



SIDE EVENT

“Smart cities, growth and industrialization in Africa”

Background

Urbanization is closely linked to economic growth and the transformation of economies towards productive sectors, namely industry and services. Cities are enablers of industrialization owing to their well-documented productive advantages. However, in African cities, these powerful productive benefits are undercut by deficits in transport and energy infrastructure, weak land and property institutions and inadequate density, among other issues. Digitization can redefine how cities are planned, designed and managed. Smart cities where digital technology is applied to improve efficiency, competitiveness, productivity, live ability and sustainability through intelligent infrastructure and services can redefine Africa's urban and national development trajectories.

An innovative, or smart, city is one that uses information and communication technologies and other technological means to improve the quality of life of its citizens, the efficiency of urban operations, services and competitiveness, while ensuring that it meets the needs of present and future generations with respect to economic, social and environmental aspects. A city can be defined as “smart” when investments are made in human and social capital and traditional and modern communication infrastructure, transport and fuel-sustainable economic development, with wise management of natural resources.

Objective

The side event is organized by ECA, UN-Habitat and Cisco, and will examine how the application of digital technologies can transform urban planning and management to address barriers to economic efficiency in cities and enhance industrial productivity in Africa's rapidly growing cities.

Format

The side event will commence with a brief presentation on the theme of the session, followed by a moderated panel debate and interactive discussion.

Expected outcomes

- Increased awareness of member States on the potential of smart cities to enable accelerated growth and industrialization
- Enhanced familiarity with opportunities to and successful practices for transforming urban planning and management through digital technologies
- Identification of potential partnerships and collaboration opportunities between various stakeholders

Target audience

Officials of ministries of economy, finance, economic planning, trade and industrialization; national and regional planners; experts from regional and international organizations.

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