Ottawa, Ontario, Canada March 30th, 2023

LAUNCH OF
THE UEF5+WPC59
OTTAWA, ON, March 25, 2023 – The Urban Economy Forum (UEF) and the International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP) are pleased to announce the successful launch of the 5th Urban Economy Forum and 59th ISOCAR, World Planning Congress, (UEF5+WPC59) joint conference. Titled “For Climate Action, Urban Finance”, the event was held on March 30th, 2023, from 10 am to 12pm (EDT), at the parliament venue, and focused on Climate-Responsive Planning for Equitable Places and Communities.

The event hosted by Matthew Green Member of Parliament, and served as a prelude to the main UEF5 + WPC59 Congress, which will be held on October 10-13, 2023, in Toronto, Canada, in a hybrid format. The Launch event brought together prominent speakers and distinguished participants, it was opened by MP Matthew Green, Steering Committee Co-Chair and Reza Pourvaziry, Chair of UEF’s remarks and continued with the valuable speeches of distinguished participants including Honourable Ahmed Hussen, Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Honourable Bob Rae, Ambassador of Canada to the United Nations, H.E. Konstantina Athanassiadou, Ambassador of Greece to Canada, Dyfed Aubrey, Inter-Regional Advisor at United Nations Human Settlements Programme, Eduardo Lopez Moreno Co-Director World Urban Pavilion, Frank D’hondt, Secretary General and Elizabeth Belpaire, board and executive committee member, ISOCARP, Anantha Krishnan, Secretary General of UEF, Meseret Haileyesus, Executive Director at Canadian Center for Women’s Empowerment (CCFWE), and Kamran Espili, Executive director of UEF.

This joint Launch event brought together representatives from countries, parliamentarians, governors, academia, planning professionals, financial institutions, and the private sector to discuss the latest trends and developments in climate action, urban finance, investment opportunities, and the implementation of the UN-SDGs, particularly SDG11. The event led to the creation of new partnerships and collaborations from different countries worldwide to assist cities in becoming prosperous, sustainable, healthy, and equitable places for all.

The previous year’s UEF4 on “Sustainable Urban Finance” aimed to identify commonalities concerning urban resource management to achieve a sustainable urban economy and share innovative opportunities. For more information on UEF4 please visit HERE.

The organizers encourage all interested participants to register for the main conference in October and join us at this significant event.

For further information about UEF5+WPC59 Conference, please visit: 59th World Planning Congress – Toronto 2023 | ISOCARP
Matthew Green
Member of Parliament and Steering Committee Co-Chair

Reza Pourvaziry
Chair of UEF

H. Minister Ahmed Hussen
Ministry of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion

Bob Rae
Ambassador of Canada to the United Nations

H.E. Konstantina Athanassiadou
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Kamran Espili
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Frank D’hondt
Secretary General of ISOCARP

Dyfed Aubrey
Inter-Regional Advisor at United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-Habitat

Eduardo Lopez Moreno
Co-Director World Urban Pavilion
Land acknowledgment

Recall the work in traditional territories and with the Indigenous people, and the importance to recognize, empower and respect their rights. Work that has a strong focus on environmental issues.

Opening Remarks from Matthew Green

Member of Parliament and Steering Committee Co-Chair

Matthew officially launched the conference, stressing the importance of a joint event with the central theme on Climate and Finance and the need of an inclusive participation. The MP mentioned that this conference was a ‘Call for Action’ with urbanization trends that are irreversible, bringing societal development, but also enormous risks. He emphasized that cities are at the intersection of the climate crisis, contributing to exacerbate it, but also being the remedy to this crisis with solutions related to housing, energy, and infrastructure, among others. The MP was clear stressing the need for strong collaboration as it was indicated by the UN Secretary-General.
Opening remarks from Reza Pourvaziry

Chair of UEF

He expressed satisfaction for launching the 5th Urban Economy Forum and the 59th World Planning Congress in company of the H. Matthew G. in a neighborhood that is a good reflection of the diversity of the country and the efforts to advance on the SDGs. Reza acknowledged the participation of the Canadian Mortgage Housing Corporation and Daniels and used this as an example for the need of strong collaboration in such important topic, as it is climate action and urban finance. This is a call for a sustainable use of resources, he expressed, indicating that cities play a crucial role in realizing the SDGs. This joint conference is at the intersection of ideas and plans and cities, planning and urban economy.

