

## SymbioCity Urban Leadership Forum

The future is urban. Kenya is at an early stage of urbanization but is urbanizing quickly. By 2050 about half of the population will be living in urban areas. Properly planned and managed cities and towns offer enhanced opportunities for people to meet, work, access public services, enjoy social and cultural benefits, and fulfil their life dreams.

Leadership plays a key role in promoting economic, social and environmental development in urban areas. Strong leadership is vital for sustainable, participatory and inclusive urban development processes.

In recognition of this, a SymbioCity Urban Leadership Forum was organised on November 14-15, 2018 in Nakuru, Kenya. 65 urban leaders from across the country participated in the Forum which was organized by the SymbioCity Kenya Programme and the Council of Governors, with support from the Embassy of Sweden to Kenya.

## Conclusions and Recommendations from the Forum

The participants of the Forum jointly identified and discussed number of key issues related to how urban leadership can support Kenya's transition into a sustainable urban future. The following conclusions and recommendations were agreed as a result of the Forum:

1. Shared visions, strategies and plans are the foundation of planning and builds local ownership.
  - Political leadership at all level is critical in building credibility
  - Inclusive processes must involve communities to ensure ownership
2. Spatial and strategic plans are a prerequisite for urban development
  - Requires political will to engage in planning and allocate budget for this
3. Working together between departments requires trust and communication between departments, and the establishment of County Planning Units
  - Requires political will to establish and allocate budget and mandate
4. Political interference and vested interests can hamper the development we want
  - Transparency through the involvement of people representatives is vital

5. Enforcement of spatial plans, building control and legislation is key
  - With proper public participation the need for enforcement is minimized
  - Actual enforcement requires diligence and political support
  - Capacity for enforcement must be strengthened
  - Neighbourhood association are important in enforcement
6. Planning for an entire urban area requires defined urban structures
  - Requires political will in delineation of boundaries
7. Future planning requires land
  - Requires political will to budget for future needs through land banking
8. For urban areas to become engines of economic growth, investment needs to be made into both planning and development. Budgets must be allocated to urban areas and the process of accessing allocated funds must be transparent.
  - Requires political will to make budget priorities for urban areas
9. Gender and social planning needs to be mainstreamed into the planning process
  - Requires political will and enforcement
10. Effective horizontal and vertical two-way communication is key to a transparent process and informed stakeholders.
  - Communication should be factored into urban development processes
11. Urban development is a long-term process and requires planning beyond elective terms
  - Requires long-term political agreements
12. For all of the above to succeed, an increased understanding between the political and technical arms of government is necessary.

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