



Commonwealth Association of Planners

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS : WORLD URBAN FORUM 4 : NANJING : NOVEMBER 2008

Dialogue on Territorial balance in urban development

4 November 2008

Honourable Ministers, Mayors, Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

If there is one message which the events of the last two years have highlighted following the World Urban Forum 3 in Vancouver in 2006 it is this: it is not "business as usual" for planners and people in planning.

The last decades of the 20th Century arguably saw planning in decline, to the point of sometimes being regarded as irrelevant or an impediment to development. There were indeed grounds for criticism. Too often technocratic masterplans and attempts at micro-managing land use failed the poor, yet still lacked the powers or political will to protect vital assets of land and environmental resources. Planners had become increasingly uncertain of their contribution, and too often had become mired in systems of planning which were never designed to cope with the demands being placed on them, or were too narrowly focussed on micro-managing land use with the resulting contestation, uncertainties and lack of coherence.

WUF 3 was a watershed, because there governments and civil society organisations agreed that planning is a key tool for the strategic coordination of sustainable urbanisation. The official UN-Habitat report on WUF 3 listed planning as one of four headline issues, and recorded that: "The Forum stressed the important role of planners as agents of change and underlined the importance of sustainability as the backbone of new forms of planning".

But importantly WUF 3 was also the occasion at which planners and those responsible for planning began to seriously engage in debate about the fundamental role of planning in addressing the urgent challenges of the 21st Century. A new groundswell of energy emerged

with the common purpose of Reinventing planning fit for purpose in the 21st Century. The paper *Reinventing Planning* presented an agenda based on 10 key principles which were presented at WUF 3. Some of these remain fundamental to today's Dialogue. These include:

Sustainability which requires reconciling and integrating social, economic and environmental considerations in human settlement development.

Integrated Planning which is a fundamental part of governance and which requires strategic, thinking which is not done in silos or boxes, about policies that support each other and which ensure effective linkages to private and public budgetary processes.

Planning with Partners which requires planning to be participatory, inclusive and to involve all sectors of the community not least the youth, women, the poor, and ethnic minorities.

Subsidiarity which requires that decisions are taken at the most appropriate level of preferably decentralised government.

Appropriate Planning Tools which should be strategic, affordable, relevant to their context and compatible with indigenous traditions and practices.

The response of planners and people responsible for planning since WUF 3 has been remarkable. There is compelling evidence that planners around the world have responded to the call to reinvent planning. A series of events bears testimony to this. One of the first has been the signing of the Vancouver Declaration by a growing number of national planning bodies, committing themselves to promoting the principles of the reformed planning agenda and to addressing the most critical issues of the day, namely rapid urbanisation, the urbanisation of poverty and climate change. By signing this declaration, these representative groups have become part of a new movement, the Global Planners Network which is a network of networks established with the aim of promoting the principles of the *Reinventing Planning* paper and the Vancouver Declaration. We will hear more of this later in this Dialogue.

Responses from grass-roots planners have been heard in a series of events around the world over the past two years, including the Pacific Islands, Australia, the Caribbean, Canada, the Great Lakes area of East Africa and Cameroon. I only have time to give you a flavour of just one of these. Planners from around the world gathered in Johannesburg in April at the Planning Africa conference to explore the "Lessons, challenges and responses from Reinventing Planning post - Vancouver". The messages were clear and consistent:

- Governments need to grasp how spatial planning which is strategic, integrated and participatory can help.

- Governance issues, including insufficient funding, lack of political will and political instability are affecting the delivery of planning .
- There is a skills shortage in ALL regions of the world and in all areas of planning and planning decision making.
- We need cross boundary thinking if we are to effectively deal with the big issues such as climate change, deepening poverty, increasing slums and the food and energy crisis.
- Globalisation and its impact on new migrations, densities, heritage and changing sense of place cannot be ignored.
- Last but not least, we need to reinvent planning education and to support the “Barefoot Planners” who are working hard to serve communities in rural areas and small island states, with few opportunities to access new knowledge and skills.

But there were also some very positive messages. There is a clear determination to make planning work and recognition that this means doing things differently . We have heard how women planners in Malaysia are preparing practical guidance on planning residential areas from a woman’s perspective. Our colleagues in east Africa reported how governments in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania have recognised the strategic role which planning can play. We heard about innovative new legislation and planning systems being established. We heard from the planners of Malawi about the recognition now given to the importance of informal trading for the livelihoods of the urban poor. We have heard about increasing gender and diversity awareness. The list goes on, but the message is clear that planning is indeed being re-invented, and largely from grassroots. But let me not mislead you - the work is far from complete.

There is also a new spirit of global solidarity. The Institute of Town Planners, Sri Lanka and the Planning Institute of Australia have worked together on re-planning after the 2004 Tsunami. The Royal Town Planning Institute of Great Britain and the Commonwealth Association of Planners have undertaken a global diagnostic assessment of capacity in planning , the largest ever study of the global planning community. Their message is clear: the potential of planning is not being properly exploited, and we need to build capacity. The findings will be reported on further in the CAP networking event later today.

Significantly there have also been a number of high level sessions at which ministers and senior officials have engaged in discussion about how to re-invent planning. UN-Habitat’s GC 21 in April last year agreed the Draft Medium Term Strategic and Institutional Plan for 2008 – 2013 which had as one of the five strategic focus areas “Urban Planning, management and governance”. The Plenary Dialogue session at GC 21 agreed the need for properly funded, sustainable planning systems and frameworks relevant to the 21st Century; acknowledged the

need to link planning to investment; agreed that the capacitation of planning and of local authority administration is crucial; accepted that planning must be socially inclusive and agreed that economic, social and environmental sustainability must be paramount. We have seen similar sentiments expressed at the Inter - Ministerial Commonwealth Consultative Group on Human Settlements and also by civil society in the Commonwealth People's Forum Kampala Civil Society Statement to CHOGM in Uganda last year.

The messages have been consistent. We cannot talk about sustainable development without talking about sustainable urbanisation, and we cannot talk about sustainable urbanisation without talking about planning. But concerns remain, particularly about political leadership, governance, capacity, social inclusion, and funding.

The lessons and responses are clear. The spatial dimension of planning remains the core and quintessential element of planning as we know it, but that is no longer enough. Planning fit for purpose in the 21st Century needs to be strategic, integrated and participatory, otherwise we have no hope of dealing with the challenges we face. Steering a path to harmony and balance requires planning, but planning that ensures that the wealth created by urbanisation is shared fairly. Without it there is no hope of the people for whom and with whom we need to plan accepting, defending or adhering to the outcomes of our efforts.

The challenges we face are overwhelming and we know that we are inextricably bound together in resolving them. None of us is immune from the impacts of cities which are set to double in size in the next 10–15 years, from the 150m climate change refugees which are being spoken of, or the 1billion people living in slums, with consequences for health, security and stability in our world. As one speaker in Johannesburg said “If the developed world thinks it is isolated from poverty issues, it is wrong on every count Climate change and failed cities will trigger international migration that will become unstoppable”.

Planners themselves are more confident. There is a new sense of urgency. The planners of the Commonwealth particularly have clearly responded to calls at WUF 3 to reinvent planning, and this has taken us across new thresholds. But Reinventing planning is not only a task; it is also a state of mind.

Therefore, I call on this Dialogue to reaffirm the commitment of the WUF of 2006 to the importance of planners acting as agents of change; to welcome the signs that planning is being reinvented, but also to recognise the call which has been repeated throughout the world that with political support and greater capacity planning could deliver much more.