

## UPF Co-Sponsors 16th Global Forum on Human Settlements (GFHS 2021)

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Asia - The 16th Annual Session of the Global Forum on Human Settlements (GFHS 2021) was successfully held virtually, under the theme, "Accelerate Green Transformation and Innovation towards Healthy, Resilient and Carbon-neutral Cities," from October 27 to 29, 2021, in observance of World Cities Day.



Joining the event as co-organizers and collaborators were UPF and 24 other international organizations. During the meeting, in-depth discussions on 10 key issues were held, scientific solutions and outstanding sustainable development practices and innovations were recommended, and a consensus on a set of outcomes were reached. Taking place several days before the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), the forum made a positive contribution in support of COP26's goals.

More than 110 leaders, including heads of international organizations, senior government officials, mayors of major cities, renowned experts and scholars, and business executives, addressed the forum. Speakers included Mrs. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, executive secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); Amb. Anwarul K. Chowdhury, chairman of the GFHS and former UN under-secretary-general and high representative; Dr. Elena Manaenkova, deputy secretary-general of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), who represented the secretary general of the WMO; and Mr. Kazushige Endo, director of the United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD).

Among the co-organizers and collaborators of the event were UPF as well as the WMO, UNCRD, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Asian Development Bank, African Development Bank and other organizations.

Six hundred media outlets around the world covered the three-day forum, which reached over 100,000 people in 68 countries on six continents.



Amb. Anwarul K. Chowdhury, chairman of the Global Forum on Human Settlements and former UN under-secretary-general and high representative, gave the opening remarks. He stated: "This sixteenth forum is again another timely, relevant and appropriate initiative that is aimed at making the international community alert and proactive about the issues of urbanization in a holistic manner. Sustainable development is the fundamental, intergenerational responsibility of our societies' efforts which benefits all. Successful, well-governed cities greatly reduce climate-related risks for their populations and for our planet as a whole."

Dr. Elena Manaenkova, deputy secretary-general of the World Meteorological Organization, stressed that "Cities are the hotspots of global warming, facing...more frequent and intense [climate] events. Integrated urban services and multi-hazard warnings are required to save lives and minimize losses. The WMO Unified Data Policy Resolution should be followed for free and [there should be] unrestricted exchange of Earth system data for advanced high-resolution forecasting and urban-scale modeling."

Mrs. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, executive secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, recommended the creation of "a design model and construction code for truly green cities." It would "include transitional and transformative technologies towards nature...incorporating water, ecosystems and soil into the texture of cities' infrastructure and urban metabolism." Mrs. Mrema also highlighted the "need to scale up finance and investment for the green city model," including in construction and renovation as well as operations. "In other words, green and blue incentives, as well as an acceleration of the circular economy should be promoted," she said.

Global Forum on Human Settlements Secretary General Mr. Lu Haifeng gave the closing remarks. He pointed out that "As the main battlefield to claim carbon neutrality and sustainable development, future-oriented cities feature several trends, i.e., decoupling, de-carbonization, decentralization, digitalization, polarization and glocalization, where both opportunities and challenges exist. GFHS 2021's commitment to uniting global cities to tackle climate change towards sustainability [aligns] with the purpose of COP26, which makes synergetic effects."

**Among the many other speakers were:**

Kevin Kanina Kariuki, vice president for power, energy, climate and green growth, African Development Bank Group;

Awni Behnam, former UN Assistant Secretary General and president of the International Ocean Institute;

Marco Lambertini, director general, WWF International;

Frank Rijsberman, director general, Global Green Growth Institute;

Nuki Agya Utama, executive director, ASEAN Centre for Energy;

Robert Andrén, director general, Swedish Energy Agency;

Rodolfo Lacy, director of the Environment Directorate, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD);

Jean-Paul Adam, director, Technology, Climate Change and Natural Resource Management Division, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA);

Tareq Emtairah, director, Department of Energy, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO); and

Loretta Hieber Girardet, chief of risk knowledge, monitoring and capacity development, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR).

