

Nigeria's media urged to understand New Urban Agenda

LAGOS, Nigeria - Speaking on the role of the media in the New Urban Agenda, the national information officer of UNIC, Oluseyi Soremekun, called on the media to drive the new narratives about urban development in Nigeria by getting acquainted with the New Urban Agenda (NUA) as well as relevant policies and plans of the government on housing and urban development.



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Following Habitat III, the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, which took place in Quito Ecuador 2016, and the emerging need to further build the capacity of the media in reporting Housing and sustainable urban development, the UN Information Centre (UNIC) Lagos and the UN Habitat Nigeria have organised a Media Workshop on Post-Habitat III Conference/ New Urban Agenda.

“If you are not conversant with the necessary NUA frameworks; the National Housing Policy as well as other National Plans, you cannot hold the government accountable to its commitment to a new urban agenda that will redress the way cities and human settlements are planned, financed, developed, governed and managed,” he noted.

“Media should give prominence to the issues of sustainable housing, urban development and slum upgrading,” Soremekun said.

“Media should rise above sensationalising and politicising issues of urban development. Rather, they should interrogate the existing housing and urban development policy and plan and juxtapose these with government actions.”

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The workshop held on Thursday 26 October 2017 in Abuja, and attended by 25 participants from the media, Federal Ministry of Power, Works and Housing (FMPWH) and the UN system, was aimed at

strengthening awareness among journalists and media professionals of the challenges of urbanisation and the global efforts to address them, notably the outcomes of the Habitat III conference in Quito; developing the capacity of journalists to engage constructively with policy makers, professionals and government functionaries to actively follow-up on implementation of the New Urban Agenda; and facilitating citizens' participation in the New Urban Agenda.

In his presentation, the program manager of UN-Habitat Nigeria, Kabir Yari explained that the New Urban Agenda is an action-oriented document which sets global standards of achievement in sustainable urban development, rethinking the way we build, manage, and live in cities through cooperation with all levels of government, relevant stakeholders, and other urban actors such as the private sector.

He noted that the agenda also “provides the underpinning for actions to address climate change and reaffirms our global commitment to sustainable urban development as a critical step for realising sustainable development in an integrated and coordinated manner.”

Yari added that the shared vision and commitments include: “Cities and human settlements must be for every one; referred as the “right to the city”. It entails equal rights including the right to adequate housing; gender equality, basic urban services etc.; urban equity and inclusiveness leaving no one behind and addressing issues of poverty, deprivation in cities, socio-economic and cultural diversity”.

Discussing the *Challenges and Response to Urbanisation in Nigeria*, the director of urban and regional development (URD) Department, Federal Ministry of Power, Works and Housing (FMPWH), LC Anikamad explained that “Nigeria boasts of more than 10 regional centres which have established status of ‘millionai cities’. In addition, she has several other fast growing population centres which have assumed very strong urban identity due to administrative, commercial, ethnic, transport connectivity and other intrinsic peculiarities.”

Anikamadu noted that as urbanisation creates hordes of cities and townships, several intimidating challenges of different shades follow in its wake. “Perhaps most significantly, urbanisation has created a huge class of ‘urban poor’ who live in unimaginable conditions, abject misery and lack of basic necessities of life.”