Forum: Economics and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Issue: Supporting Sustainable and Resilient Societies in Urban Communities

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Introduction

As urbanization becomes more and more commonplace in nations around the world, many challenges and issues surface if the city is handled without proper management and regulation. The uniqueness of an urban community lies in its relatively large population as it congregates living, industry, and government into one city. Although keeping and maintaining a large population has not been a significant problem, preventing it from being susceptible to change and making the city sustainable has been far from simple.

The importance of supporting and building sustainable and resilient societies comes from the negative impact that a society without these qualities would produce. Such impacts affect the industry, government and also civilian life ultimately reversing the purpose of an urban city. As the global population increases, the increase of urbanization would become inevitable; limiting or eradicating the negative impacts of an urban community will therefore not be the long term solution as we know it today.

Definition of Key Terms

Commercialization

Commercialization is the process of initiating the sales of a set of new goods or methods of production to the general consumer market. Commercialization encompasses aspects of sales, marketing, and business development, fueling economic development to sustain a country to urbanize.

Urbanization

Urbanization is the gradual shift in population from an increase of urban settlement to a decrease of rural residency. Urbanization is often driven by a natural increase in population, human migration, and urban-rural boundary changes. Such a phenomenon also comes with many challenges such as

overcrowding, unemployment, and poor sanitation. This scenario is often the result of increased accessibility (job opportunities, trade, good consumption, etc.) in urban cities and at the same time, having little incentives in rural areas.

Environmental Degradation

Environmental degradation denotes the worsening of the natural environment as resources— air, water, and soil in specific— deplete. Environmental degradation comes at the risk of habitat destruction. ecosystem malfunction, wildlife extinction, and extreme pollution.

Low Elevation Coastal Zone (LECZ)

The Low Elevation Coastal Zone refers to a piece of land along the ocean coast that is less than ten meters above sea level. LECZs are extremely vulnerable to the many contemporary consequences of climate change, including flooding, storm surges, and sea level rises.

Sustainable Economic Growth

Sufficient amount of growth for a country to sustain its population without causing social, economic, or environmental problems. Such rapid growth in the economy is measured by Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and often derives from an increase in aggregate demand, such as the rise in consumer spending. Major difficulties in trying to achieve this include the waste that manufacture industries produce in large amounts, problems introduced through competition(unemployment, deteriorating working conditions, etc.), and keeping up with the increasing population.

Sustainable City

A city built considering social, environmental, and economic impact with a resilient habitat. Cities are categorized as sustainable when its urban development supports economic growth with a minimum ecological, carbon, and environmental footprint. Sustainable cities are encompassed in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In this context, supporting a sustainable city includes building upon an urban community and also its maintenance and management. Therefore, solutions should not only be temporary but also those that can make a long term improvement on a city's development allowing it to thrive in the future.

Slum

Slums are densely populated urban areas where dwellers reside; it is characterized by insane overcrowding, poor sanitation, inadequate health facilities, and deteriorated physical infrastructure. Although

the majority of slums are concentrated in developing countries, there are slums in most big cities of the world.

Urban Planning

Urban planning deals with the physical layout of a metropolitan settlement, laying the foundations for orderly development in urban areas. Urban planning intertwines with aspects of public welfare, distribution networks, sanitation, and transportation; it strives to ensure the orderly development and environmental sustainability of urban cities through engineering, architectural and social designs.

Background Information

Urban Resilience

For the past century, urban resilience referred to the "measurable ability of any urban system, with its inhabitants, to maintain continuity through all shocks and stresses, while positively adapting and transforming towards sustainability". However, cities house an increasingly urban population, natural and security threats arise as prevalent threats to the sustainability and resilience of modern society. Today, urban resilience strategies have expanded to encompass challenges to climate change, natural disasters, poverty reduction, social inclusion, terrorism, and environmental sustainability. Today, urban resilience is addressed in Goal 11 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), joining world leaders together to "make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable".