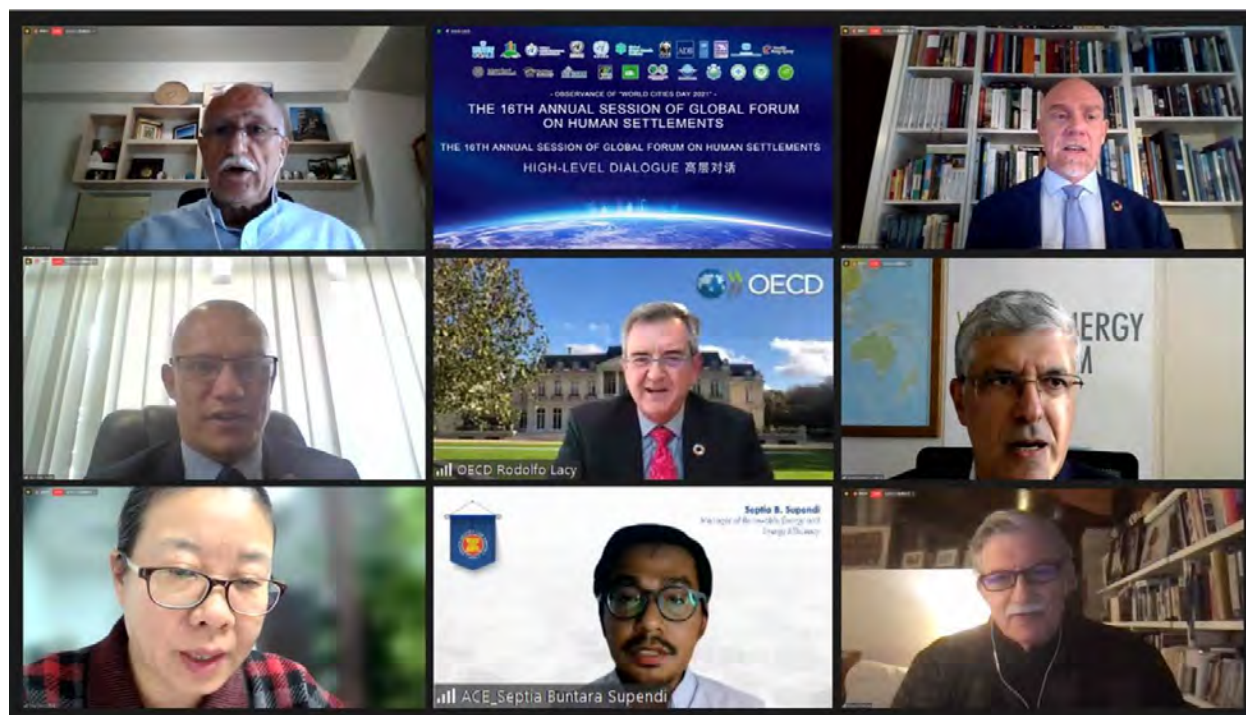


In addition, senior officials from various intergovernmental organizations and NGOs - including the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), World Economic Forum, C40 and ICLEI - contributed to the forum's discussions.

A green transition is sweeping the world. 2021 is the start of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. It also is a year of global action towards carbon neutrality. The first part of the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP 15) successfully concluded on October 15 in Kunming, China. Cities are where net zero emissions and sustainable development can be realized. Faced with the intertwined threats of extreme climate events, pollution, biodiversity loss and the pandemic, the world has a tougher challenge of meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this context, the forum called for prioritizing cities; accelerating the green transition and innovation; and improving urban safety, resilience, inclusiveness and sustainability. GFHS 2021 also urged greater efforts be made to address the climate crisis, particularly through mitigation and adaptation, and the acceleration of actions towards achieving carbon-neutral cities, and in turn, sustainable development and carbon neutrality.

Specifically, the participants called for (a) enhancing urban hydrology and integrated water resources management, and adapting to the severe challenges posed by extreme weather events, flood disasters and sea level rise; (b) strengthening disaster prevention and comprehensive response and building climate-

resilient cities; (c) formulating comprehensive and scientific urban planning policies, adopting eco- and climate-friendly design strategies to control urban sprawl; (d) learning from nature and building sustainable human settlements; (e) stepping up investment in urban green infrastructure, maintaining ecological balance and integrity, and promoting harmony between man and nature; (f) significantly reducing carbon emissions throughout the life cycle of buildings, improving the adaptability, durability, resilience and intelligence of buildings communities and infrastructure, and creating future-proof buildings and communities; (g) implementing nature-based solutions, promoting resource recycling, improving resource and energy efficiency and creating zero-waste cities and communities; and (h) formulating and implementing a scientific and orderly energy transition development plan, stabilizing energy supply and ensuring a just transition from fossil fuels to green energy. Finally, the urban governance capabilities of all stakeholders needs to be improved and a drive towards transforming urban planning, investment, construction and governance needs to be made to make cities and human settlements healthy, inclusive, resilient, carbon-neutral and sustainable.



The event concluded with the Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements Awards Ceremony 2021 (SCAHS2021) which recognized projects, organizations and individuals from around the world for their excellence in sustainable development practices and innovations.

The awardees included the world-famous historical and cultural city, Barcelona, Spain; the advanced city of ecological civilization, Jiande in Zhejiang province, China; carbon-neutral tourism destination Sani Resort in Greece; carbon-neutral company Signify in the Netherlands; and American architect and 2021 AIA Gold Medal winner Mr. Edward Mazria. The complete list of awardees can be viewed here: [www.gfhsforum.org/award](http://www.gfhsforum.org/award). As well, a group of cities and companies joined the International Green Model City (IGMC) initiative which aims to create zero-waste and zero-carbon cities.

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