The Role of Technology

Implementing the New Urban Agenda to Achieve Sustainable Development

United Nations Headquarters, New York

20 June 2018 (10 AM – 6 PM) Conference Room 2

Summary

The Consortium for Sustainable Urbanization is an ECOSOC and DPI accredited ,New York based, not-for-profit organization that promotes understanding of the role of sustainable urbanization and resilient design in planning cities around the world. We connect global thought leaders to exchange ideas in high-level meetings and public forums, often in collaboration with the United Nations, UN-Habitat, American Institute of Architects and UCLG. Our organization is committed to developing a worldwide discussion on issues related to sustainable urbanization in response to the new challenges, in an era of ever increasing urbanization.

We decided to hold a conference on sustainable urbanization and technology, means of Implementation for SDG 11 on 20 June at the UN as a contribution to HLPF 2018 on the discussions on SDG11 and all the related SDGs. We hope that the meeting discussions will be useful in preparation of the High Level Political Forum which will discuss UN Sustainable Development Goal 11.

Our conference examined the impact of technology on cities now and in the future. It will look at how advancing technology can be used to achieve the sustainable development goals related to cities and implement the New Urban Agenda. The advent of driverless cars, automation, artificial intelligence and infinite data will play an increasing role in defining the future of urban living and its sustainability.

This conference aimed to showcase good examples of how advanced technology can improve urban sustainability now and in the future .It also analyzed challenges and opportunities of the trends of how advanced technology is shaping cities.

The contributions resulted in a stimulating and thought provoking meeting.
We had an impressive list of speakers who were authorities on the topics of interest for us.
The room was full to the brim from the start to the end. Our audience consisted of architects, urban planners, students, members of the civil society, academicians and of course delegations.

Our speakers came from Europe (France,Germany,Spain,Jordan and Columbia) as well as all over the USA (Boston,Kansas City,Washington DC) etc.

The conference touched on many subjects. Speakers representing the professions, academics, government and business addressed a wide range of suggestions to further the aims of the SDG11. What follows is an eclectic list of proposals, gleaned from the contributions of approximately 20 speakers. The suggestions appear in no particular order. No inference should be made about the relative importance of these items based on the location on the list.

Data

Despite the ubiquitous nature of data collection and mining, data in the developing world are often unreliable or non-existent, thereby hampering the use of data for informed decision-making**. Support the generation of reliable open data. Regard data as a new form of infrastructure.**

Planning and design tools

Building information modeling and other tools enable full assessment of building impacts. Tools exist to drastically reduce energy use and greenhouse emissions**. Mandate the use of information modeling to reduce carbon footprints of buildings.**

Construction

Unprecedented amounts of building in the 21st century provide opportunities for more efficient production and operation of buildings**.** Technology has had a major impact on building performance greenhouse gas emission and energy consumption.**Mandate minimum energy and performance standards for all construction.**

Logistics

Driverless vehicles will change the delivery of people and goods. Automated delivery systems and related technology could dramatically increase the carrying capacity of present infrastructure and reduce energy consumption**. Explore the potential impact of a driverless society.**

Waste

Waste is being generated at an unprecedented level**. Explore new technologies to handle and reduce waste streams.**

Local government

The operation and management of city governments is a multi-trillion challenge. Efficiencies, better performance, more responsiveness make smart city technologies a good investment. New more socially responsible operation of city governments can create more opportunities for all**. Promote smart city technology.**

Learning from industry

Governments need the same performance expectations and accountability as the corporate world**. Use technology to establish more accountable and responsive relationships between the governing and the governed.**

Leadership

Cities need leadership to reinvent themselves to be competitive with other cities. Leadership vacuums and corruption undermine the ability to adapt and change. Use of new technologies to communicate with and respond to the electorate. **Support democratic election and training of civic leaders, capable of creating the political will for change and progress.**

Diversity and inclusion

Historically diversity and inclusion have produced more innovation, technological advancement and opportunity. **Support diversity and inclusion and help with the assimilation of migrant populations.**

Automation and robotics

Machines can do certain things better and cheaper than humans. Artificial intelligence and self learning algorithms show promise to improve the human condition. The purpose of machines is to augment not replace human beings. **Endorse constantly updated regulatory processes for artificial intelligence and other machine learning to ensure safety and security.**

Energy

Increasingly energy is created from renewable sources. Increased energy efficiency and new technologies have slowed the need for new sources of energy. **Encourage innovation in energy generation and storage.**

Conflict areas

Post-conflict urban areas are marked by limited competence and resources of local governments. Humanitarian needs overshadow the need for planning and strategic investments in critical infrastructure**. Support use of evidence-based decision-making, establish accessible Geo data with dynamic maps and dashboard tracking of damage and recovery efforts.**

Resilience

Particularly in disaster prone areas, it is essential to plan for the impact of natural or man-made disasters. **Establish links between technology, sustainability and resilience.**

Communication

Ubiquitous access to information has been the single most important change agent over the last 10 years**. Encourage leapfrog technology to make the Internet available to everyone, especially in the developing world.**

Water

Water is a critical and finite element in the further urbanization of the globe. **Encourage more prudent use/reuse of water resources.**

Reinvention and renewal

Cities, in order to stay healthy, are in constant need of redefinition. **Encourage the innovative use of public lands to improve the public realm.**

Mobility

Access is one of the key elements of urban improvements**. Use a regulatory framework to ensure access to all in public and private spaces and buildings.**

Financing

Cities need to raise financing for infrastructure and other improvements. There is a dire need to strengthen municipal finance and the capacity to manage finance**. Help cities become credit worthy.**

Best practices

The UN is uniquely placed to facilitate interactions and support partnerships in the service of achieving SDGs**. Recognize and disseminate best practices to be emulated elsewhere. Establish peer to peer networks.**