



## ROYAL TOWN PLANNING INSTITUTE

### Global Challenges and International Agreements on Sustainable Development

#### 1.0 Introduction

This note briefly describes the current global challenges facing our built and natural environment and the international agreements and commitments countries have signed to try address these.

Global challenges all countries face (to varying degrees) include climate change, rapid urbanisation, water, air and noise pollution, inadequate housing and infrastructure, food security, humanitarian issues, and financing and governance issues.

Legally and non-legally binding international commitments and agreements are generally focussed on sustainable development and tackling climate change. Some of the main ones include: The Paris Climate Change Agreement, Agenda 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals, the New Urban Agenda, the City We Need 2.0 and the Agenda for Humanity.

***Planners alongside other built and natural environment professionals are critical in addressing these issues and implementing international commitments.***

#### 2.0 Global Challenges

Most countries face similar major challenges:

- Adverse impacts from climate change
- Rapid urbanisation and in some places de-population
- Adequate housing
- Traffic congestion
- Poverty and inequality
- Food security
- Water and energy shortages
- Water, air and noise pollution
- Loss of natural habitats and cultural heritage assets
- Pressure on existing infrastructure
- Traffic congestion
- Natural and man-made disasters
- Biggest humanitarian crises since World War II

Over-arching all this, for the first time in human history, more people live in cities compared to rural areas. This is where society's biggest challenges but greatest solutions can be found. It is anticipated that by 2050 cities will comprise up to 70 per

cent of the world population and be the main engine for sustainable growth in the future.

### 3.0 Global Commitments and Agreements

Many countries, including the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, are responding to these challenges by entering into international commitments, agreements and frameworks. All call for sustainable development and most require measures to address climate change impacts. Some of these are noted below:

Date	Agreement or Framework	Name of Event	Outcomes
March 2015	Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction	Third United Nations (UN) World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 -2030</li> </ul>
July 2015	Addis Ababa Action Agenda	Third International Conference on Financing for Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development Framework</li> </ul>
September 2015	Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (i.e. 2030 Agenda)	UN Summit on Sustainable Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agenda 2030</li> <li>Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)</li> </ul>
December 2015	Paris Climate Change Agreement	The 21 <sup>st</sup> session of the Conference of the Parties (COP21)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paris Agreement</li> </ul>
May 2016	World Humanitarian Summit	Agenda for Humanity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>World Humanitarian Summit Framework</li> <li>Agenda for Humanity</li> </ul>
October 2016	Habitat III on Housing and Sustainable Development	UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The New Urban Agenda</li> <li>The City We Need 2.0</li> </ul>

For further information see: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/frameworks>

#### 4.0 The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction

The Sendai Framework, agreed in Sendai, Japan in March 2015, is a 15-year, voluntary, non-binding agreement which supersedes the Hyogo Framework for Action. The Hyogo Framework covered the period 2005 to 2015 and the Sendai Framework now covers the period from 2015 to 2030. This new Framework recognises the State has the primary role to reduce disaster risk and responsibility should be shared with other stakeholders including local government, the private sector and other stakeholders. It aims for a substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health which includes people, the environment, businesses, communities and countries.

It includes global targets and priority areas which calls for an understanding of disaster risk, strengthening governance in order to manage disaster risk, investing in disaster risk reduction and resilience, enhancing preparedness and 'building back better' in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

For further information see: <http://www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/sendai-framework>

#### 5.0 Addis Ababa Action Agenda

The third United Nations Conference on Financing for Development was held between 13 – 16 July 2015 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Countries agreed measures to overhaul global finance practices and generate investments for tackling a range of economic, social and environmental challenges.

