Foundation pour un Centre pour le Developpement Socio-Eco-Nomique
(Centre for Socio-Eco-Nomic Development, CSEND), Geneva
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Statement Proposed by CSEND for the Session on Smart Cities organized by UNECE Innovative Policies Development Section, Economic Cooperation and Trade Division: 5-6 December 2019, Geneva

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Purpose of the UNECE Session on Smart Cities as written in UNECE Programme Announcement:

"Smart and sustainable cities: the role of governance and innovation policy". Policy makers and representatives of cities, business, civil society and academia will share experiences from the ECE region on how to promote innovation in an urban context, how innovation can help solve sustainability challenges in cities, how to run cities in innovative ways so that technology benefits everyone and citizens can participate actively, and on what policy makers at all levels can do to facilitate the transition to smart sustainable cities.

Measuring sustainability of cities

The role of governance and innovation policy can help cities and countries achieve the goal of creating smart cities and sustainable human development. In view of challenges that countries and citizens face when attempting to create sustainable smart cities, it is of paramount importance to take into consideration how the 2030 agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals can help support the creation of sustainable smart cities.

[1] Prof. Raymond Saner, Director, DiplomacyDialogue, CSEND Geneva; Prof Lichia Yiu, President, CSEND, Geneva, Ms Ankita Ajith, Research Assistant, CSEND, Geneva

One of the ways to help countries and cities achieve sustainable development is the ability to measure whether sustainability has been achieved and if not, what can be undertaken to re-align policy and implementation with the 2030 agenda.

Voluntary Local Reviews

CSEND's statement relies on information from the voluntary local reviews presented at the 2019 High Level Political Forum. In total there were 22 VLRs presented: 2 from North America, 6 from Asia and the Pacific, 8 from Europe, 6 from GRULAC. The cities in the UNECE region are New York City, Helsinki, Los Angeles, Bristol, and Mannheim.

The statement focuses on these 5 cities as they are in the region being discussed at the conference. Each of these cities produced extensive voluntary local reviews that detailed the SDGs they chose to focus on, the ways in which they met SDG indicators, evidence of progress in the goal areas and explanations of future plans.

This table illustrates the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the specific goals mentioned and reported on by UNECE cities. New York referenced SDG targets in their report and cited increased budgets and expansion of programs as evidence of their progress. Helsinki did not use SDG targets in their report, but they did reference the SDG goals. Los Angeles utilized SDG targets and illustrated progress through descriptions of programs and policies. Bristol also referenced SDG targets in their report and relied on qualitative evidence to demonstrate the progress made. Mannheim created 7 strategic goals and grouped SDGs within those goals, thus evidence of progress in specific goal areas was more difficult to prove.

Table 1: Mapping of the reported policy priorities regarding the Seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the cities and regions in the ECE region who submitted and presented their Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) to the High Level Political Forum in July 2019

Cities	SDG #1	SDG #2	SDG #3	SDG #4	SDG #5	SDG #6	SDG #7	SDG #8	SDG #9	SDG #10	SDG #11	SDG #12	SDG #13	SDG #14	SDG #15	SDG #16	SDG #17
NYC, NY						X	X				X	X			X		
Helsinki, Finland				X				X		X			X			X	
Los Angeles, California	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Bristol, UK	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mannheim, Germany	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

A total number of five cities from the ECE countries presented their VLRs in New York during the July High Level Political Forum in July. A quick scan of the landscape, only three out of the five VLR cities reported to work on the whole portfolio of the 17 SDGs. They are: Los Angeles, Bristol and Mannheim. While New York city and Helsinki only reported on selected five SDG goal areas, representing approximately 30% of the policy portfolio, and left out the more complex and composite goals, such as poverty reduction, elimination of hunger and achieving health and wellbeing.

The SDGs that were focused on the most in VLRs were SDG 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15 and 16. These SDGs have a common theme of improving the standard of life in for citizens whether it be through increased clean energy sources, economic growth, better education or government transparency.

Since the seventeen SDGs are indivisible, one wonders the logic applied by the city planners and policy makers in New York City and Helsinki.

Sustainable Development Goal #11

Sustainable Development Goal #11 is defined as:

"Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable."

When measuring the gaps regarding transition to sustainable development, it is pivatal to focus on SDG #11 in order to specifically assess development made on the sub-national level. This bottom up assessment complements the top down national policy direction and reveal the opportunities and challenges in the daily practices of running a subnational territory.

