



G7 GERMANY

Ministerial Meeting on Sustainable Urban Development

Communiqué

13 September 2022

Chapeau

At our first-ever G7 Ministerial Meeting for Urban Development, we, the Ministers responsible for urban development of the Group of Seven (G7), recognise that, as members of leading industrialised democratic countries and value-based partners, we have a special responsibility to help shape a liveable future for all on a healthy planet, with sustainable economic recovery, the 2030 Agenda, and the Paris Agreement in mind.

Against the background of current global crises inflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and Russia's unjustifiable, unprovoked and illegal war against Ukraine, we reaffirm the principles of respect for international law, the multilateral rules-based order, the shared values of democracy, the rule of law, and universal human rights. We believe that in urban development policy we can overcome global challenges through mutual collaboration and coordinated multilateral cooperation, based on our shared democratic values and universal human rights.

In this context, we condemn the tremendous destruction of cities in Ukraine, for which Russia's war of aggression bears full responsibility, and stand ready to accompany international efforts to rebuild and rehabilitate the country's devastated cities and thereby support the self-determined reconstruction of a free and democratic Ukraine.

As G7 Ministers responsible for urban development, we jointly want to contribute to achieving the policy priorities for the German 2022 G7 Presidency. We want to make concrete progress towards a sustainable planet, economic stability and transformation, a healthy life, investing in a better future, and strong cooperation. Our cooperation is intended as a response to the 2022 G7 Leaders' Communiqué, which has tasked us to develop a joint understanding of good urban development policy and to decide on joint initiatives for unlocking the full potential of cities to promote social, cultural, technological, climate-neutral, economic, and democratic innovation for the common good.

Given the fact that we are living in the "century of cities", a major political task lies ahead of us. Cities constitute the immediate living environment of a growing majority of an increasing population worldwide. They are built environments of not only physical, but also social, cultural, environmental and economic infrastructure; they are places of diversity, identity, encounters, exchange and belonging; and they are spaces where policy decisions have a direct, tangible impact.

Cities and urban areas are critical global systems to combat the triple crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Whilst cities are responsible for the majority of greenhouse gas emissions and to some degree for pollutants, they are also particularly affected by the effects of

global warming and pollution. Innovative and sustainable energy solutions can turn smart, sustainable and resilient cities into a laboratory for a future with net zero emissions.

Other key challenges and transformative processes include economic structural changes, social inequality and polarisation, demographic change including both population ageing and shrinkage, and digitalisation. Cities are already struggling with crises and disasters due to various causes. In the coming years, cities will have to develop solutions and adapt in order to respond to the many changes impacting them directly. This requires amending urban development policies to support urban resilience.

Today more than ever, cities are interconnected globally, nationally and regionally, and city networks are becoming major global players. Cities have the power to develop visions of their own future, to create innovations and to mobilise resources, and are key to implementing landmark international policy frameworks, particularly the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the New Urban Agenda and other relevant multilateral agreements, in a place-based manner, while continuing to share experience and best practices. Cities have the potential to implement innovative urban development approaches and create tangible improvements and sustainable living environments for their inhabitants if they are provided with enabling framework conditions.

With our first meeting in 2022 as G7 Ministers responsible for urban development, we want to highlight the importance of a sustainable, resilient, climate-friendly, environment-friendly, socially-inclusive, common good-oriented and well-informed urban development policy. We also wish to highlight the extensive opportunities resulting from such policy that may help us tackle local, regional, national and global challenges. We affirm that this will form the basis for future G7 cooperation.

Policy Basis

Our common goal is to maintain and improve the quality of life in cities of all sizes in their pursuit of urban resilience and sustainable transformation. Thus, in the spirit of existing international frameworks, we reaffirm the importance of the following global agreements for sustainable urban development, namely

- the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in particular its Sustainable Development Goals 11 (“Sustainable Cities and Communities”) and 17 (“Global Partnership”) (2015);
- the New Urban Agenda adopted by the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III, 2016);
- the Paris Agreement (2015);
- the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015);
- the OECD Principles on Urban Policy (2019).

We recall the 2016 Communiqué of the G7 Toyama Environment Ministers' Meeting and the 2021 G20 Rome Leaders' Declaration reaffirming the importance of the role of cities and subnational actors in sustainable development and addressing climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

We acknowledge that the "New Leipzig Charter: The transformative power of cities for the common good" adopted by EU Member States in 2020 serves as an exemplary multilateral and strategic framework document of contemporary urban policy to address social, economic and environmental challenges in accordance with the principles of good urban development policy.

We take note of other guidelines that are of importance to urban development, such as the regional report "Transition of Asian and Pacific Cities to a Sustainable Future: Accelerating Action for Sustainable Urbanization" of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (2022) and the "Regional Action Plan 2030" of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (2021).

We take note of the 2022 U7 Mayors Declaration and the 2022 Global Declaration of Mayors for Democracy, and recognise that many cities are already taking responsibility for addressing global challenges such as climate change, social polarisation and inequality, biodiversity loss, pollution and the COVID-19 pandemic. Cities continue to play a leading role in developing a successful, sustainable and inclusive future through mutually supportive cooperation and information sharing at intra-, inter- and supranational levels.

