



Stakeholders, Habitat III and the New Urban Agenda: *The General Assembly of Partners Profiled

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Good Morning Madam co-chairs, Secretary General of the Conference, Members of the Bureau, Representatives of Member States, and stakeholders from far and wide.

Thank you for arranging this Intersessional Meeting of Stakeholders for an exchange of views on the zero draft of the New Urban Agenda. We are pledged to work with you to lay out an effective path to sustainable urbanization in the next decades.

First and foremost, let me express our appreciation for the comprehensiveness of draft zero of the New Urban Agenda. We praise its fundamental ideas – the principles of leaving no one behind, promoting sustainable and inclusive prosperity and opportunities for all, and fostering ecological and resilient cities and regions. We agree with the three drivers of change – organizing the rights and responsibilities of spheres of government, promoting urban spatial planning and management and crafting financing and other tools fit for purpose. Second, we are here to reflect on the document based on our respective experiences as stakeholders possessing a range of knowledge and expertise on sustainable urbanization drawn from decades of working in this specialized area. But before we discuss that, let me give you some background on the General Assembly of Partners (GAP), thanking at the same time the Secretary General and the Bureau for their foresight, courage and conviction for providing the enabling environment for its growth and development.

In the past three years, the General Assembly has passed several resolutions “reiterating the importance of the wide participation of all relevant stakeholders in the promotion of sustainable urbanization” and has called “for the effective contributions from and active participation of all relevant stakeholders ... at all stages of the preparatory process for Habitat III (67/216, 70/61).” In an effort to go beyond addressing this mandate in a traditional fashion,

* Adapted from comments made at German Habitat Forum June 2, 2016, a response to “How does GAP contribute to the success of the Habitat III process?”

the Habitat III Secretary General has encouraged the creation of an innovative stakeholder engagement platform, the General Assembly of Partners, recognized by the General Assembly in December 2015. In GA resolution 70/61, the General Assembly's expressed appreciation of the Secretary General's encouragement of the General Assembly of Partners as "supporting *and improving* (italics added) stakeholder engagement in and contributions to the preparatory process for Habitat III and the conference itself" (para 10). Finally, the *New Urban Agenda*, zero draft, recognized the General Assembly of Partners (para 15) and cited it as a likely party to be included in the Follow Up and Review processes, especially those related to offering evidence based and practical guidance "for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the urban dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals, in close collaboration with Member States" (para 171).

With all of these acknowledgements, you are probably wonder what is this thing called the General Assembly of Partners and how and what is it contributing to the Habitat III efforts. Let me explain. In this explanation, you will see that the group is new, organized, energetic and full of ideas and has demonstrated them. So let's go...

The General Assembly of Partners is New: It is only 14 months old

The General Assembly of Partners or GAP is a special initiative of the World Urban Campaign, inaugurated at PrepCom II in Nairobi in April 2015 and recognized last December by the General Assembly's resolution on the modalities for Habitat III. GAP's *raison d etre* is to support stakeholder engagement in the Habitat III Conference, in particular to the New Urban Agenda. Overall, GAP is a tangible example of a mechanism that supports multi-stakeholder partnerships and offers an organizational model of what would be possible to develop more fully in the Post Habitat III environment.

