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CSTD 2021-2022 priority theme on "Science, technology and innovation for sustainable urban development in a post-COVID world"

Statement submitted by

United Kingdom

UK contribution to CSTD Intersessional Panel

Science, Technology and Innovation for sustainable urban development in the post Covid 19 world

- Thank you, chair, and thank you to the panelists for sharing such valuable insights on this important topic.

- On behalf of the UK, I would also like to express appreciation to the Secretariat for preparing such an insightful and informative draft issues paper. We are very pleased to have the opportunity to discuss and learn from the many transformative developments and projects that the paper covers.

- The UK believes that this discussion comes at a highly crucial time, given the unprecedented pressures that the pandemic has placed on urban areas.

- As noted in the issues paper, estimates show that 90% of Covid cases worldwide are recorded in urban settings. Under these circumstances, cities around the world have had to deal with diverse challenges, be it increased socioeconomic inequalities, extreme pressures on urban public health systems, or changes to education, work and travel patterns due to social distancing restrictions.

- Yet, at the same time, as the issues paper illustrates, responses to the pandemic have resulted in positive impacts for the environment such as lowered greenhouse gas emissions and reduced congestion.

- Furthermore, these extreme circumstances have in fact fuelled innovation. Through science, technology and innovation, cities have developed new ways to address issues, from urban violence to water scarcity and vulnerable healthcare systems. We were fascinated to read about examples of work covered in the paper, such as harnessing AI and robotics to transform waste management systems, using gamification to engage citizens in urban planning, and tackling water contamination via satellite technology.

- We were also interested to read about the important role data plays in many of these interventions. To that end, we'd like to mention the potential for novel data sharing solutions such as data intermediaries and privacy enhancing technologies to help support the data sharing described in the paper, whilst providing reassurance that the data will be used safely and appropriately.

- To conclude, the paper rightly notes that the experience of the pandemic has provided us with crucial urban sustainability lessons that we can take into the future. And, given that two-thirds of the world's population are expected to live in urban areas by 2050, the question of how to make urban areas more sustainable will only become increasingly urgent.

- We therefore welcome the opportunity this discussion provides to take stock of lessons learned and share ideas and experiences for how we can drive progress in the future. Thank you Chair.