

Local Governments Special Session

“OPERATIONALIZING THE INTERNATIONAL GUIDELINES ON DECENTRALISATION AND ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES FOR ALL”

Thursday 25 March, 4.30-6.30 pm

Rio de Janeiro - Brazil

BACKGROUND

The 5th edition of the World Urban Forum (WUF5) will focus on the overall theme of the: “right to the city – bridging the urban divide”. More than a simple appeal to opening up the urban infrastructure and markets to allow for a better access of the poor to employment and basic services, the right to the “right to the city” most importantly must imply that every one of the city inhabitants deserves to be given a chance to have a constructive impact on the future of the city in which he, or she, is living.

With the adoption by the Governing council of UN-HABITAT of the international “Guidelines on decentralization and the strengthening of local authorities” in April 2007, and the “Guidelines on Access to Basic Services for all” in April 2009, the United nations sent a clear signal that local democracy needs to be strengthened in line with the above premises.

On one hand, the Guidelines on Decentralization and Strengthening of Local Authorities particularly underline, the significance of political and administrative processes, i.e. the involvement of citizens into decision-making processes in various forms at the local level. They also highlight the principle of subsidiarity, which provides for public responsibilities to be mostly exercised at the decentralized or local level. Last but not least, the Guidelines call for adequate financial resources of local authorities as a prerequisite for strong local autonomy.

On the other hand, the Guidelines on Access to Basic Services for all respond to the need for filling up the gaps for the poor and marginalized groups – also know as the “urban divide”, and invite governments at all levels to strengthen their legal and institutional frameworks for facilitating partnerships in favor of the urban poor.

OBJECTIVES

While acknowledging the coherence and complementarity between the guidelines on access to basic services for all and the international guidelines on decentralization and the strengthening of local authorities, the Governing council requested UN-HABITAT to develop innovative partnerships with other United Nations bodies, development banks, Governments, local authorities and their associations, including private service providers and other Habitat



Agenda partners, to support the ownership and application of the guidelines to local and national circumstances.

The primary objective of the proposed special session will be to pave the way for the operationalisation of the international Guidelines on decentralization, and access to basic services at the country and city levels. Based on a thematic presentation of both sets of Guidelines, participants will be invited to share their visions, highlight the challenges, but also explore opportunities and formulate recommendations which will guide the joint follow-up actions to be taken.

The special session will further serve as a forum for mobilizing representatives of Governments at all levels, as well as other interested Habitat Agenda partners to provide institutional, technical and financial support for the future work of the UN-HABITAT at country and city levels in this particular field.

PROGRAMME (4.30 - 6.30 pm)

Welcoming remarks (moderator)

Opening Speech by UN-HABITAT

Mrs. Anna Tibaijuka, Executive Director

Chair's Statement*

Thematic presentations of the Guidelines*

Exchange of regional experiences and lessons learnt*

Regional overview:

- Africa
- Asia-Pacific
- Latin America and the Caribbean
- EU and Transition Countries
- UNDP, UNESCO, WHO, WB, Cities Alliance
- Representatives of the private sector (Veolia, IGD, ISTED and others)

General debate/interaction with the audience

Formulation of recommendations for follow-up actions

*(*All names of speakers to be confirmed)*



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