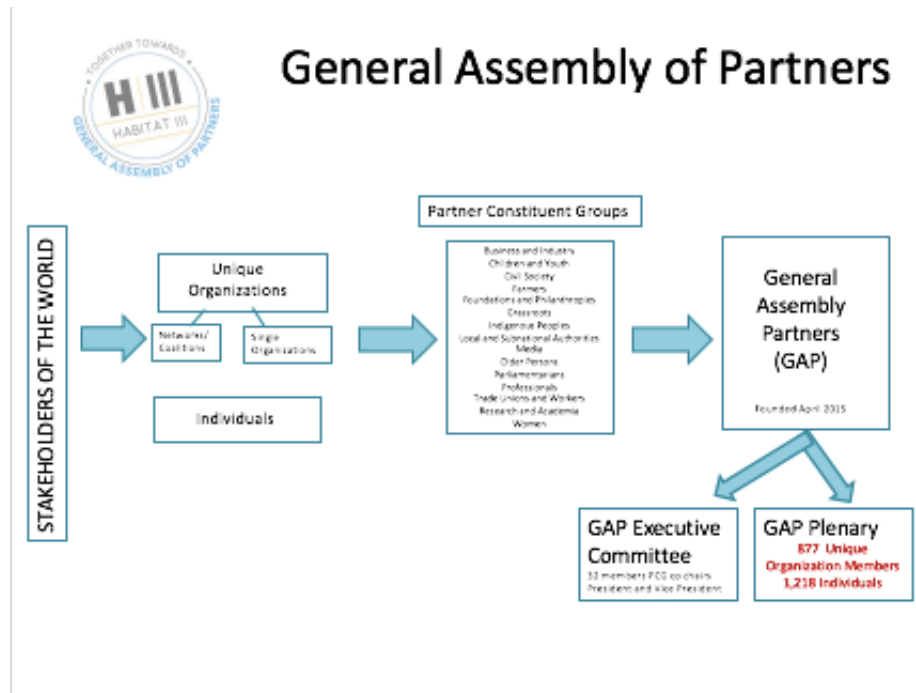
In its short life, GAP has organized, developed a voice and displayed its collective intelligence and talents. It is united, focused, ethical and collaborative. In sum, GAP's contributions to the Habitat III process are organization, energy and ideas – all characteristics desired of a strong stakeholder engagement platform prepared to provide positive and constructive input to the preparations and execution of Habitat III and its aftermath.

GAP is organized: It Has an Active Decentralized Governance with Leaders from Around the World

- GAP has assembled civil society and other stakeholders into 15 Partner Constituent Groups. The PCGs encompass the Agenda 21 nine major groups, the Habitat Agenda Partners and others with an interest in housing and sustainable urban development. Each PCG has co-chairs elected by that PCG. The co-chairs who constitute the GAP Executive Committee are drawn from all the UN regions – from the Asia Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, and Western Europe and others – who set policy and guide the organization. GAP has taken responsibility for building consensus, amplifying community voices, and working together towards convergence and prioritization of

common values. At the same time, GAP has recognized and respected that different partners have different roles related to their respective missions.

Figure 1 General Assembly of Partners Organization

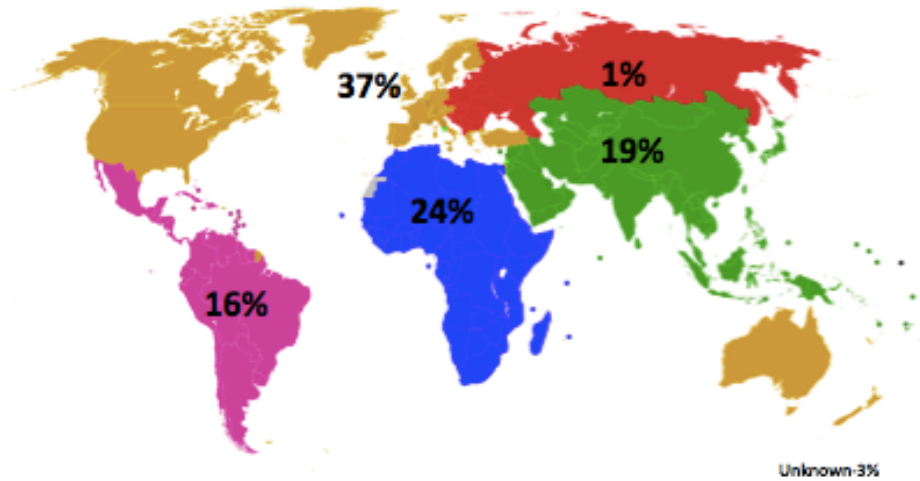


GAP is energetic: There are lots of “Gapsters”

- To date, 880 unique organizations from 118 countries. Some 1,218 representatives either from these organizations or as individuals are GAP members. Their distribution in the UN regions based on their headquarters reveals: a little more than one third (37%) are from the Western European and Other Group; nearly a quarter (24%) are from the Africa Group; almost a fifth (19%) are from the Asia Pacific Group and 16% are from the Latin American and Caribbean Group. Quite underrepresented is the Eastern Europe Group, we will work on that. Notably, many members headquartered in the Western European and Other Group region have extensive operations in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Figure 2 GAP has a global reach

