



As of July 7th, 2023

Side Event at 2023 High Level Political Forum (HLPF)
Co-organized by: Ministry of Transport, Government of Malaysia, Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations, and UNCRD-DSDG/UN DESA

Supported by: UN HABITAT, World Bank (tbc), Toyota City, SEED

Time: 13 July 2023 / 18:30-20:00 p.m
Venue: Conference Room 11 / UN Headquarters Building, New York

1. Title:

Towards Safe, Smart, Resilient and Sustainable Cities under the 2030 Agenda – Integrated Pathways to Transformation through Local Actions, Partnerships, Technological Interventions, and Infrastructure Development

2. Background:

Safe, smart, resilient, and sustainable cities are central to achieving all 17 SDGs. If current trends continue, cities will host approximately 70% of the global population (~5 billion people) and produce approximately 85%¹ of global economic output by 2050. By 2023, the world is projected to have 43 megacities with more than 10 million people.

While cities occupy only 2% of Earth’s surface, their water footprint (area covered by the sources of their water) accounts for 41% of the Earth’s land surface; they generate 70% of the global GHG emissions (from fossil fuel burning) and 2 billion tons of solid waste (expected to increase by 70% by 2050 if current trend continues); and consume 70% of all resources. In a business usual scenario, the cities of the world will consume 90 billion tons per year of raw materials and minerals.² Around 90% of people living in cities breathe air that does not meet WHO standard on particulate matter (10 micrograms per cubic meter).³ The challenges faced by cities are vast and multifaceted. Further pandemics like COVID-19 and increasing frequency and magnitude of natural disasters have further compounded the challenges that the cities need to overcome.

Policy and investment decisions made today in a number of areas such as – water and sanitation, healthcare and education, public transport, waste management, energy, infrastructure development, digital connectivity, and land use planning and urban space management, etc. will be profound and long-lasting impact on the quality of life, livability and resilience of the cities. Smart cities where technology could be leveraged to improve urban life and help municipalities expand their services are growing all over the world. With a wealth of data and next generation transport systems and solutions, city authorities and decision makers can minimize traffic congestion, accidents, and CO2 emissions. Adopting circular economy and 3R, cities can move towards zero waste societies meeting the needs of consumers and business entities. By embracing nature-based solutions such as preserving and maintaining wetlands and parks and green spaces, cities can enhance their adaptability to climate change and resilience. By promoting public-private-partnerships along with various tax and other positive incentives, city authorities can meet the massive financing needs for infrastructure development.

The side event aims to address how urban planning and development should progress in a well-planned, integrated, and inclusive manner with city and municipal authorities working together in close collaboration and partnership with private and business sector, civil society organizations, scientific and research communities and national governments towards achieving the SDGs, in particular SDG 11, while ensuring “no one is left behind” in cities.

¹ UN Global Sustainable Development Report 2019

² International Resource Panel, UNEP 2018

³ Compiled from various UN sources, ECOSOC 2019, World Bank 2019,

3. Agenda/Programme (90 mins)

Moderator: Choudhury Rudra Charan Mohanty, Environment Programme Coordinators, UNCRD-DSDG/UN DESA

1. Opening Session: 10 mins

- Welcome remarks by Mr. Li Junhua, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations (tbc) (3 mins)
- Opening remarks by Mr. Koichiro Matsumoto, Director, Global Issues Cooperation Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (3 mins)
- Opening remarks by H.E. Mr. Loke Siew Fook, Minister, Ministry of Transport Government of Malaysia (3 mins)

2. Presentations: 60 mins

- Innovative approaches and solutions to safe, smart, resilient, low carbon and sustainable cities - Case of Toyota City - by Mr. Toshihiko Ota, Mayor of Toyota City, Japan (8 mins)
- Quality transport infrastructure development towards smart and resilient cities - by the Representative of World Bank (8 mins) (tbc)
- Transforming Cities into Smart City – Accelerating integrated actions towards achieving the SDGs (tbc) – by Prof. Norichika Kanie, Graduate School of Media Governance, Keio University, Japan (8 mins)
- Role of SMEs in leading the future of smart cities - by Dr. Arab Hoballah, Executive Director SEED, Former Team Leader, EU SWITCH-Asia, Former Chief of Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP), UNEP (8 mins)
- Balancing nature and urban development in a smart city ecosystem - by Dr. André Dzikus, Chief, Urban Basic Services Section, Global Solutions Division, Urban Practices Branch, UN-Habitat (8 mins)
- Local actions and partnerships for disaster risk reduction and water management (tbc) - by Mr. Takahiro Konami, Director, International Affairs Office, Water and Disaster Management Bureau, MLIT, Japan (8 mins)
- Next generation transport technologies for realizing smart cities – by Ms. Yumi Otsuka, Chief Sustainability Officer of Toyota Motor Corporation (8 mins)

3. Discussions, including interventions by Member States and other stakeholders (15 mins)

- What critical lessons does Toyota City offer in realizing safe, smart, resilient, low carbon and sustainable cities towards achieving SDG 11?
- What potential partnerships opportunities does the private sector offer in building next generation quality transport infrastructures in realizing smart and resilient cities?
- How can technologies play a role in balancing nature and urban development in a smart city ecosystem?
- Globally growing number of SMEs or firms are pursuing green strategies to benefit in many ways, e.g., cost savings, energy savings, better public image, better marketing of products, etc. What could be the policy, institutional, financial and partnership aspects of greening the SMEs towards sustainable industrialization, fostering innovation, pollution reduction and achieving smart cities?

4. Summary and Closing Remarks by Mr. Kazushige Endo, Director, UNCRD-DSDG/UN DESA (5 min)

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