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Concepts, definitions and data sources for the study of urbanization: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

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Since 1990, the world has seen an increased gathering of its population in urban areas. This trend is not new, but relentless and has been marked by a remarkable increase in the absolute numbers of urban dwellers.[1] This urban transformation has positioned cities at the core of the development agenda. It is undeniable that urbanization is indeed one of the most significant trends of the past and present century, providing the foundation and momentum for global change.

Cities have become a positive and potent force for addressing sustainable economic growth, development and prosperity. They drive innovation, consumption and investment in both developed and developing countries.[2] Cities can certainly take the lead to address many of the global challenges of the 21st century, including poverty, inequality, unemployment, environmental

There are multiple definitions of what const   The
estimations of the proportion urban in countries are confronted to various and multiple definitions of what
constitutes an 'urban settlement'. National Statistics Offices employ definitions with very different
criteria that are not compatible and make difficult to aggregate values in a consistent manner. Such

other conceptual definitions is an obvious source of recurrent controversy, and tends to produce inaccurate information on the city population.

The Urban Agglomeration concept refers to "the population contained within the contours of a contiguous territory inhabited

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the same overtime. They will not represent the cities of the country in a statistical form. The lack of an appropriate method of aggregation of city data would it make difficult, if not impossible, to generate national values in a systematic manner. This, in turn, will make problematic to produce national reports, and it will also compromise the production of regional and global aggregates of locally produced urban data.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission on Population and Development is invited to consider the following recommendations for its fifty-first session to be held in New York for further transmission to relevant bodies:

1. ***Adopt as a statistical concept the 'urban extent' for the delimitation and measurement of cities and urban agglomerations.*** The adoption of this concept will enable national governments and development partners to standardize the definition and the unit of measurement of what constitutes an urban area. This standard definition will prevent inconsistencies arising from the use of different urban definitions, when collecting and analysing information at city and sub-city levels.

   UN-Habitat and partners have been working in this definition, using satellite imagery and field work, creating a Global Sample of 200 Cities[13] used in the monitoring of some of the urban SDGs.[14] As unit of analysis, cities transcend municipal boundaries and group many municipalities into single agglomerations. The "Urban Extent" resolves the methodological problem of the city boundaries. It is based in the morphology of the city, its 'hard edge', urban built-up, sub-urban built-up and open spaces. The study areas of the 'Urban Extent' are based on the enumeration areas fixed by the National Statistical Office.[15] This concept provides more refined information of the added area when analyzing city growth in two or more periods in time, creating conditions to better understand urban dynamics.

2. ***Create a National Sample of Cities, enabling National Governments to monitor and report on Goal 11 indicators and to produce national aggregates in a consistent and systematic manner.*** This national sample can serve to harmonize urban data and indicators using a set number of cities agreed upon, that are statistically representative of the country's urban human settlements.

   Governments recognize that it is not possible, and perhaps not necessary, to study each and every city in the country to monitor national trends on SDGs urban indicators. A carefully constructed sample that takes into account sub-regional and city specific characteristics and variances, can be used to monitor the dominant pattern in the country's cities in an aggregated manner.
   The national sample of cities will be drawn using sound statistical and scientific methodologies based on the Global Sample of Cities approach.[16] The criteria for the selection of this sample considers the

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[13] The Global Sample of Cities (2017) was developed by UN-Habitat, New York University and L.47 31(s)2304C600460044>2004F600

number of cities in the country, the population and the size of the city, geographic location, functionality, economic and political importance and other factors decided by the national government. Still, national Governments will be able to add cities as they may require, ensuring that national reports are based on the same number of cities and conditions. The added cities can provide qualitative information, specific city analysis and possible best practice studies.

The adoption of a National Sample of Cities brings the following advantages: i) integrates cities of all sizes, functions and types as part of a national system of cities that can help to amalgamate the disjoined energies and potential of urban centres; ii) assists in the aggregation of locally produced city indicators for national monitoring and reporting, and for the production of regional and global reports and analysis; c) provides a platform for collecting different layers of data with a unified methodology that can be used to report on national progress on the SDGs or other elements of the urban agenda; d) allows the calculation of an un-weighted national average as well as weighted national averages on the overall urban SDGs indicators; e) creates baseline data and