Factors of Urbanization

Whilst being a migration phenomenon since the creation of mankind, urbanization has oversaw the metropolitan population growth rate curve up at a speed never known to mankind. Before the first millennium BCE, a balance was always maintained between the rural and urban populations. The economy of these people relied heavily on the trade of agricultural goods at markets. However, from the first millennium BCE thenceforth, cities have rapidly increased in population as the world experienced an increase in commerce, trade, and urban industry. By the late 18th Century, European nations engaged in the British agricultural and industrial revolutions have led the way for the world's increase in its urban population, in conjunction with American colonies who have increasing population sizes. By the 1900s, 14% of the world's population resided in urban areas, with 12 cities housing populations of over one million. Even after only half a century, the urban population has doubled to 30% and there were now 83 cities with more than one million citizens. Such an exponential growth and rapid increase paved the way for the modern

world to have more than half of its population in urban areas with more than 400 countries considered "urbanized". Urbanization occurs in modern world for the following reasons:

Industrialization

Invigorating the growth of a modernized society, industrialization plays a significant role in accelerating urbanization. The Industrial Revolution sparked a trend for communities to migrate from rural villages in search of jobs to places where factories were set up, stirring rapid economic development. More people are attracted to new economic and employment opportunities, leading to the rise in urban population and size of settlements.

Environmental Degradation

A large population produces a large amount of waste. Without proper waste management and restrictions, a community is vulnerable to environmental degradation and deteriorating public hygiene. Environmental degradation is a major challenge for many urban communities with its disastrous impacts and lack of feasible solutions. Natural disasters are a leading cause of a city's physical non-resilience. For example, through a series of natural disasters, civilians have no purpose in investing in moderately stable shelters. The reason being that one powerful disaster would render the shelters useless. Therefore, lower class civilians in disaster-prone urban areas resort to more congregated and weaker shelters such as urban slums(controversially, a solution to overpopulation). Environmental degradation also affects countries with agriculture-based economies as droughts, floods, and other extreme weather events heavily impact the production of crops and the domestication of animals. A decrease in food production does not only affect the revenues of rural communities but also urban communities as well. Without adequate food production, trade and food consumption may be halted.

Commercialization

Commercialization is one of many rooting factors contributing to urbanization. As goods and services are being distributed in the general consumer market, the emergence of marketing techniques and exchange methods have given rise to the growth of communities. With the increase in marketing trade and commercialized goods, people migrate to cities based upon the general perception of beneficial commercial opportunities that the urban community offers.

Migration

Migration has been a gradually more pressing issue for both communities previously sustainable and those that are trying to achieve that goal. Traffic congestion, unemployment, and

cultural differences are problems presented when migration is in the context where large numbers of people escape persecution, war, etc.

Demographic transition

The problem presented by demographic transitions, although seemingly far off into the future, is extremely troublesome when not planning and considering the future. Demographic transitions occur when high birth rates and high death rates transitions to lower birth rates and low death rates in society. In the past, children, who performed mostly labor and were rarely educated, were viewed as an additional helper. Therefore, many families took to bearing many offspring to help the family business or simply because of high death rates. However, as the world began to industrialize, children are more often educated, increasing the cost of raising children. Today, education is valued more as well-educated children tend to have better futures, incentifying families to raise little offspring. Additionally, with improved healthcare and services, death rates are lowering increasing the average age of death. As the world population begins to shift more towards the old and retired, there will be fewer people working. Therefore, when considering long term solutions for sustainable cities, demographic transitions must be heavily considered.

Emerging Risks of Urbanization

On the surface, urbanization is often seen as a positive phenomenon; it brings benefits to social development, economic growth, cultural diffusion, and much more. However, as the speed of urbanization accelerates across the globe, the booming urban population becomes an impetuous driver behind many contemporary issues— water crises, the spread of infectious diseases, inadequacy of infrastructure, and social instability.

Health and Sanitation

In spite of the numerical increase in hospitals and medical facilities, the critical aspects of urbanization— insufficient infrastructure, high population proximity, extreme poverty— can have the exact opposite effect. With inadequate sanitation, waterborne or infectious diseases contribute to worsening of public health. With the prevalent contamination of water in slums and squatter settlements, premature death and lack of medical facilities worsen the city's resistance towards health threats.

Infrastructure

Not only is infrastructure a critical aspect to the quality of life of citizens, it is also one of many determining factors to the city's resilience against global threats. However, the underinvestment in

infrastructure emerges as a critical crises to urbanized nations as their infrastructures— railroads and roads, airports and ports, water supply and sewage, electric power plants, telecommunications, and common residence— begin to fall behind the rapid growth in population and economic development. In addition, it is estimated that a third of urban inhabitants of developing countries reside in impoverished squatter settlements and slums. These shelters feature overcrowded houses built with insufficient materials, little to no sanitation, restricted access to sources of water, and inadequate health facilities.

