



TOWARDS NATIONAL URBAN POLICY COMMISSIONS
(NUPCs):

A Proposal for Improved Multi-Level Governance and for the
Implementation of the New Urban Agenda

WFC Project Proposal

World Future Council
Climate, Energy and Cities Commission
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Towards National Urban Policy Commissions (NUPCs)

1. The issue

The recently published Habitat III Policy Paper 3 on National Urban Policy¹ already recognizes the existing gap between national and local policy making and the lack of good communication, coordination and consistency between different levels of government, such as between national and local governments. The inability of local actors to have a formal voice at the national level and the lack of effective collaboration between the different levels of government are widely recognized as critical limiting factors for the effective transition towards a more sustainable and just urban future.

2. The proposal : National Urban Policy Commissions

While there is widespread consensus on the need for improved multi-level governance, few concrete and practicable tools are being proposed to effectively tackle this lack of cross- level cooperation and coordination between national, regional and local authorities.

In several relevant cross-sectoral workshops led by the World Future Council (WFC) such as its annual Future of Cities Forum, several solutions to tackle the above mentioned issue were discussed. One of the solutions that repeatedly emerged was the need to create an institutionalized body to supervise coordination across levels of government. Other stakeholders such as civil society organizations, interest groups and the private sector would also be involved within these commissions to ensure comprehensive representation and to stimulate cross-sectoral collaboration.

More specifically, it is hereby suggested that national governments should partner with local authorities to establish **National Urban Policy Commissions (NUPCs)**, i.e. cross-ministerial and cross-governmental commissions co-led by national, regional and local governments which would help to bridge incompatibilities between local and national legislations and hence help the effective and consistent implementation of national programmes and international agreements within the local context (e.g. national sustainability programmes, the New Urban Agenda, the Paris Agreement, SDGs, etc.). This Commission would be composed of members from different levels of government (from the local to the national level) and would facilitate a more cohesive and constructive collaboration among them.

It is also suggested that these NUPCs would be the institutional platform for the design, implementation and monitoring of National Urban Policies (as outlined in Habitat III Policy Paper 3) as well as of the New Urban Agenda (as agreed by the UN General Assembly in October 2016). This would allow the commission to assume two key roles. On one hand, the role of improving multi-level governance by supervising cross-level collaboration. On the other hand, it would serve as a dedicated national taskforce for the implementation and monitoring of the New Urban Agenda following its ratification at the Habitat III in Quito on 20th October 2016.

2.1 Tasks

The main tasks of the Commission would include:

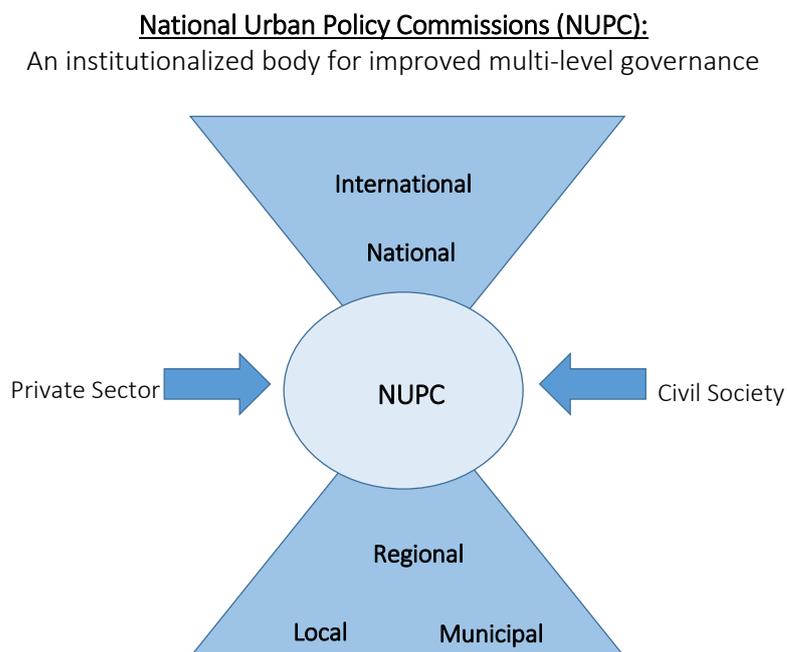
- **Design National Urban Policies.** The Commission is in charge of the design, implementation and monitoring of National Urban Policies.
- **Facilitate coordination and help cross-departmental collaboration.** The Commission is in charge of encouraging projects and collaboration across governmental departments and national ministries to find integrated and cross-silos policy solutions for cities. Many times departments both at the national level (e.g. ministries) and at the municipal level (e.g. city councils) struggle

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<https://www.habitat3.org/bitcache/ba191ad5b396e736bd24005451e1d46459561a1b?vid=572972&disposition=inline&op=view>

to work jointly and cohesively. The Commission therefore facilitates collaboration across governmental departments to ensure coherence across sectorial policies at the national as well as at the municipal level.

