CONCEPT NOTE

VOLUNTARY METROPOLITAN REVIEWS

Raymond Saner, CSEND,
Geneva

1.   The 2030 Agenda is now at mid-point. Seven years are left to reach the 17 goals and 169 targets. Since 2015, member countries of the United Nations meet regularly in New York in July during the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) to present their Voluntary National Reviews which narrate their countries' progress in achieving the SDGs. (https://hlpf.un.org/). The objective of the annual HLPF meetings is to compare the results of the SDG transformations at national level.

2.   A growing number of cities have come together as well to compare their implementation of the SDGs at the urban level (city) and learn from each other's experiences which they describe in their Voluntary Local Review (VLR). For more information see: https://sdgs.un.org/topics/voluntary-local-reviews. These cities meet at different locations and also during the annual HLPF global event in New York.

3.   Today, some 56% of the world's population – 4.4 billion inhabitants – live in cities. This trend is expected to continue, with the urban population more than doubling its current size by 2050, at which point nearly 7 of 10 people will live in cities.
(https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/overview) and by 2030, 43 cities around the globe will have 10 million or more inhabitants according to UNDESA estimations.
(https://www.un.org/development/desa/publications/graphic/world-urbanization-prospects-2018-more-megacities-in-the-future).

4.   The larger the cities grow into metropolitan or mega-city size urban centres, the more challenges and opportunities emerge for growth and development and sustainable development becomes an absolute necessity to avoid chaotic development with ensuing conflicts of multiple kind. Yet unplanned growth coupled with inherent system vulnerability, especially in mega cities of the developing countries, may significantly increase the risk of these territories with high concentration of populations and existing gaps of system resilience.

Metropolitan areas need to manage the many interdependencies such as natural resources, security, safe housing, transport etc. and at the same time these metropolitan areas need to collaborate and negotiate with different territorial units that are part of the larger agglomeration but who have their own political mandate and institutions (administration, local police, primary schools, waste management etc.).

5.   Large cities are often agglomerations of different separate cities and towns which became integrated into a larger size urban as the larger city grows larger over time. However, these separate areas often retain some form of autonomous political entity making it very challenging

for the larger metropolitan agglomeration to coordinate sustainable growth of its infrastructure, personal mobility, safeguarding food security, managing waste and social development such as education, health, security and housing rules and regulations

6.   According to the OECD, metropolitan areas are defined as a population between 500 000 and 1.5 million people. The UNECE region has several such metropolitan areas which are often agglomerations of different separate cities and towns which became integrated into a larger size urban areas.

These separate territorial areas often retain some form of autonomy making it very challenging for the larger metropolitan agglomeration to coordinate sustainable growth of its infrastructure, personal mobility, safeguarding food security, managing waste and social development such as education, health, security and housing rules and regulations.

7.   There is an urgent need to address the specific challenges of SDG implementation of such large size metropolitan areas and to complement the VNR and VLR with a VMR (Voluntary Metropolitan Review. It is also needed to uncover the distinct system characteristics of hybrid administrative systems with permeable boundaries due to the shared arrangement of territorial agglomerations.

8.   How to ensure implementation of the SDGs at the level of a metropolitan area with their many cross-boundary realities has not been discussed nor analyzed so far.

9.   The implementation of SDG 11 at a metropolitan scale of urban development goes beyond the traditional VLR reporting and requires instead a VMR (Voluntary Metropolitan Review).

10.   In closing, CSEND is calling for a concerted effort to study and report on means of improving SDG implementation by metropolitan urban areas.

Some background information on CSEND

The Centre for Socio-Eco-Nomic Development (CSEND) was established in 1993 and is accredited by ECOSOC in special consultative status. CSEND is based in Geneva and has representatives in New York and Vienna. The Involvement with the 2030 Agenda consists of the following:

Member of Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Global Sustainable Development, 2013; Member of EGM on agenda-setting for the HLPF of Post 2015 Development Agenda, 2014; Moderator, Second HLPF meeting under auspices of ECOSOC, 2015;

Author of chapter on science-policy interface, member of EGM on the GSDR 2015
Drafter of Chapter 6 on countries with special focus on LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs, member of EGM for the Global Sustainable Development Report 2015;

Speaker and Discussant of People First PPPs for UNECE 2016,
Key note speaker at UN conference on financing of SDGs, Jamaica, 2017,
Consultant to UNOSD, Incheon South Korea, co-designing and providing input for 60 Policy Makers in situ, Executive Training for Policymakers on the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), External Training for Policy Makers on SDG; http://www.csend.org/publications/agenda-2030 HLPF Financing for SDGs, 2022
  SD Transformation forum, UNOSD, 2023 Stakeholder Forum, SDG transition, 2023 UNECE PPP Barcelona, 2022

Publications

Saner, R; Yiu, L; Kingombe, Ch; (2019); "The 2030 Agenda compared with six related international agreements: valuable resources for SDG implementation", Sustainability Science, pp 1685-1716, https://www.diplomacydialogue.org/images/files/20190209-11625_2019_655_OnlinePDF.pdf

Saner, R; Yiu, L, Nguyen, M, (2019), "Monitoring the SDGs: digital and social technologies to ensure citizen participation, inclusiveness and transparency", Development Policy Review, doi: 10.1111/dpr.12433, 25 pages, https://www.csend.org/images/articles/files/20190309-Saner_et_al-2019-Development_Policy_Review.pdf

Saner, R., Saner-Yiu, L., Golub, N. & Sidibe, D. (2017). "Implementing the SDGs by Subnational Governments: Urgent Need to Strengthen Administrative Capacities". Public Administration and Policy, 20(2): 23-40, Fall. https://www.csend.org/images/articles/files/20180324-Raymond_Saner_et_al.pdf

Saner,R, Frilet, M; Barth-Coullaré, JC; Baxter,D.; Hayek, Z.A.; Penyalver, D.; Turró. M; (2021) "Making PPPs fit the 2030 Agenda", CSEND, Geneva.
https://www.csend.org/publications/agenda-2030/518-making-ppps-fit-the-2030-agenda