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[Home](#) > Quality urbanization can stir inclusive and sustainable growth in Africa, says Ms. Yemeru

## Quality urbanization can stir inclusive and sustainable growth in Africa, says Ms. Yemeru

Cape Town, South Africa, December 4, 2017 (ECA) – It is critical for African countries to strategically integrate and link urbanization to their national development priorities, plans and visions if urbanization is to contribute to structural transformation and economic development, says Ms. Edlam Yemeru, Chief of the Economic Commission for Africa's Urbanization Section.

Speaking at a two-day Regional Meeting on the Harmonized Regional Framework for the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda in Africa in Cape Town, Ms. Yemeru said urbanization needs to be seen as a core driver of productivity and economic growth, and located at the core of national visioning and planning.

"The strategic integration of urbanization into national development planning, linked as a vehicle for the achievement of growth and transformation targets, including through accelerated industrialization, is crucial for realizing the visions of the New Urban Agenda in Africa," she said.

Africa, said Ms. Yemeru, is grappling with the challenge of achieving inclusive economic growth raising the need for quality urbanization that can be harnessed to achieve inclusive and sustainable growth.

"Only when it well planned and managed can urbanization contribute to greater economic dynamism, job creation, and poverty reduction," she told participants brought together by the ECA, UN Habitat and the African Union Commission to discuss and validate the Harmonized Regional Framework in support of the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda in Africa.

Ms. Yemeru said the overarching priority for Africa today, as encapsulated in Agenda 2063, is structural transformation through economic diversification and value addition, underpinned by commodity-based industrialization.

"It is therefore important that the proposed implementation framework we are reviewing at this meeting will realistically enable African countries to focus on specific policy and implementation priorities over the next five, ten, fifteen and twenty years, linked to national development priorities and targets," added Ms. Yemeru.

### Policy

UN-Habitat's Regional Office for Africa Director, Naison D. Mutizwa-Mangiza, said African countries cannot achieve a structural transformation of their economies without significant improvements in how cities and towns are planned and managed and without fully recognizing the contribution of urbanization to sustainable national development.

“If translated into effective policies implemented in an integrated way, building a robust urban governance structure, as well as deploying supportive rules and regulations, sound urban planning and design assisted by viable financial strategies, the New Urban Agenda can ensure that cities function as transformational drivers of sustainable development,” he said.

He said the New Urban Agenda, which is grounded on bold transformative commitments articulated across the three pillars of sustainability, provides a framework for the achievement of sustainable urbanization and for maximizing its contribution to sustainable development.

Habofanoe Lehana, Lesotho’s Minister of Local Government, said Africa, more than any other region needs to look at the New Urban Agenda more closely as it is urbanizing faster than any other region and therefore bearing the biggest challenge associated with unplanned and unmanaged urbanization.

For his part, Khabele Matlosa, Director for Political Affairs at the AUC said the implementation plan should be firmly anchored upon the concept and vision of the Agenda 2063 ‘The Africa We Want’, while taking into account the overall philosophy of the 2030 global Agenda on sustainable development.

“There is need for an action-oriented roadmap to monitor, review and report on milestones achieved in respect of the New Urban Agenda,” he said, adding effective implementation of the plan requires sustainable and meaningful partnerships at international, continental, regional, national, sub-national and community levels working in unison towards a common vision.

Ms. Zoe Kota-Fredericks, South Africa’s Deputy Minister in the Department of Human Settlements said the New Urban Agenda aligned well with South Africa’s development objectives as articulated in the country’s National Development Plan.

Officials, policy makers, and experts from various African countries attended the meeting to discuss and validate the proposed Harmonized Regional Framework for the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda in Africa.

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