WUF11 SESSION CONCEPT NOTE

TRANSFORMING CITIES THROUGH INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS AND TECHNOLOGIES
Future Cities 2050

1. **List of Partners Contributing to the Session:**

   - Microsoft
   - Republic of Poland
   - Future Cities Institute
   - ITU
   - UNDP

2. **Key words:**

   Future Cities, Technology, urban innovations, people-centred smart cities

3. **Objectives of the Session:**

   This Dialogue will explore the role that innovation and technology can play in the transition to more sustainable urban futures. The future of cities will be knowledge-based, driven largely by innovation and the widespread use of new technologies and digitization of virtually all facets of our urban space. The Dialogue will highlight the risks linked to digitalization and ways to mitigate associated harms with newer technologies such as artificial intelligence. Drawing on the COVID-19 crisis, the dialogue will also explore how the deepening digital divide and social inequalities within cities and across the urban-rural continuum as well as between high and low-income countries can be addressed.

4. **Summary:**

   By 2050, more than two-thirds of the world population[1] will be living in cities – an increase of 2.5 billion people requiring transformation of today's cities and providing an opportunity, as many new cities are still to be built. Innovative solutions and technologies can play an important role in ensuring our Future Cities 2050 are more people-centred, inclusive, safe, resilient and environmentally friendly.

   As centres of economic development, and cultural and social exchange, cities have catalysed innovation - the creation of new ideas, approaches, knowledge and technologies. Their role has become even more important with the challenges of the global pandemic, the climate crisis and rapid urbanization.

   Cities are at the centre of the technological changes occasioned by the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) and are rapidly deploying technologies in the delivery of public services and addressing a wide range of urban challenges and making cities more livable, workable, and sustainable. This rapid technological change brings both opportunities and challenges. Particularly challenging is to ensure that it benefits all sections of the population, particularly

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[1] https://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/Download/ (Files 19,20,21)

the poor and vulnerable. It is equally important, that technology is not used to violate human rights, increase the digital divide and that data processing, new devices and e-waste do not harm the environment and people. Furthermore, the formulation and shape of smart cities, and how they and the associated growth in the use of data and digital technologies for urban development are governed, are becoming more important. UN-Habitat has been promoting a people-centred smart cities approach to make urban digital transformation work for the benefit of all.

Under the overall theme of transforming our cities for a better urban future, the dialogue will bring diverse stakeholders together to discuss the opportunities and challenges of our Future Cities 2050, especially considering innovative solutions and technologies.

5.   **Guiding Questions for Discussions:**

- Will our future cities be people- or technology centred? How do we ensure that no one is left behind?
- What can future cities do to maximize the socio-economic benefits of new technologies for the greatest good of its inhabitants while upholding their human and digital rights?
- What kind of urban futures do we envisage in technological terms? What kind of futures do we envision for resource-limited cities?
- How can cities leverage innovation and new technologies to achieve more productive, prosperous and resilient urban economies in different contexts?
- What role can disruptive technologies play in enhancing social inclusion, more equitable cities and quality of life? How can innovation and technology contribute to environmentally resilient urban development?
- How can cities mobilize new financing models to reach the unconnected; How can cities invest in affordable technology solutions?
- How can cities apply their civic technologies and encourage innovations to address their problems before pursuing private-sector technology products?
- How can cities better govern the growing digital ecosystem and the emerging smart cities?
- At the national, regional and international level, what guidelines or institutional arrangements should be in place to facilitate the governance of urban digital ecosystems and smart cities.

6.   **Expected Outcomes and Impact:**

- Plan of action (Communique): Future Cities 2050

7.   **Session Format:**

1. Opening remarks
2. Keynote by an inspirational speaker
3. Live Survey with Audience – Envisioning Future Cities 2050
4. Panel discussion on outcomes of the live survey "Envisioning Future Cities 2050" (Davos-style, i.e., every speaker giving a 3 min introduction, followed by a guided discussion)
5. Live Survey – "Role of technology and innovation in reaching our Future Cities 2050"
6. Panel discussion on outcomes of the live survey "Role of technology and innovation in reaching our Future Cities 2050" (Davos-style, i.e., every speaker giving a 3 min introduction, followed by a guided discussion)

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7. Closing remarks and presentation of Plan of Action ("Communique: Future Cities 2050")

The discussions during the dialogue will be captured in real-time and distilled into a "Communique: Future Cities 2050". The audience will be able to contribute directly to the drafting.