He explained that UEF is a platform and a network, and the conference of the previous year brought more than 300 experts from 150 countries. Climate change poses a great risk and action must be taken now, with definitive actions to reduce carbon emissions. He concluded indicating the intention to connect this conference and related actions to the G7 and G20.

Central remarks by H. Minister Ahmed Hussen

Ministry of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion

The Minister initiated his speech acknowledging the importance of indigenous territories and the right for affordable housing, which requires the participation of three levels of government. Yet, he indicated that funding from the central government is critical, as well as programs for community strengthening with a strong focus on affordability and accessibility. The Minister stressed that housing is key for climate change, diversity, economic stability, and health, and there is a need of housing programmes that meet the needs of everyone. He made reference to the National Housing Strategy and the 82 billion budget, which as important as it is, it does not meet the housing demand, considering that Canada is the country from the G7 with the highest migration flows. As previous speakers, the Minister mentioned that housing is an accelerator of the national economy, and a system change is required by giving more prominence to local communities that are the real game changers. The Minister was emphatic saying that the country will double the housing production in 10 years, but they will make sure that the houses produced are done in a sustainable manner, considering the adequate densities, diversity, and infrastructure. He said that the connection between housing and green infrastructure is becoming more prominent, connected to affordable housing. Finally, the Minister said that a 4 billion budget has been allocated to deal with rural and urban linkages and for an indigenous housing strategy.
The H. Ambassador opened his intervention indicating that there was no better time to organize this conference, indicating that progress in the SDGs is a responsibility of everyone and this joint event should be considered as a ‘Call for Action’. There is a need of a whole of society and a whole of country approaches, the Ambassador expressed, making a clear relation to the Canadian Government efforts to respond to SDGs, since this was not a choice, but an imperative action, in response to climate action, housing and community development. Even more so, considering the Co-chair role of the Prime Minister in the implementation of SDGs, and recalling that ‘cities are the key for this response’.
**Speaker 1 - H.E. Konstantina Athanassiadou**

Ambassador of Greece to Canada

‘I am a city person’, expressed the H. Ambassador, indicating that she is from Athens and Acropolis, a universal symbol of democracy. It is important to advocate for change and this conference is a call for that. She made a summary of Greece’s and the EU’s interventions in response to the climate agenda, saying that very important actions are taken by small Islands as a way to contribute to the world, since their own reduced spaces. This is a ‘contribution for people with no name’, she mentioned with a lot of respect and empathy. As other speakers, she mentioned that cities are a remedy, but also the cause of the problem. The Ambassador referred to the new Climate Law and some of the important changes this legislation is proposing, namely with regards to the use of electric and hybrid vehicles, the control of emissions in various regions and cities, the target to reduce by 30% energy consumption and the substitution by urban green interventions. The Ambassador made reference to Smart City Platforms and Smart Mobility projects in collaboration with the Canadian Government.

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**Speaker 2 - Frank D’hondt**

Secretary General of ISOCARP

‘I am a boy of the city’ expressed the SG of ISOCARP, alluding to the comment of the Ambassador of Greece, indicating that he is to some extent also from Athens. He explained that the Garden Movement of urbanism was part of the roots of the Urban Planners Association, taking basic principles such as housing and planning that were important historic responses to what is now the climate agenda, with a strong connection to health conditions and the environment. He would prefer that urban planners are considered today as ‘sustainability planners’. He introduced Elizabeth as coordinator of the Conference.
Speaker 3 - Elizabeth Belpaire
Board and Executive Committee Member / ISOCARP

Elizabeth stressed that this joint conference is about collaboration, action and knowledge and a process of co-creation. The executive member of the committee recalled that ‘place matters’ to respond to global challenges that impact locally and require local solutions. She explained that the rate of adaptation and mitigation to the needs of climate change are low and urban planning can contribute to climate action. Isocarp, the association of planners, and co-organizer of the conference, favors knowledge creation processes, articulating theory to practice. There is a clear need of more urban planners, she emphasized with a focus on young people, who are the decision-makers of tomorrow and can ensure an inter-generational sustainability. There is a need of more women, who are real change makers and most seat at the table of decisions, particularly from indigenous groups. Elizabeth concluded that this conference is pushing the knowledge boundaries in areas such as underground urbanization and the use of technologies.

