

SDG 11 interventions

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Session 1: Interventions by ...

I am here today to speak as a representative of civil society, as part of the UN ECE Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism.

We need to look at innovative financing with a broader lens and not only at private investments. The government needs to be accountable on all the financing mechanisms and make sure they comply with human rights and respond to the needs of the population and the development of the urban environment. While we agree that innovative, and private funding can be important, this cannot be an excuse for governments to step back themselves, or for private financing not to focus on delivering human rights first and foremost.

Delivering SDG11 is not just about bricks and mortar, builders and architects, it is about people. Therefore, upstream of financing decisions around urban planning, we need to consider the principles of universal design. The needs of everyone – women, older persons, persons with disabilities and vulnerable groups in particular – need to be borne in mind. Smart cities should above all be shaped by the needs of citizens.

A key means of doing this is to focus on the bottom-up approaches. The voices of all groups need to be heard as we develop policies, and as they are implemented. There needs to be empowered, informed participation, based on transparent and accountable open government, and access to information and technology. Governments should invest in supporting citizen learning and participation. The key role of local and city-level governments in implementing change, recognized in the New urban Agenda should be supported.

Governments must invest in making this happen, or face paying for the consequences of inaction later. We should not look only at cost effectiveness in the short term. An investment in inclusive and universal design today will be cost-effective in the future. We need to talk not just about what we can afford, but rather to look at what people want/need in their community.

A holistic approach is needed such as the WHO's age-friendly cities model with interlinkages: Outdoor spaces and buildings, Transportation, Housing, Social participation, Social inclusion and respect, Civic participation and work, Social and health services, and Communication and information, Cities and national governments should consider building on existing schemes such as this.

All countries must recognize and challenge the existing multiple forms of discrimination such as based on age, gender, disability, LGBTI, ethnic groups, migrants, etc. A gender lens with the intersections is needed, including in financial mechanisms and gender budgeting.

Promote and protect income earning opportunities, including informal street based activities. Put in place innovative financing mechanisms that support micro credits and cooperative entrepreneurs without age-caps.

Session 2: Intervention by Joan Lanfranco

Thank you chair. My name is Joan Lanfranco, I speak on behalf of the Workers and Trade Unions Major Group and on behalf of the UNECE CSO Engagement Mechanism.

Cities are sustainable when they are inclusive and no one is left behind. If livelihoods are unsustainable, cities will be unsustainable too. Cities concentrate most of jobs and wealth in the UNECE region. However, their distribution is not always fair, leading to disparities, exclusion and inequalities. We ask UNECE governments to uphold the commitments made at Habitat III and New Urban Agenda, and of the Sendai Framework.

Civil society would like to put forward some practicable policy recommendation for the achievement of SDG11:

- Resilience and preparedness are becoming increasingly essential. We need to identify risks from both natural and human-made threats, including the unchecked growth of cities and sustained high unemployment.
- Local active labour market policies for decent employment generation and social cohesion measures should trigger including positive action for gender equality, youth and ageing workers, migrant and refugees and people with disabilities.
- It should consider all the pillars of the Sendai Framework, importantly respect for the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental welfare of communities.
- The creation and safeguarding of safe spaces cannot be forgotten. This is both about ensuring that everyone can feel safe and dealing with dangers such as road transport, pollution and other risks.
- Governments need to prioritise and invest in social and physical infrastructure that that enhances social and intergenerational interaction and that respects and promotes the rights of people to live independently in the community, to age in place, to appropriate and affordable housing, accessible transport, lifelong education, ICT, mobility, health, long term care and to social protection.
- We need reliable data, and the tools to use it. Data collection does not cover all groups – especially those who are less visible – or be insufficiently disaggregated.
- Data collection and analysis needs to ensure that all population is included with 5-year age-bands without an age cap limit. Proper data disaggregation, including age, gender and disability is essential reflecting diversity and the heterogeneity among the population as people age.
- Too often, data is available, but is unused. There therefore needs to be investment in analysis, including through big data techniques, in order to support informed policy-making across sectors.
- Transparency will play an important role, enabling more people to get involved both in monitoring progress and identifying solutions.

Chair, I appreciate the inclusion of civil society in these discussions and we look forward to contribute to debates and implementation of SDG 11 at national, regional and global level.

Thank you.