Distribution of GAP Organizations by UN Region

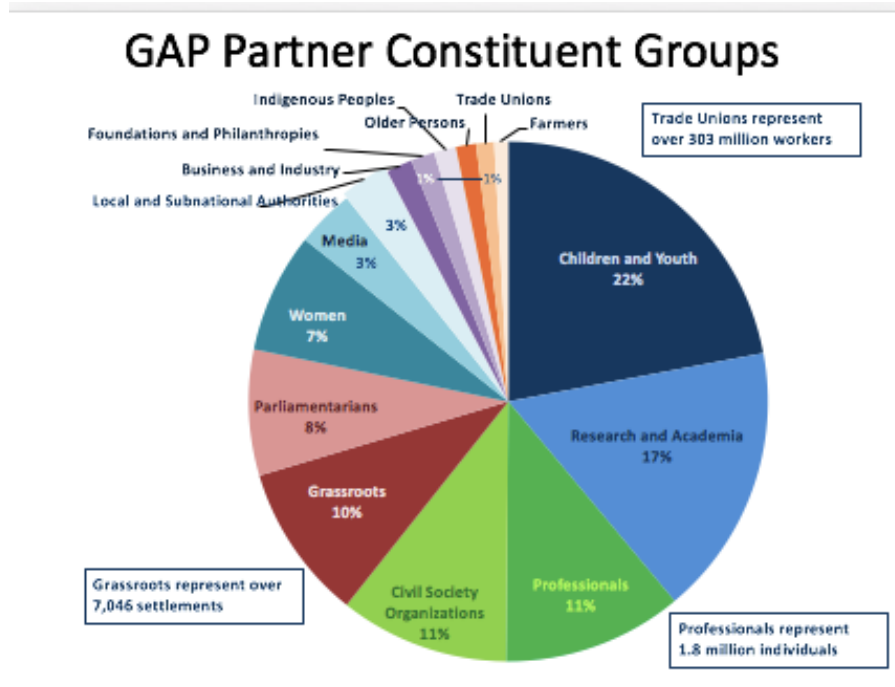


Total 880 unique organizations (1,218 representatives) and individual members)

Source: GAP Membership Database as of May 1, 2016

Further as can be seen on Figure 2, the distribution among the Partnership Constituent Groups varies – but a word of caution in interpreting these graphics. While the pie chart on the left shows Children and Youth and Research and Academia constituting nearly 40% of the unique organizations – and numerically this is true. However, going inside the organization numbers, you will see that for many groups, including Local and Subnational Authorities, Trade Unions, Grassroots, Professionals and others, the organizations are coalitions of networks. So Local and Subnational Authorities that show up as 3% of the unique organizations actually represent some 250,000 entities with a reach to billions of citizens. Similarly, Trade Unions and Workers, at 1%, actually represent some 125 million members in 160 countries; and Professionals, 11% of the organizations, have nearly 2 million in their roster. Another nuance in interpretation underlines a particular issue that we are facing in the New Urban Agenda – that of accurate data collection. The Grassroots Organizations who represent 10% of the GAP organizations reflect their membership in terms of settlements – that is actual slum communities in which they are organized. They report 7,065 settlements in their networks, and as you know, they are actively involved in counting the populations in these areas.

Figure 3 GAP Partner Constituent Groups



GAP gets things done

- GAP General Assembly met three times, GAP Executive Committee met four times
 - **April 15:** GAP General Assembly and GAP Executive Committee have founding meetings: ratified Constitution, elected most co-chairs through PCG caucuses; Executive Committee elected its president and vice president and issued and delivered to the Bureau and Secretariat the **Nairobi Declaration** with commitments to:
 - Develop common positions to help constitute the New Urban Agenda with a focus on key principles and thematic areas;
 - Propose a set of prioritized actionable recommendations, supported by evidence and proven urban solutions, which will help international, national, sub-national and local stakeholders to implement and monitor the New Urban Agenda;
 - Advocate for and publicize outcomes and collective positions that emerge during the GAP process to the Habitat III Conference and associated programs and processes, via all available channels; and,
 - Suggest strategies for the implementation and monitoring of the New Urban Agenda after Habitat III
 - **October,** GAP General Assembly and GAP Executive Committee New York meeting, approved co-chairs’ handbook, terms of reference for the executive committee, draft outline for GAP contributions to NUA and issued and delivered to the Bureau and Secretariat the **New York Declaration** with commitments to:
 - Work with the Global Task Force
 - Develop a legacy document for Habitat III, which:
 - *features multi-stakeholder partnerships and illustrates the potential for expanding and enriching such partnerships;
 - *provides a framework for developing future issue-based coalitions;

*serves as an inspiration and offers prototypical elements of a renewed and updated governance architecture that is fit-for- purpose for an urbanizing civilization.