- **Establish Cooperation Projects Across Levels of Government.** The Commission ensures enhanced coordination and collaboration across the different levels of government. Coordination between the national and municipal governments is essential in ensuring improved effectiveness of policy implementation, greater efficiency in the administrative procedures as well as ensure consistency and coherence between national and local policies. It is also important to ensure a balance between top-down and bottom up approaches.
- **Supervise the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda.** The Commission is in charge of ensuring that the agreements of the New Urban Agenda are considered when designing and implementing National Urban Policies. This Commission will be adapting the international targets and objectives agreed in the New Urban Agenda to the national and local contexts and explore concrete action-oriented solutions to achieve those targets. The Commission therefore facilitates the enactment of the New Urban Agenda and ensure consistency of national and local policies with international agreements.
- **Coordinate Multi-Stakeholder Engagement.** The commission engages different experts and stakeholders from a variety of sectors (government, private sector, civil society, etc.) when drafting National Urban Policies. This ensures that all voices are heard and all interests considered in an open, fair and transparent way.
- **Coordinate City-to-City Collaboration.** The Commission also facilitates the cooperation of cities across the country and promote exchange of knowledge and best policy solutions among cities from the same country and from abroad.



2.2 Members

The Commission comprises of a variety of members ranging from government to the private sector, including:

- Members of the National Government
- Members of Regional Governments
- Members of Municipal Governments
- Civil Society Representatives

- Private Sector Representatives
- Interest Groups Representatives

The appointment and selection of members depend on the particular national context.

2.3 Benefits

The Commission would contribute to:

1. Improve Vertical Collaboration

- Improve coordination across levels of governments, especially between national and municipal level
- Improve consistency between levels of government to ensure coherence between different policies in particular between national, regional and municipal policies
- Promote capacity building needed to enable governments and administrative bodies to work across departments and across levels of government.
- Ensure adequate implementation of national policies at the local level.
- Supervise monitoring and ensure appropriate feedback is delivered from cities to the national government in order to carry out necessary improvements and policy changes.

2. Improve Horizontal Collaboration

- Foster cooperation among jurisdictions and cities across the country.
- Balance the development across urban, peri-urban and rural areas and strengthen linkages between urban and rural areas and coordination between city centres and surrounding metropolitan areas.

3. Create a Shared Vision For Cities and Empower Local Authorities

- Create a unified national vision for urban development. This vision will need to have clear objectives, targets, implementation strategies and monitoring mechanisms. More cohesive urban policies across the country would also create a more stable policy environment throughout different cities, which can also incentivize private investments and facilitate business innovation.
- Strengthen the political commitment for sustainable urbanization and promote mobilization of all relevant stakeholders.
- Empower local authorities to take action and give them the appropriate political mandate and financial resources to carry out the needed transformations, in line with national and international priorities and guidelines. The decentralization required to give more power to cities can be facilitated by the Commission, which ensures the decentralization process is fair and effective and does not compromise the cohesive and unifying power of national governments.
- Create an enabling institutional force able to effectively harness the benefits of urbanization and ensures that it is not seen as a problem but as a source of greater opportunities for prosperity and improved well-being of communities.
- Mitigate the short-termism of politics by creating a body that ensures continuity throughout different political mandates and enables a coherent, continual and long-term political commitment for cities.
- Reinforce the understanding of urban matters and necessary national policies interventions particularly with regard to:
 - Environmental Sustainability (especially energy, transport, waste and water)
 - Social Segregation and Inequality
 - Public Space and Urban Planning

3. Key Goal of WFC Proposal

The ultimate goal of this WFC project is to support national and local governments across the world establishing National Urban Policies Commissions with the aim of improving urban governance especially through enhanced multi-level governance and through the implementation of the New Urban Agenda across national and sub-national constituencies.

4. Proposed Plan

In order to assess the feasibility of establishing a NUPC, a first analysis and mapping of existing institutional bodies with similar tasks is necessary. This first analysis will be followed by a study investigating the potential and opportunities of establishing these commissions in specific target countries (examples in Germany, in Sweden, or in other countries). Following the identification of potential countries interested in implementing NUPCs, the project will support the setting up of these commissions in the specific context and their official launching. Lessons learnt from these specific first established NUPCs will then be gathered to be shared with other countries that might be interested in setting up similar commissions. A monitoring of how these NUPCs perform will also be carried following their establishment. A continuous process of monitoring and improvement will be vital for the correct functioning of these commissions.

4.1 Key Steps

In summary, the project would include the following steps:

- Step 1: Detailed mapping and analysis of existing cases of institutionalized bodies with similar tasks to NUPCs
- Step 2: Detailed feasibility study for the implementation of NUPCs in selected countries
- Step 3: Comprehensive Implementation Strategy/Roadmap for selected country
- Step 4: Launching of NUPC in selected country
- Step 5: Follow-up and Monitoring of NUPC performance in selected country

5. Partnership

The World Future Council is looking for partners to join efforts on this project. Partners can be civil society organizations as well as governmental institutions. The partnership would seek to build together a more detailed plan to carry out the steps highlighted above. These steps as well as the other details specified in this current proposal are a suggestion and they are by no means final. Further discussions with interested partners will lead to a more final and detailed version of the proposal. The ideal partnering scenario would include a series of different stakeholders to support this project to ensure that the proposal serves the interests of all different groups and that can effectively promote constructive cross-sectoral efforts.

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