SPECIAL SESSION
INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS AND SLUM UPGRADEING

Key words
2030 Agenda; Citywide and Incremental Transformation; Community Empowerment; Inclusion; Informal Economy; New Urban Agenda; Participation; Resilience And Climate Change; Scale; Sustainable Development Goals; Sustainable Livelihoods

Objectives of the session
The Special Session will demonstrate the potential of investing in informal settlements and slum upgrading. It will aim at 1) repositioning informal settlement and slum upgrading; 2) highlight the importance of an integrated citywide approach putting people at the centre of policies, strategies and projects, and 3) present an implementation framework engaging diverse actors in the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the New Urban Agenda “Leaving No One Behind”.

The session will facilitate exchange of knowledge, practices and approaches from different actors and regions. It will aim to disseminate and enrich UN-Habitat’s approaches on slum upgrading globally, and kick-start a dialogue for building a global network that will address slum upgrading by solidifying political commitment, leveraging and allocating larger financial resources for inclusive urbanization.

Introduction of the topic
One billion people worldwide live in slums. The numbers of slum dwellers continue to grow. Today, one in eight of us lives in slums and informal settlements globally. In Asia, this is one in four of us compared to more than the majority of our urban population in Africa.

Governments have made significant efforts to break exclusion and improve living conditions - represented by a decrease from 39 per cent to 30 per cent of urban population living in slums in developing countries between 2000 and 2014. However, the scale remains enormous, resources scarce. The capacity of the urban poor to afford large scale transformations and bridge the investment costs are also limited. Therefore, governments need long-term vision strategic and people-centred interventions. Incremental, citywide and inclusive transformation is the opportunity to fully leverage the benefits of sustainable urbanization and prosperity for all. Basic services, infrastructure, housing, secure tenure, public space and mobility as well as building resilience to crisis and climate change are essential elements for a sustainable transformation of neighbourhoods.
There are many innovations worldwide providing solutions to systematic blockages and challenges in inclusive and sustainable urban transformation by different actors. Diverse partnerships, contributions and investments as well as locally adapted solutions at community, local, national, regional and global levels need to be strengthened and more efficiently connected.

The Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme initiated by the Secretariat of the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, financed by the European Commission and implemented by UN-Habitat mobilized more than 160 cities to invest in strategic slum upgrading for inclusive and sustainable urbanization. The session will amongst others build on the experiences and lessons learnt through the Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme.

**Guiding questions**

Q1: What successful practices and policies exist which have changed lives of slum dwellers?

Q2: How was incremental integration and transformation of informal settlements through participatory and strategic planning achieved? What approaches ensure community participation and contribution in slum upgrading?

Q3: What options exist for financing slum upgrading programmes? What governance mechanisms and institutions have been arranged to ensure sustainable financing and upgrading? How can slum upgrading programmes be designed to contribute to job creation, sustainable livelihoods and small businesses?

Q4: What are the opportunities with slum upgrading for building resilient communities and adapting to climate change thus contributing environmental sustainability?

Q5: What roles have been played by different actors, particularly roles of local and central (state or federal) governments, civil society organizations and community representatives?

Q6: What is the vision for informal settlement and slum upgrading in the next 15 years?