- **February** GAP Executive Committee meet in Berlin to develop first draft of outcome report, *Partnerships for the New Urban Agenda* and articulated a statement on its rights and responsibilities:
 - sharing our collective knowledge, expertise and experience among ourselves, with our constituencies and with the general public
 - working across disciplines and across jurisdictions and breaking down strictly compartmentalized approaches that create significant barriers to sustainable urban development
 - amplifying community voices, and working together towards convergence and prioritization of common values
 - considering the voices of all our members, speaking with one voice on areas of agreement and to working together to make tangible commitments supportive of the New Urban Agenda
 - committing to open GAP deliberations to all interested stakeholders in the spirit of sharing ownership and building trust

- **March** GAP General Assembly and GAP Executive meetings Prague; continued to work on *Partnerships* and delegated its completion to a drafting committee, elected a new PCG, Older Persons, and participated broadly in the Regional Conference.

Figure 4 GAP Activities



GAP is full of talent and ideas and has demonstrated them

- **GAP contributes knowledge and expertise**
 - Substantive and Advisory Work
 - Organized side events at Prague and other conferences: Three multi-stakeholder panels (Balanced territorial development, national urban policies and knowledge platform) Individual PCGs performed the same function at several other Regional and Thematic Conferences
 - Sat on Advisory Committees on all the Regional and Thematic Conferences
 - Assembled the June Intersessionals: Stakeholder hearings.
 - Creating an interactive website, Global Urban Commons, mapping the membership and linking to their websites

- ***In Partnerships for the New Urban Agenda, GAP has originated four core ideas for the Post Habitat III architecture.***
 - Knowledge (science of cities; understanding and evaluating what urban dynamics),
 - Advocacy (identify, channel and advocate shared priorities),
 - Experimentation (pilot innovative approaches),
 - Monitoring (qualitative aspects of SDGs and other indicators that may arise)
 - Financial support advice (committee to review infrastructure investments by development banks to assure alignment with the New Urban Agenda. .

Being organized, energetic and full of ideas, GAP is working with member states to impress on them the urgency of the situation: The speed and trajectory of rapid urbanization in Asia and Africa is so astonishing that one can visualize it in this way: those places will need to build the equivalent of a city of a million every week for then next forty years. At the same time, in highly urbanized places, many cities and regions have not addressed the precarious conditions and or have been supporting entirely unsustainable ways of life.

In either case, decisions made in the next ten years will set the pattern for future development – **hence the GAP's call for the member states to declare a Decade of Sustainable Urbanization.** This decade would provide a broad umbrella under which to develop the wide variety of commitments, programs, and partnerships that can help assure that cities are inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. This would be the decade to show that the world's cities and human settlements can be well-planned; that they can house all of their citizens well as well as provide access and mobility to transportation and public space, protect cultural and environmental heritage, to be free from disasters, while minimizing, their environmental impact, and are part of balanced territories or regions that maximize urban rural synergies and allow their residents to live healthy, productive lives.

Second, GAP has another idea for immediate consideration by the Bureau: Craft a bold, simply stated, more inspiring and **aspirational** vision statement in the New Urban Agenda.

GAP respectfully suggests that the authors of the NUA develop a vision statement that better reflects the nobility of the mission, wins the hearts and minds of the member states and the general populace and imagines what the successful implementation of the New Urban Agenda will yield – the rest of the document can discuss how to achieve the vision through commitments, implementation and follow up and review.

In conclusion, as you have seen, although only little more than a year old, GAP has emerged as organized, energetic and full of talent and ideas. In the next sessions, you will hear from my colleagues, Shipra Narang Suri, GAP Vice President and the 15 GAP co-chairs about their aspirations for the New Urban Agenda. We hope you will recognize the strength of their contributions to sustainable urbanization present and future as you finalize the New Urban Agenda. Thank you.