Social Instability

Whilst bringing rapid economic development and widespread education, urbanization comes at the risk of urban violence and social unrest if unplanned. High population proximity gives rise to crimes, prostitution, drug abuse, street children, acts of violence, and social exclusion. As a common distress amongst urban dwellers, social instability likely arouses a sense of insecurity and terror in the city, challenging the many critical aspects crucial to ensure the development of new urbanized areas.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

The United Kingdom

The United Kingdom has been an active nation in developing sustainable and resilient communities in their own cities. They implemented the Sustainable Communities Plan in 2003 which implemented plans related to spatial management such as Thames Gateway and The Northern Way. By developing Local Enterprise Partnerships(LEPs), the United Kingdom established a trilateral relationship between the government, industries, and the civilians. This is a great solution as the government communicates with industries to seek and develop local economic priorities. One of the most prominent examples of its success is Bristol, the fastest growing city in all of United Kingdom. To support population growth, the government has invested $2.7 million in the construction of sustainable infrastructure, particularly the expansion of transportation, common housing, and energy sources. With maximum sustainability, Bristol is currently the most energy and waste-efficient city in the United Kingdom's. Economic interdependent systems such as these provide a great solution for economic stability and sustainability.

Germany

In the past decade, German cities have been struggling to tackle contemporary threats towards sustainability and resistance. With a series of natural disasters and political shocks— Hurricanes Katrina

and Sandy, large-scale influx of refugees, escalating cross-border tensions, and increasing unemployment— the resilience and sustainability of societies continue to be challenged. One of the many vulnerable cities of the nation is Dresden, the traditional capital city of Saxony. Populations in this city struggle with sustainable and resilient development as the city continues to be affected by the prevalent consequences of wartime firestromes, political upheavals, and severe flooding.

China

China is one of the most vulnerable countries to the impacts of environmental degradation and climate change, hence threatening the social stability of urban communities. Coastal cities account for the majority of China's economic and social development, however are currently threatened by sea level rises and other consequences as such. As Low Elevation Coastal Zones(LECZs) house more than 164 million people, these populations are subject to the following challenges— contamination of fresh water, weakened sewage system, and intensive seasons of hurricanes and floods. Nevertheless, the rate of urbanization in China has bypassed 50% in 2014 and is expected to reach 70% in the 2030s.

International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)

The International Institute for Environment and Development has the purpose of building a more sustainable and fairer world through evidence, influence, and action. By considering both local priorities and global issues, IIED works with Asian, African, Latin American, and Middle Eastern countries to bolster their voice and thoughts. They mainly focus upon cooperating with partnerships to address inequalities and unfair access to resources.

United Nations-Habitat

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) is an United Nations subsidary with the intent of ensuring sustainable urban development and environmental protection in cities of the urbanizing world. UN-Habitat has been operating in more than seventy countries to assist its goal through the works of the following aspects— urban planning of cities, assistance of fundamental facilities, slum and shelter improvements, rehabilitation of risk-affected populations, and urban economy analyses. The organization utilizes the City Resilience Profiling Tool (CRPT) which is a process for developing resilience in communities. It first initiates with the government and trains personnel. The next step is to collect data and diagnostics. Afterward, an analysis is provided to move on towards action. After repetitions of analysis and action, the organization considers the extension of plans into the future and considers how to take the process further. UN-Habitat also drafts a Resilience Action Plan (RAP) for each country that has signed an agreement with the organization. UN-Habitat directly branches from the work contained in that of the UN

Millennium Declaration, one of the key goals being assisting 100 million slum-dwellers to a better life by the year 2020.

