INTERSESSIONAL PANEL OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD)

Geneva, Switzerland
17-19 November 2021

Contribution by FAO

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

PRIORITY THEME 2: STI for sustainable urban development in a post-COVID world

United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD)

To Whom it May Concern,

The 24th CSTD annual session selected "STI for sustainable urban development in a post-COVID world" as one of the priority themes for its 25th session (2021-22 period). This theme addresses SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities.

Urbanization is a complex megatrend touching on various issues including economic transformation, environmental sustainability, inclusion and poverty eradication, and resilience to natural disasters, climate change, and public health emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic. Cities also play a central role in shaping innovation and technological diffusion. In addition, peri-urban areas present increasing challenges in terms of poverty, sustainability, mobility, and economic performance. The 19th CSTD explored innovation and urban development in 2016. Since then, accelerating technological change and its deep impact on issues such as urban planning and management, critical systems' resilience, and citizen and community involvement make it advisable for the CSTD to update its findings and to examine and share emerging good practices and consider the latest trends in science, technology and innovation that can contribute to greener, more resilient, and more inclusive cities, particularly in light of the knowledge gained in developing innovative responses to the challenge of COVID-19.

The CSTD secretariat is in the process of drafting an issues paper on the theme to be presented at the CSTD inter-sessional panel meeting on 17-19 November 2021. In this context, we would like to solicit inputs from international organizations, UN entities and agencies, and regional commissions on this theme. We would be grateful if you could kindly answer the following questions based on your organization's work at the global, regional, and/or national levels.

1. Can you give examples of projects/policies in your organization helping countries undertake transition towards urban sustainability so that cities are productive, inclusive, and liveable? What are the main challenges confronted while trying to implement these projects/policies?

Green Cities Initiative (GCI)
- The FAO Green Cities Initiative focuses on improving the urban environment, strengthening urban-rural linkages and the resilience of urban systems, services and populations to external shocks. Ensuring access to a healthy environment and healthy diets from sustainable agri-food systems, increasing availability of green spaces through urban and peri-urban forestry, it will also contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation and sustainable resource management. A "Green Cities Network" will allow cities of all sizes - from megapolis to medium to small - to share experiences, best practices, successes and lessons learned, as well as build city-to-city cooperation opportunities.

Urban Food Agenda:

- At least 55% of the world's population already live in urban areas and 80% of all food produced globally is destined for consumption in urban spaces. Therefore, a greater focus on the Urban Food Agenda is long overdue. FAO 2030 vision for the Urban Food Agenda is an integral part of the organizations vision of resilient integrated, sustainable and inclusive food systems, which ensure that all people in all places are free from hunger and all forms of malnutrition.

- The Urban Food Agenda is corporate framework to enhance sustainable development, food security and nutrition in urban and peri-urban areas, and nearby rural spaces. It consists of a vast range of policies, programmes and initiatives and implemented in partnership with different stakeholders: civil society, academia, UN & International organizations, City Networks and relevant public and private bodies and entities.(http://www.fao.org/urban-food-agenda/en/)

Urban Food Actions Platform:

- The platform provides access to a comprehensive database of resources related to urban policies and programmes, to achieve sustainable urban food systems. It covers a wide range of aspects: Governance and planning, sustainable diets and nutrition, social and economic equity, food production and ecosystem management, food supply and distribution, food loss and waste (http://www.fao.org/urban-food-actions/en/)

2. In your organization's view, how has the Covid-19 pandemic so far impacted on sustainable urban development, and what lessons could we draw from the Covid-19 pandemic on sustainable urban development?

   - Urban food systems and COVID-19: The role of cities and local governments in responding to the emergency: http://www.fao.org/policy-support/tools-and-publications/resources-details/en/c/1271238/
   - COVID-19 and the role of local food production in building more resilient local food systems : http://www.fao.org/3/cb1020en/CB1020EN.pdf
   - City Region Food Systems: Building Resilience to COVID-19 and Other Shocks: https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/13/3/1325

3. Could you share specific examples, projects or initiatives that have used science, technology, and innovation (STI), including frontier technologies (e.g., AI, drones, blockchain, 3D printing, etc.) or other forms of innovation in general in addressing the above challenges in relation to urban sustainability transition?

4. Can you provide examples of policies/projects/initiatives specifically aimed at strengthening national STI capabilities to promote urban sustainability transition?

   - Green City Initiative: http://www.fao.org/green-cities-initiative/en/. Green Cities Regional Programme for Africa: http://www.fao.org/green-cities-initiative/event-green-cities-africa-initiatives/en/
   - City region food systems programme: http://www.fao.org/3/ca6337en/ca6337en.pdf
   - Forests and Sustainable cities: http://www.fao.org/3/I8707EN/i8707en.pdf
   - Urban and peri-urban horticulture: http://www.fao.org/ag/agp/greenercities/index_en.html
   - The NADHALI project focuses on developing sustainable food systems for urban areas: Piloting a holistic approach in Nairobi (Kenya), Dhaka (Bangladesh) and Lima (Peru). Project link: http://www.fao.org/in-action/nadhali/en/

5. Could you share case studies of regional and international cooperation that have strengthened STI capacities of developing countries in dealing with urban sustainability transition?

   List of case studies form City Region Food Systems Programme: http://www.fao.org/in-action/food-for-cities-programme/pilotcities/wherewework/en/
   http://www.fao.org/in-action/food-for-cities-programme/resources/city-factsheet/en/

6. Could you suggest some contact persons responsible for projects/policies, related technologies and international collaboration in this context as well as any experts dealing with projects in this area? We might contact them directly for further inputs or invite some of them as speakers for the CSTD inter-sessional panel and annual session.

   FAO Contact on Urban work:

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Please send your responses and any further inputs on the theme to the CSTD secretariat (stdev@unctad.org) by 6 September 2021. We look forward to receiving your valuable inputs.

Sincere regards,

CSTD secretariat