Table 2: Listing of the specific targets contained in SDG #11

SDG #11	Targets
11.1	By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums
11.2	By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons
11.3	By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries
11.4	Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage
11.5	By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations
11.6	By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management
11.7	By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities
11.A	Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning
11.B	By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels
11.C	Support least developed countries, including through financial and technical assistance, in building sustainable and resilient buildings utilizing local materials

Annexes 1 to 3 provide the findings through the use of text analysis on the VLRs examined. Of the five VLRs reviewed, only three reports are compatible with the 2030 Agenda in the indicators used and targets specified. Both Helsinki and Mannheim developed their own measurements and used different statistic data rendering direct comparison challenging. An overview of the landscape of SDG 11 within the five VLRs is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Focused Targets of SDG 11 in the 5 VLRs

SDG #11	NYC	Helsinki N/A	Bristol	LA	Mannheim
11.1	X		X	X	X
11.2	X		X	X	X
11.3	X				
11.4	X			X	
11.5	X			X	
11.6	X		X		
11.7	X			X	
11.A					
11.B					
11.C					

Acknowledging the context specificities of goals and targets, lack of alignment reduces the possibility of benchmarking and mutual learning and produces unnecessary barrier for easy dialogue. This phenomenon of lacking coherence in measurements and indicators also manifested between two cities (NYC and LA) of the same macro context, the USA.

To prepare VLRs at the city level requires major effort and substantial resources, by not adhering to the core set of targets and indicators reduced potential impact of cross-city and cross-country dialogue and mutual learning. Some disciplined approach to the preparation of VLRs will be needed.

Major Findings of Five VLRs references to SDG 11 and Targets by cities
Sustainable Development goals are applicable at the national level as well as at the sub-national level. As stated in the Saner, Saner-Yiu. Gollub and Sidibe (2017) paper[2], SDGs at the sub-national level are important to consider to ensure the successful implementation of both development goals and the 2030 agenda. SDG 11, in particular, requires attention from cities that will be feeling the brunt of impact from climate change and a strain on resources to reduce risk and to achieve resilience.

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

In New York City, the focus was on the lack of affordable housing and transportation problems (SDG 11.1 and 11.2). While its plan details expansion of affordable housing and increased funding for the housing and bus transportation departments, it fails to address the issue of crumbling subway system. Cities like New York must invest more energy and money into creating a reliable, affordable and clean form of transportation.

Helsinki's voluntary local review did not include a section that could be linked directly to SDG #11 Helsinki's VLR focused on SDG4 4: Quality Education, SDG 8: Economic Growth, SDG 10: Reduced Inequality and SDG 13: Climate Action.

Bristol focused their efforts on improving housing services for homeless people (SDG 11.1) and providing access to community transport that reduces use of private vehicles (SDG 11.2). Bristol has also taken solid steps towards creating a more inclusive environment for vulnerable citizens and would continue increasing access to public services (SDG 11.1).

Mannheim alluded to SDG #11 but provided no clear evidence or data of their progress in this goal area. Mannheim's VLR presented 7 strategic goals (SGs) and grouped SDGs within these goals. Mannheim referenced SDG 11 when discussing stable rent prices, satisfaction with public facilities, and decreased in car ownership.

Los Angeles discussed their effort to stabilize rent (SDG 11.1) and prevent evictions as well as their plan to better manage transportation data (SDG 11.2). Rent stabilization and legal support for those facing eviction is a significant development in a city with high rates of gentrification.

The cities that use SDG indicators are generally clearer in their goals and sub-targets and have an easier time proving their progress in an area. It is difficult to compare progress made by cities if some cities choose to create their own targets.

Motion:

It is therefore proposed to promote consistency in the language and measures used in monitoring and reporting progress made in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the cities, especially in better alignment of the city SDGs with the SDG 11.

Such alignment should be expressed through the VLR reports presented at the future HLPF in New York in order to leverage the opportunity for benchmarking, mutual learning and needed innovations.