The outcome is the Addis Ababa Action Agenda – a global financing framework for development and which provides a foundation for implementing Agenda 2030 i.e. the global sustainable development agenda world leaders adopted along with the SDGs in September 2015. See: [http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/AAAA\\_Outcome.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/AAAA_Outcome.pdf)

The Addis Ababa agreement aims to foster universal, inclusive economic prosperity and improve people's well-being while protecting the environment. It is seen as a critical step forward in a global partnership for sustainable development and provides an international framework for financing sustainable development. This also provided a strong foundation for countries to finance and adopt Agenda 2030 (see section 6.0 below) and agree the COP 21 Paris Climate Change agreement (see section 7.0 below). For further information see: <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/ffd3/index.html>

#### 6.0 Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals

The Transforming our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development ('Agenda 2030') and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were agreed by members of the United Nations in New York, United States of America (USA) in September 2015. The outcome is a new global sustainable development agenda for national governments, the international community, and development and aid agencies over the next 15 years. For further information see:

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

It includes a Declaration and 17 global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), focussing on all countries regardless of development or income status and all

aspects of the earth i.e. people, land, water and air; all human settlements i.e. towns, cities, villages, hamlets; all land resources including urban and rural areas and coastlines; water resources i.e. rivers, oceans, glaciers and groundwater. The Agenda aims to end poverty and build sustainable economic growth including industrialisation and consumption in all countries. It also seeks to address a range of needs including education, health, social protection and job opportunities while addressing climate change and inequality, and protecting the environment, biodiversity and oceans.



The SDGs replace the former 10 Millennium Development Goals (adopted in 2000) which expired in 2015. The SDGs include 169 targets and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, environmental and social, and aim to reduce poverty, achieve gender equality, strengthen institutions and protect the environment.

See: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

For the first time, the impacts and opportunities of cities and towns have been recognised in the SDGs by countries and the United Nations. This has resulted in a global goal entirely dedicated to urban areas in the form of **SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities**. This SDG aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. It will include targets and indicators (currently under negotiation), such as eliminating slums, reducing urban sprawl and providing access to safe and sustainable urban transit. SDG 11 therefore marks the United Nations' acknowledgement of the critical role that cities will play in the world's future and is recognised further in the New Urban Agenda adopted at Habitat III (see section 9.0 below)

Agenda 2030 builds on the outcome of the Conference on Financing for Development agreed in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (see section 5.0 above). Agenda 2030 also influenced the Paris COP 21 Climate Change negotiations, and the New Urban Agenda and City We Need 2.0 documents at Habitat III (see sections 7.0 and 9.0 below).



## 7.0 The UN Framework on Climate Change (COP21 Paris Agreement)

In December 2015, the United Nations Framework on Climate Change negotiated a new legally binding international agreement on tackling greenhouse gas emissions. This took place at the 21<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP21 Paris Agreement) in Paris, France.

The COP 21 Paris Agreement is a more updated and legally binding agreement than the previous version i.e. the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. The Paris Agreement aims to keep the increase in global temperatures between 1.5 and 2 degrees Celsius. It aims to do this by reducing all greenhouse gas emissions including carbon, methane and nitrous oxide. It also advocates for low-carbon societies that can adapt to climate change.

The COP 21 Paris Agreement came into force in early November 2016 and the United Nations COP 22 meeting took place later that month in Marrakesh, Morocco. COP 21 is the overarching framework which sets out goals for climate change action and COP 22 is known as the 'implementation COP'.

It has been recognised that it will take time to implement with an aim for all details to be agreed by 2018. There were some notable outcomes during COP 22 including countries pledging to move forward on the Paris Agreement and affirmation for full implementation, support for Agenda 2030 and the new Sustainable Development Goals. However, extensive negotiations are still required and there is some doubt as to when all will be agreed, especially as major political changes have taken place in some countries which may see them withdrawing or scaling back their commitments (for example the USA). However, many cities are leading the way and implementing climate change adaptation and mitigation measures and implementing the Paris Climate Change Agreement (see <http://www.c40.org/>). Overall there is global commitment but there will be delays and uncertainty in implementation. For further information see: <http://unfccc.int/2860.php>

## 8.0 The Agenda for Humanity

The first World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) took place in Istanbul, Turkey in May 2016. This was in response to the sheer scale of globally displaced people. There are now more refugees and internally displaced persons than at any time since the end of World War II. It is recognised that 60 percent of all crises are faced in urban areas and urban solutions are rapidly required to help urban areas adapt and cope with rapid change.