With reference to the importance of resilience for sustainable urban development, we also take note of the definition provided by UN-Habitat (2021) which defines urban resilience as "the measurable ability of any urban system, with its inhabitants, to maintain continuity through all shocks and stresses, while positively adapting and transforming toward sustainability."

Principles & Recommendations

In order to fully capitalise on the potential of cities and subnational regions, instruments of integrated urban development and appropriate enabling framework conditions need to be combined with room for innovation and cooperation. Good multi-level and multi-stakeholder cooperation and the participation of all concerned inhabitants at the local level create the preconditions for successfully addressing global challenges.

Building on this, we emphasise the following principles in strengthening international cooperation in urban development policy:

- Responsibility for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals of other global frameworks encompasses a global, national and local dimension. Pooling national and subnational – including municipal – forces in international cooperation on the basis of rules-based multilateralism is key to achieving the SDGs and limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C.
- Cities play a crucial role as drivers of transformation for net zero emissions, better quality of life and stronger urban and territorial resilience. Many frontrunner cities contribute with their knowledge and ambition and take on local and global responsibility. Global challenges stimulate local solutions. Strengthening the local capacity to act ultimately benefits broader sustainable transformation. Municipal priorities should be reflected in national agendas and be supported through international exchanges of knowledge and best practices in urban development.
- Political action in urban development is oriented towards the common good and aims to balance public and private interests in democratic decision-making processes at all levels, including the municipal level. Collaborative and democratic working processes are characterised by the principles of subsidiarity, interdepartmental and multilevel cooperation of the public administration, the involvement of relevant actors at all levels, local planning autonomy, co-creative participation of all concerned stakeholders – including bottom-up participation – and the rule of law.
- Integrated and inclusive urban planning follows principles of good urban governance: orientation on the common good, integrated approach, participation and co-creation, multi-level governance, place-based approach.

In order to strengthen international cooperation in urban development policy, we recommend

- pursuing a multilaterally coordinated approach to developing and implementing global policies, in close collaboration with cities and their networks;
- establishing integrated and long-term urban policies on various levels which take into account each country's unique context, the increased involvement of cities in the development and implementation of such policies, the strengthening of dialogue between local, regional and national levels, and the integration of sectoral policies in a place-based approach;
- focusing on evidence-based best practices for implementing good urban development policy, using the insights of research and innovation, which provide knowledge to national and local actors in charge of sustainable urban development and facilitate learning between them and through international networks;
- remaining committed to supporting key urban development goals such as climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience, social cohesion, adequate housing, improved mobility schemes including non-motorised transport and public transportation systems as well as economic prosperity and the transformation towards a circular economy;
- paying special attention to the many opportunities digitalisation provides for cities which allows for improved resource efficiency, participation, mobility, health and public services, while

ensuring data sovereignty, data protection, capacity-building and widespread access to digital tools;

- noting the importance of cities in developing and financing sustainable infrastructure – including public and private finance – and the corresponding requirement for stronger financial and planning capacities at the local level;
- placing special priority on strengthening resilient communities for social equity, which calls on decision-makers at all levels to leave no one behind, to reflect the diversity of urban societies, and to counteract all kinds of segregation by giving attention to the needs of all social and age groups including the most vulnerable and disadvantaged;
- pursuing a gender-sensitive approach in planning processes and a stronger representation of women in decision-making, which ultimately benefits all;
- increasing opportunities for children and young people to enjoy the benefits of urban life and giving them a greater say in decision-making in order to meet their age-specific needs for mobility, housing and public spaces;
- acknowledging the role of different spatial levels, and therefore focusing in particular on neighbourhoods as the immediate living environment and scope for engagement of most people; focusing also on functional urban areas, often referred to as city regions or metropolitan areas, and the need to account for an overall balanced territorial development with compact polycentric structures and limiting demand for land;
- implementing high-quality urban design to create livable, safe, healthy, accessible, inclusive and well-designed public spaces for all with a holistic understanding of people-centred design which gives particular consideration to the needs of girls and women;
- enhancing international cooperation on research and innovation in urbanisation and promoting both social and technological innovations;
- strengthening cities' capacities to monitor crises at an early stage and increasing the integration of risk and crisis management as part of a preventive urban development policy to create urban resilience.

Commitment for Joint Action

In our first year of mutual collaboration and coordinated multilateral cooperation, we, the Ministers responsible for urban development of the Group of Seven (G7), support the implementation of the following action-oriented approaches and, within our national competence, in urban development policy. In this context, we emphasise the urgency of promoting just, green, inclusive, sustainable and circular cities; the possibility for the national level to provide enabling framework conditions, including urban development policies, taking into account each country's unique context; increasing the involvement of cities in the development and implementation of

urban development policies; strengthening dialogue between local and national levels; and the special role of cities in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda.

We support

- the continuation of cooperation on urban development policy within the framework of the G7 and in pursuit of the implementation of other relevant multilateral agreements;
- a stronger recognition of cities as dialogue partners within the framework of the G7, by continuing and intensifying dialogue with city associations, alliances and networks, e.g. the “Urban Seven”;
- the enhanced joint action of the international community in pursuit of sustainable urban development by continuing and aligning existing alliances and establishing new initiatives, where necessary, on international cooperation in urban development policy;
- a particular focus on the joint development of and exchange on strategies to increase urban resilience to prevent, protect against and adapt to imminent crises and disasters threatening livelihoods on a global scale.