Annexes

Annex 1: Reported achievements of SDG 11 targets by the New York City

SDG 11	NYC
11.1	Financed over 87,500 affordable apartments and homes, Created over 4,000 affordable units through a program that makes affordable housing mandatory (MIH program), Released record number of RFPs for affordable housing development with a Universal Pre-Kindergarten operated by DOE and public library operated by the New York Public Library, Committed additional $1.9 billion to house most vulnerable New Yorkers, Enacted legislation to protect tenants from harassment, Created or preserved 7,285 apartments for homeless New Yorkers, Dedicated nearly $59 million annually for homelessness prevention, Helped over 77,000 people exit or avoid entering shelter with rental assistance, Increased funding for tenant legal assistance to $77 million in FY 2018—a 120 percent increase since FY 2013
11.2	Launched NYC Ferry, carrying nearly 3 million riders in its first year, Expanded bus service to improve transit options for more New Yorkers, Grew City's bike network to support safe cycling, FreightNYC- a comprehensive, multimodal freight management strategy to modernize the City's logistics and distribution network, Reduced traffic fatalities to record lows, Made streets and intersections safer for pedestrians and cyclists, Improved transit accessibility, Prioritized enforcement of dangerous driving violations
11.3	Awarded over $8.5 million over three years to fund commercial district improvement projects, Offered free design and media services to support neighborhood development, Allocated more than $700 million to support projects in growing neighborhoods, Civil society participation in urban planning and management
11.4	Supported communities in creating their own cultural visions, Integrated artists into City Government to promote creative problem solving, Public Artists in Residence (PAIR), Landmarks Preservation
11.5	An Emergency Preparedness Plan for every New Yorker, Launched Cool Neighborhoods NYC—a $106 million initiative to keep New Yorkers safe during extreme heat, Encouraged flood-resilient retrofits to mitigate flood risk, Investing over $37 million to strengthen the resiliency of small businesses, Lobbied to improve the accuracy of critical flooding data and insurance rate maps
11.6	New York City, home to the world's largest sanitation department, has committed to sending zero waste to landfills by 2030, eliminating the need to send waste to out-of-state landfills, and minimizing the overall environmental impact of the city's trash.
11.7	Commission on Gender Equity, Administration for Children's Services, Department for the Aging, Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities,

Annex 2: Reported achievements of SDG 11 targets by the City of Bristol

SDG 11	Bristol
11.1	One25 is a charity that works with vulnerable women who are homeless and living on the streets. They are working alongside Goldenkey to deliver improved services for these homeless women who are often hidden from formal counts. CHAS Bristol works to tackle homelessness and improve living conditions for the most vulnerable people in Bristol, through a combination of advice, practical, hands-on support, and advocacy. 1625 Independent People, work to provide affordable housing for young people faced with homelessness. Bristol Homeless Connect, launched in 2018, is a website providing a single online access point for information and help on rough sleeping in Bristol.

11.2	The Bristol Bath Cycle, a Sustrans project, has over 2.5 million annual users. Lawrence Weston Community Transport provide access to affordable community transport that improves access to the city and reduces private vehicles.
11.6	The Bristol Clean Air Alliance are working to persuade the local authority to adopt the fairest, most ambitious and sustainable option for tackling air pollution.

Annex 3: Reported achievements of SDG 11 targets by the City of Los Angeles

SDG 11	Los Angeles
11.1	Los Angeles' Rent Stabilization Ordinance protects renters from extreme rent increases and arbitrary evictions, helping to maintain housing accessibility. The L.A. City Council is also working on a "right to counsel" fund that would provide legal support to tenants fighting eviction.
11.2	LA Department of Transportation's (LADOT) plan establishes a platform for transportation innovation rooted in managing data. The strategy proposes a series of policy priorities: to build a solid data foundation, leverage technology and design for a better transportation experience, create partnerships for more shared services, establish feedback loops for services and infrastructure, and prepare for an automated future. Together, these policy goals will ensure that transportation technologies evolve and expand in a way that makes them accessible to all Angelenos. L.A.'s Green New Deal also sets ambitious goals for expanding electric vehicle infrastructure. The plan will increase the percentage of zero emission vehicles in the city to 25% by 2025, 80% by 2035, and to 100% by 2050. The plan will also electrify 100% of Metro and LADOT buses by 2030.
11.4	Los Angeles now has one of the largest programs of designated historic districts in the nation, with 35 Historic Preservation Overlay Zones (HPOZs) encompassing over 21,000 structures, ranging from the Vinegar Hill neighborhood near the Harbor in San Pedro to the Balboa Highlands neighborhood at the northern edge of Granada Hills. HPOZs help prevent demolitions of significant historic resources and provide for design review before properties can be altered.
11.5	This plan outlines a comprehensive strategy to engage Angelenos in making the City more resilient to threats such as earthquakes and climate change. 96 detailed actions (See Appendix for a detailed mapping of these actions to the SDG targets) will build the long-term financial security of families and small businesses, engage neighborhood networks in adaptation to climate change, modernize and streamline disaster preparedness, and establish partnerships to uphold the principles of climate resilience.
11.7	The City's Summer Night Lights program creates safe, inclusive spaces in 32 city parks and recreation centers through extended evening hours and expanding programming. Residents of all ages are provided free food, sports leagues, arts programming, and health and wellness resources.