The result of the WHS was the **Agenda for Humanity** and the launch of new partnerships and initiatives. The Agenda for Humanity calls on global leaders, civil society and international organisations to act on five core responsibilities:

1. political leadership to prevent conflicts,
2. upholding the norms that safeguard humanity,
3. leaving no one behind,
4. positively changing people's lives from delivering aid to ending need, and
5. investing in humanity.

All these relate to Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (see section 6.0 above. Further information: <https://www.worldhumanitariansummit.org/>

The Summit also saw the launch of new partnerships and initiatives to help implement the Agenda for Humanity. One of these is the **Global Alliance for Urban Crises** (i.e. the Global Alliance). The Global Alliance, chaired by UN Habitat and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), brings together humanitarian agencies, development agencies, urban professionals (e.g. planners, architects and engineers), and local authority networks in an innovative virtual partnership which aims for future humanitarian responses to be more appropriate, effective and sustainable. For further information see: <http://agendaforhumanity.org/initiatives/3851>

The RTPI is a founding member of the Global Alliance and provides professional planning expertise via the **UK Built Environment Advisory Group**. This virtual network co-founded in 2016 with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and IstructE (Institution of Structural Engineers) provides access to professional town planning, architecture and engineering services via our members. For further information see: <https://www.architecture.com/RIBA/Campaigns%20and%20issues/Ukbeag.aspx>

## 9.0 The New Urban Agenda and the City We Need 2.0

The United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (i.e. known as Habitat III) took place from 17 – 20 October 2016 in Quito, Ecuador. It was the biggest United Nations conference in 20 years and included all UN departments, nation members and civil society groups. See: <https://habitat3.org/>

The aim was to set a new global development agenda for sustainable, resilient urban development over the next 20 years. This includes cities, towns, villages – how they are planned, designed, managed, developed, financed and adapted in order to fulfil their role as drivers of sustainable development and help implement the SDGs and the Paris Climate Change Agreement. The outcome is contained in the New Urban Agenda (NUA) and is an extension to the 2030 Agenda. It is not legally binding but provides a framework for future managed of sustainable cities. See: <https://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda>

Civil society worldwide also played a key role and inputted views into another document called the City We Need 2.0. This too featured at Habitat III and acts as a reference document for governments and stakeholders. It highlights the need for partnerships between governments, civil society organisations, local authorities, the private sector, research community, trade unions, parliamentarians, professional organisations, youth and women groups to work together for a more sustainable urban future. The process was managed by the World Urban Campaign (part of UN-Habitat) who, in the lead up to Habitat III, organised a number of Urban Thinkers Campus events in cities around the world. The final document, adopted in Prague, Czech Republic in March 2016, featured at Habitat III. It includes 10 principles, drivers for change and urban solutions and specifically calls on professionals and good planning to help implement. See: <http://www.worldurbancampaign.org/city-we-need>. In 2017 WUC agreed to engage with stakeholders and over 70 UTCs are



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mediation of space · making of place

scheduled in cities around the world. See:

<http://www.worldurbancampaign.org/urban-thinkers-campus>

## 10.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

The **COP 21 Paris Climate Change Agreement, Agenda 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals, the New Urban Agenda, the City We Need 2.0 and the Agenda for Humanity, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Addis Ababa Development Financing Action Plan** will help guide the sustainable urban development efforts in cities. This includes all those living, working, designing, planning, funding and governing cities. These actors include national government leaders, city and regional leaders, international development funders, United Nations programmes, built and natural environment professionals, which include urban planners and civil society groups for the next 20 years.

