ensure objectivity and credibility in assessing progress.

Strengthened partnership, Advocacy, Outreach and Communication

Collaboration between governments, international organizations, private sector entities, civil society, and local communities cannot be over emphasized. At the continental level, partnerships with regional bodies such as the African Union, the African Development Bank, UNECA, UCLG-A, Shelter Afrique Development Bank and UN-Habitat will provide strategic support and resources. Member states should also establish public-private partnerships to leverage private sector investment in urban development projects. Engaging non-governmental stakeholders and community-based organizations will ensure that diverse perspectives and expertise are incorporated into urban development initiatives. Inclusive planning is crucial for creating equitable and sustainable urban environments. This involves participatory urban planning approaches that actively involve all stakeholders, including marginalized and vulnerable groups, in the decision-making process. By prioritizing inclusivity, we can develop urban environments that promote equal opportunities, social equity, and a higher quality of life for all residents. Additionally, promoting the use of digital tools and platforms can enhance citizen engagement and feedback mechanisms, ensuring that community voices are heard and considered in urban development projects.

Effective advocacy, outreach, and communication strategies are critical for driving the urban development agenda forward and ensuring the successful implementation of initiatives. Advocacy efforts should target policymakers, business leaders, and the public to raise awareness of the importance of sustainable urban development. Developing a comprehensive advocacy strategy that includes lobbying, public campaigns, and engagement with media outlets will help to amplify the message and garner broader support. Utilizing data and evidence-based research to support advocacy efforts will strengthen their impact. Outreach and communication should involve clear, consistent, and compelling messages that resonate with diverse audiences. Launching awareness campaigns to inform citizens about the goals and benefits of the declaration is essential. Using various media channels, including social media, traditional media, and community outreach programs, will maximize the reach and impact of these messages. Transparent and open communication fosters trust and collaboration among stakeholders, enhancing the overall effectiveness of urban development efforts and ensuring that the goals of the African Urban Forum's declaration are effectively implemented.

10

Conclusion: Shaping the Future of African Urbanization

The Africa Urban Forum will represent a pivotal moment in the continent's journey towards sustainable urban development and socio-economic transformation. Through in-depth discussions, collaborative exchanges, and visionary planning, stakeholders from across Africa will come together to chart a course towards building prosperous, inclusive, and resilient African urban centres.

As the forum draws to a close, the momentum generated will be sustained through continued dialogue, cooperation, and collective action. The commitments made here will translate into tangible outcomes on the ground, improving the lives of urban residents and contributing to the overall prosperity of the continent.

The Africa Urban Forum will serve as a catalyst for change, inspiring renewed efforts to build the urban centres and cities of tomorrow. With a shared vision, political will, and active participation from all stakeholders, Africa will be poised to harness the power of urbanization to transform its future and realize the aspirations outlined in Agenda 2063.

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