



Integrating Urbanization in National Development

Planning for Inclusive Cities

Expert Group Meeting

AIDE MEMOIRE

9 and 10 October 2017, Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)

1. In the framework of the implementation of its work programme for the biennium 2016-2017¹, the Economic Commission for Africa is organizing an Expert Group Meeting to review the report on ‘Integrating Urbanization in National Development Planning for Inclusive Cities’ to be held on 9 and 10 October 2017, in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia).

Background

2. In recent years, Africa has registered impressive economic performance and future prospects for growth remain strong. However, concerns remain about the inclusiveness and sustainability of this growth as Africa continues to face a host of challenges, including high unemployment, inequality and poverty. This leads to the question of whether the current growth patterns in African countries are likely to lead to the continental vision of inclusive and sustainable development.

3. There is wide agreement across the continent that the challenge confronting Africa is, therefore, not only to maintain robust economic growth, but also to transform it into sustained and inclusive development, based on a new economic model that will mostly be based on economic diversification, with a special focus on industrialization and modernization of agriculture. This new model will allow the creation of millions of new jobs every year, reducing inequality and poverty rates, and enhancing access to basic services. This underlies the renewed calls by member States for a structural transformation that fosters sustained and inclusive economic growth.

4. A key foundation for accelerating structural transformation is the formulation of long-term national development plans. It is worth noting that recently, many African countries have started defining or redefining their long-term visions and strategies with the goal of accelerating or achieving structural transformation. Often, the visions and strategies aim at propelling countries to middle-income status in the medium term, with strong emphasis on diversification, industrialization and linkages to the global economy. The new generation of national development strategies is also being informed by new and emerging trends in the demographic, environmental, and economic spheres.

5. One of the most profound of these emerging trends is the wave of urbanization that is sweeping across most of Africa. Indeed, while Africa’s population is currently estimated to be 40 per cent urban, in less than 20 years, it is projected that more than 50 per cent of Africa’s population will be living in urban areas, and by 2050 this will have risen to 60 per cent. If these projections are realized, this will profoundly change the profile of the continent, and will present a challenge for policymakers in their efforts to manage urbanization strategically for Africa's structural transformation².

6. Urbanization is multidimensional in nature, as it affects the social, economic, political, cultural and environmental aspects of development in a cross-cutting way. The rapid urban transition unfolding in Africa presents both opportunities and challenges. Evidence around the world suggests that linking economic and urban development generates positive interactions and spillovers that improve productivity and well-being.

¹ United Nations General Assembly (2015), Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017, A/70/6 (Sect. 18).

² United Nations Department Economic Social Affairs (2014), “World Urbanization Prospects: Highlights”.

7. The immense role that urbanization can play in economic and social transformation has received universal acknowledgement in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and clear recognition in Africa in the form of Agenda 2063, as well as the Common African Position on Habitat III. Despite this, the integration of urbanization into African national and regional policy frameworks as a cross-cutting factor has been limited. Few African countries have adequately integrated urbanization in their national development plans as a mega trend of considerable proportions shaping all aspects of development, including employment, poverty and inequalities. Instead, urbanization is more or less seen from a compartmentalized viewpoint with focus on specific issues such as housing, infrastructure, slums and environmental degradation. Yet, planning plays a fundamental role in determining a country's development objectives, as well as to ensure a rational allocation of national and external resources to support strategic development goals and the suboptimal integration of urbanization can limit its ability to achieve inclusive and sustained development.

8. On the other hand, assigning urbanization a central role in development planning can be a vehicle to harness urbanization for African countries' long-term inclusive and sustainable development vision and goals by unleashing the potential of cities to be the drivers of local, regional and national level economic development. A strategic national response to the urbanization wave in Africa must also be accompanied by strategic sectoral national policies that adequately factor spatial considerations. Such policies are important instruments to optimize the opportunities, and minimize negative externalities of urbanization, while being informed and guided by national development planning vision, goals and objectives.

9. It is in this context that the Urbanization Section of Social Development Policy Division/Urbanization Section (SDPD/US) of ECA has prepared a report on the integration of urbanization in national development planning. The main aim of the report is to strengthen member States' knowledge and capacities in integrating urbanization into national development planning frameworks and processes to promote inclusive and sustainable cities for Africa's structural transformation.

10. More specifically, the report includes the rationale and conceptual framework on the need to integrate urbanization in national development planning in the context of Africa's pursuit of inclusive structural transformation; assesses case studies undertaken in some African countries and examples from other countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, drawing out overarching themes and conclusions; and proffers a set of recommendations that will inform Africa's member States on how to better integrate urbanization in national development planning frameworks and processes.

11. The Expert Group Meeting will be held on 9 and 10 October 2017 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Following the meeting, the report will be finalized on the basis of comments and inputs provided by the participants. The final report will inform the preparation of guideline on integrating urbanization in national development planning, which will be used for the training of national development planners across the continent. Moreover, the report will be published as a stand-alone publication of ECA and will be disseminated targeting key national and regional stakeholders.

Objectives of the meeting

12. The overall objective of the meeting is to enable participants to deliberate on, to provide inputs and comments, and to validate and enrich the Report on Integrating Urbanization in National Development Planning for Inclusive Cities, in order to finalize it. The specific objectives of the meeting are to:

- (i) Review the report on the basis of the study terms of reference, with a view to identifying gaps, providing expert inputs, and proposing revisions that should form the basis for finalizing it;
- (ii) Identify some significant elements to inform the key messages of the report;
- (iii) Provide a platform to enhance understanding, multi-stakeholder dialogue, networking and coordination on urbanization, structural transformation and national development planning in Africa.

Format of the meeting

13. The key input to the discussions at the validation meeting will be the draft report on the state of urbanization in Africa. Sessions of the meeting will be organized around the structure of the report to enable a thorough and critical review of its content and to identify a means of enhancing its policy relevance.

14. Participants will receive the aide memoire, concept note, agenda and programme of the meeting as well as the draft report ahead of time.

Expected outcomes

15. The main outcomes expected from the meeting are:
- (i) Agreed-upon elements and modalities for finalizing the draft report;
 - (ii) Key policy messages on the report, which would also inform the synthesis report;
 - (iii) Enhanced understanding, networking and coordination on urbanization and national development planning in the framework of structural transformation in Africa.

Expected outputs

16. The main outputs of the expert group meeting will be:
- (i) The report of the meeting, including participants' comments, inputs and recommendations for enriching the draft report;
 - (ii) Agreed upon elements and inputs for finalizing the key messages.

Participation

17. The validation meeting will bring together selected participants including policymakers, experts and practitioners from the fields and sectors of national development planning, urban planning, and economic planning. These participants will be drawn from national institutions responsible for these key sectors of development in Africa as well as from the private sector, academia and civil society organizations. They will also include representatives of research institutions and practitioners in Asia and Latin America. Other participants will be representatives of relevant divisions of ECA and regional organizations and partners, such as the African Union Commission, UNDP, UNIDO, UN-Habitat, and UNFPA.

Date and venue

18. The meeting will be held at the United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 9 and 10 October 2017.

Contacts

19. All communication on the meeting should be addressed to

Ms. Semia Solange Guermas de Tapia
Social Affairs Officer
Urbanization Section
Social Development Policy Division
United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)
E-mail: guermastapia@un.org

And copied to:

Ms. Meaza Molla
Assistant
Urbanization Section
Social Development Policy Division
United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)
E-mail: molla.uneca@un.org