Video Message 2 - Anantha Krishnan
Secretary General of UEF

The SG of the UEF acknowledged the excellent work of the MP Matthew Green and the participation of the Ambassadors. As previous speakers, Krishnan explained that urbanization is not going to stop, creating multiple vulnerabilities. He expressed that partnerships are critical to prepare for better responses for climate action and to reduce inequalities in cities for which visionary planning was needed. Cities are fundamental to address health issues and the climate agenda with a necessary reduction of carbon emissions. However, the gap in funding for this purpose is enormous. The SG proposed interventions in critical areas, such as monitoring and reporting, the creation of local damage funding and other innovative financial instruments.
**Speaker 5 - Kamran Espili**  
Executive Director of UEF

The Executive Director of UEF indicates that the global conference is the premier global gathering that has made prominent sustainability topics, as it was with the previous conference that focused on multisectoral and multilevel responses to address major global challenges. This year joint conference between UEF and Isocarp focuses on climate agenda, finance and cities for which training, and capacity building is a fundamental component. He said that participation is central and requires to be promoted and nurtured.

**Speaker 4 - Meseret Haileyesus**  
Executive Director at Canadian Centre for Women’s Empowerment, CCFWE

The Executive Director was emphatic on the need to tackle climate justice with a focus on gender and equality. She expressed that during the pandemic, women showed their incredible leadership, as in many other crises. Women are agents for change, and they are needed to address SDGs, particularly Goal 5. The organization she represents specializes in access to finance and technology to empower women, and they are the right advocates for the use of local resources. The sad reality of domestic violence affects women and particularly black and from indigenous populations, which represents a double jeopardy. She recognized the importance of this join conference in which planning and climate change is strongly connected. This is a way to ensure economic justice is achieved through a systemic transformation.
Video Message by Dyfed Aubrey

Inter-Regional Advisor at United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-Habitat

The Inter-Regional Advisor at the United Nations emphasized the crucial role of integrating urban planning into the process of developing human settlements to achieve sustainable development. He highlighted the pressing global issues of climate change, inequality, pandemics, conflicts, and more, which make sustainable development an absolute necessity in our approach to addressing these challenges. The Inter-Regional Advisor underscored how planning plays a key role in ensuring that cities are on the right track towards sustainable development and are equipped to deal with climate-related issues.

The Advisor also declared the importance of cities adopting planning guidelines and demonstrating their impact. He recognized that it is important to have guidelines in place, but it is crucial to ensure that cities are actively adopting and implementing them. The need for urban planning efforts to translate into action is a global challenge that needs urgent attention.

Highlight of the speeches by Eduardo Lopez Moreno

Co- Director World Urban Pavilion

Eduardo Lopez Moreno, Co-Director of World Urban Pavilion, delivered his wrap-up remarks. He mentioned that the speakers stressed the importance of collaboration to tackle the climate crisis, with cities at the forefront and they highlighted the crucial role of cities in achieving Sustainable Development Goals through sustainable resource use.

The conference recognized that women are agents for change and emphasized the need to address climate justice with a focus on gender and equality. Housing was identified as a critical issue in achieving climate change, diversity, economic stability, and health, with a strong emphasis on affordability and accessibility. Speakers highlighted the importance of collaboration and knowledge creation in responding to global challenges that impact locally. Anantha Krishnan, Secretary General of UEF, emphasized the importance of partnerships in preparing better responses for climate action and reducing inequalities in cities. The conference concluded with an emphasis on partnerships and knowledge creation to better respond to climate action and reduce inequalities in cities. The chair of UEF expressed an intention to connect the conference to the G7 and G20.
Managing Team

Launch of the 59th ISOCARP World Planning Congress + 5th Urban

Mathew Green, Host
Member of Parliament and Steering Committee Co-Chair

Fazileh Dadvar (Center) Director
Coordinator of UEF5, Secretariat of Academic Platform at UEF, Head of Capacity Building and Networking at World Urban Pavilion

Alex Venuto, Moderator
Acting Deputy Director, World Urban Pavilion in Regent Park - Powered by Daniels

Reza Pourvaziry
Chair of UEF