

Ninth Session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development***Planning for Sustainable Cities and Communities*****Institute for Development and Economic Planning – United Nations Economic
Commission for Africa**

Side-event on “*Planning for sustainable cities and communities – the challenges of peri-urban areas*”

The challenges of an increasing urbanization phenomenon can no longer be undermined in the continent. Recent statistics posit that the cities in Africa accounts for 395 million people in 2009, representing 40% of the population (Mungai, 2019)¹. Another UN study projects that 2.5 billion people will be added to the global population by 2050 with 90% of the increase expected from Africa and Asia (UN, 2014)². Therefore, the rapid growth of cities, as well as the increase in migration from the countryside to cities, perceived as places of economic and social opportunity, has led to a boom in megacities. This massive urbanization is not proportional to the level of development of the cities concerned, therefore raising the problem of the anarchic, and informal occupation of peri-urban areas.

Peri-urban areas can be described as areas located at urban fringes and mostly at the edge of built-up areas of high population around the transportation hub. Furthermore, these areas are characterized by poverty, informal settlements, air pollution, poor infrastructures and often referred to as centers of disaster outbreaks. Despite the chaotic and fragmented nature of peri-urban areas, they play a vital role in enhancing sustainability of cities and communities, taking into account the role of the informal economy that somehow sustains households and communities. They have also been described as catalysts for building healthy cities and bridging the urban-rural divide. This is premised on the fact that cities in Africa are constrained with the challenges of urban sprawl due to poor spatial planning. Hence, poor urban planning has clearly shown that sustainable development is impossible without significant transformation in the way urban spaces are built and managed.

Making cities safe and sustainable requires ensuring access to safe and affordable housing, improving slums, investing in public transport, creating greener spaces, and improving urban planning and management in a way that is both participatory and inclusive. As governments at all levels galvanize its effort to grow their GDP by double digits, there must be concerted efforts to scale up urban planning instruments to accelerate sustainable development of cities and communities to improve the living condition of city dwellers in line with SDG 11.

¹ Mungai, E. (2019). A Case for Sustainable Urban Planning in Africa. *Africa Sustainability Matters Magazine*. Nairobi.

² UNDESA (2014). Population Division. *World Urbanization Prospects*. New York.

It is against this background that IDEP aims at organizing the side-event, *“Planning for sustainable cities and communities – the challenges of peri-urban areas”*, in order to create a platform of discussion over:

- The issue of increasing rates of peri-urban cities in Africa, in line with SDGs 11.
- Discuss the use of spatial planning measures to accelerate the sustainable development of cities for inclusive growth.
- Learning from past experiences to find how public policies can stimulate the growth of sustainable economy and reduce the level of poverty.

Partners/Speakers

- **UNECA/GSPD**
- **UNRC (Niamey)**
- **UN HABITAT (Niamey)**
- **UNFPA (Dakar)**
- **UNEP (Dakar/Addis Abeba)**