Implementation will require appropriate institutions and systems of governance, national and local urban policies, urban rules and regulations, urban planning and design, municipal finance, and the provision of basic services and infrastructure.

## 11.0 RTPI Input and Contributions

The Royal Town Planning Institute has been actively involved in many of these agreements and engagement continues in 2017. Contributions have included being a member and attending World Urban Campaign activities including an Urban Thinkers Campus events and the Europe Regional Meeting, inputting to the City We Need document and providing urban solutions. We also attended and presented at Habitat III in Quito and inputted to the New Urban Agenda. The RTPI also helped co-found the Global Alliance for Urban Crises which will assist humanitarian agencies and in turn communities facing disasters via the UK Built Environment Advisory Group which was launched with RIBA and IstructE at Habitat III.

With our international planning and other built environment partners and memberships we continue to promote the role that good planning and skilled planners can play in helping to deliver on these global commitments and implement sustainable development.

See:

- <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/the-rtpi-near-you/rtpi-international/habitat-iii-and-cop21/>
- <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/briefing-room/news-releases/2016/october/habitat-iii-rtpi-puts-planning-on-world-stage/>
- <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/briefing-room/news-releases/2016/may/rtpi-joins-new-global-alliance-to-rethink-disaster-response-in-cities/>
- <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/briefing-room/news-releases/2017/april/rtpi-calls-on-government-to-implement-international-sustainable-development-obligations/>

## 12.0 Recommended Publications

Further information on how planners can help implement these global commitments can be found at:



## **United Nations International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning (United Nations Publication)**

a global framework for national governments, local authorities, civil society organisations and planning professionals. The guidelines which promote more compact, socially inclusive, better integrated and connected cities and territories that foster sustainable urban development and are resilient to climate change. See: <http://bit.ly/1IMotA3>

## **Delivering Better Development: The role of the urban planner (joint Royal Town Planning Institute and Global Planners Network publication)**

aimed at non-planners, including communities, politicians, leaders and those interested in studying planning. It explains the roles, skills and sectors where planners work worldwide. See: <http://bit.ly/1N8GXir> .

## **Worldwide Value of Planning (Royal Town Planning Institute Publication)**

celebrates the good that planning does worldwide and sets out why good planning is vital for safe, sustainable and successful places. See: <http://bit.ly/1IG7214>

## **The Built Environment Professionals in Disaster Risk Reduction and Response (joint RTPI, RIBA, ICE, IFRC publication)**

demonstrates the value of using built environment professionals more widely in disaster risk reduction and response and giving early attention to engaging the right expertise to address the problems of building, infrastructure and land. See: <http://bit.ly/2gyEJdA> .

## **Climate Change (COP21) Agreement, The New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals**

RTPI information source on international climate change and sustainable urbanisation commitments including the UN international commitments signed by most countries: New Urban Agenda, Sustainable Development Goals; and climate change. Also includes how planners can help implement these. <http://bit.ly/2frX4wT>

## **Commonwealth Association of Planners Fiji Declaration**

Calls on all Commonwealth Governments at national, sub national and local levels to take action to deliver the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG11 to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. CAP members, including the RTPI and other planning institutes, have committed to calling on governments to deliver and will promote planning skills to implement these. <http://bit.ly/2sDnqS6>

## **European Council of Spatial Planners (ECTP\_CEU) Publications**

**Charter of European Planning (2013)** promotes a more pro-active role for planners in shaping public debate to deal with current and future European issues e.g. economics, climate change, regional planning and ecosystems. <http://bit.ly/2rk3Vdn>

## **European Charter on Participatory Democracy in Spatial Planning**

**Processes (2015)** states all political decisions have direct/indirect impact on spatial planning, spatial planning is relevant in insuring access to essential services and exercising rights, and individuals and communities need to be involved. <http://bit.ly/2rzhQvx>