Timeline of Event

Date	Description of event
1971	Established by the United Kingdom, The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) is an action research organization striving to "build a fairer, more sustainable world, using evidence, action and influence in partnership with others". Since its creation, the IIED has promoted livelihood in local and vulnerable communities to confront challenges of urbanization in areas such as Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Pacific.
1974	Latin American World Model strives for growth and equity in the Third World.
May 31, 1976	Habitat, the UN Conference on Human Settlements was the first global meeting linking environment and human settlement.
1980	World Conservation Strategy released by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) identifies causes of habitat destruction as poverty, population pressure, social inequity, and trading regimes. It wants a new international strategy to remedy inequities.
November 1984	As a global research and advocacy organization, the Third World Network (TWN) aims to advocate for economic, social, and developmental issues pertaining to a nation's sustainable development. The TWN also provides an international fora for both developing and developed nations to represent their interests in annual forums held in United Nations procedure.

September 2000	UN Millennium Development Goals gathered world leaders, setting up a time-bound(2015) and goals combating poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women.
2008	More than 50% of the world population lives in towns and cities.
December 2013	The 100 Resilient Cities and the City Resilience Index (CRI) was launched by the Rockefeller Foundation in contribution to the achievement of SDG 11: making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. The index encompasses a total of 100 cities, of which are all obligated to develop individual City Resilience Strategies in an effort to coordinate worldwide resilience efforts.
September 2015	In September of 2015, concerns for resilient communities were addressed in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11, to "make cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable". This SDG links the quality of life in cities and its management of natural resources, striving for resource efficient cities with reduced environmental impacts whilst providing consumer choices, sustainable economic growth, and suitable lifestyles.

Relevant UN Resolutions and Treaties

- New Urban Agenda, 25 January 2017 **(A/RES/71/256)**

- Resolution 66/207, 14 March 2012 **(A/RES/66/207)**

- Housing, building and planning, 15 December 1970, **(A/RES/25/2718)**

- International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade, 24 October, 1970 **(A/RES/25/2626)**

Possible Solutions

Create national and city-government initiatives.n order to bolster a city's competency to adapt to adverse social and economic circumstances, member nations must take measures to fortify a strong interrelation between the city administration, national government, private sectors, and economic industries within the nation. can provide a variety of advantages. Governments should establish growth programs with the objective of eliminating urban sprawls and respective consequences on the physical environment. Such growth programs serve the purpose of limiting residential units in a given area, monitoring environmental degradation, and funding expenditure of infrastructure and transportation to safeguard its citizens. Other programs can include pollution remediation, health insurance, and supplemental nutrition assistance programs, all striving for ensuring sustainable life quality of societies in these increasingly vulnerable urban communities.

Develop frameworks and policies focusing on economic resilience of city development, in conjunction with the execution of such initiatives. Nations are to examine the City Resilience Framework (CRI), assisting cities to identify and measure their resilience competency. As the CRI serves as merely a decision-making tool assisting a country's path to developing respective measures, cities should come up with financial policies and frameworks that fit in accordance with the extent of urgency in the given area.

Fostering a balance between economic interdependence both at a domestic and international level. Within a country or community, industries should engage in specialization whilst collaborating with the government and other industries to maximize growth. This way, as the industry is ensuring its ability to overcome financial adversities by maintaining a steady facilitation of trade, it maximizes the potential for growth in the economy. The United Kingdom's Local Enterprise Partnership (LEPs) should be taken account as a country pinpoints its economic priorities within communities and collaboration on a domestic level.

Foster economic diversity as it lessens the reliance upon one single industry and therefore, makes the urban communities more resilient. An explicit example would be agriculture-based models. When natural disasters occur, the whole country, including the urban communities, plunges into economic deterioration as the production can't catch up with the demand. Therefore, by also increasing manufacture industries, a nation could lessen reliance upon single industries should the industry fail. On an international level, trade between nations lightens burdens for all countries as globalization slowly coerces more imports and exports.

Guarantee the physical security and mental livelihood of its existing societies. To further ensure the appropriateness of public infrastructure and services upon construction and planning, government regulations could be imposed upon private construction companies to ensure the safety and sturdiness of constructions. As the issue gets to the core of addressing risks and vulnerabilities for certain populations, federal governments must address the basic needs of unprotected populations; such objective

can be achieved by providing equitable choices for housing and transportation, ensuring adequate sanitation, and maximizing energy efficiency. When deemed appropriate, governments should impose regulations on private sectors and companies to limit their contribution to climate change. Improvements of public systems— including water, sanitation, and transportation systems— are also critical to ensuring the livelihood and dignity of societies in urban communities.

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