



United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

Published on *United Nations Economic Commission for Africa* (<http://www.uneca.org>)

[Home](#) > With integrated planning, Africa can benefit from urbanisation

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Lusaka, Zambia/ECA 11, Nov, 2016 - Urbanization can support industrialization, sustained economic growth, enhanced productivity and social environment if well managed.

Speaking at the launch of a project to promote inclusive and sustainable cities, Director, ECA Sub Regional Office for Southern Africa, Said Adejumbi, noted that urbanization presented immense opportunities for Africa with systematic planning. "If well handled, urbanization can support industrialization, sustained economic growth, enhanced productivity and a congenial human and social environment" he argued. Similarly, Adejumbi, argued that if poorly managed, "urbanization can perpetuate economic inequality, crime, violence, human rights abuses and other vices."

The project which was launched in Lusaka, Zambia under the theme 'designing and implementing strategies for the building inclusive and sustainable cities' was jointly organised by the Government of Zambia and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, on 27 October 2016.

Adejumbi, emphasized the importance of the project, which is based on the premise that urbanization must be fused into the national development planning process if it is to be harnessed for growth and transformation and its challenges responded to effectively. Policy responses to the urbanization process, he underscored, should be comprehensive, multi-sectoral, innovative, inclusive and eco-sensitive.

For his part, Minister of National Development Planning, Lucky Mulusa, pointed out that Zambia, like many other countries, was experiencing rapid urbanization, and that this phenomena will continue to pose more challenges in terms of unplanned settlements, strained service delivery and infrastructure gaps among others.

Mulusa, reiterated the call for integrated planning and reaffirmed Zambia's commitment in mainstreaming urbanisation into the national development planning framework and link it to the overall targets of growth, economic diversification among many.

The project will be piloted in five countries, including Zambia, in partnership with the United Nations Programme for Human Settlements (UN-Habitat) and financed through the Development Account of the United Nations.

Existing data suggests that Africa has the highest rate of urbanization in the World currently estimated at about 4.8 percent.

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