



EAROPH Australia is the Australian national chapter of the Eastern Regional Organisation for Planning and Human Settlements, for the Asia-Pacific. It is an NGO established in 1960 to foster the exchange of insights and experiences among countries in the EAROPH region. It promotes a better understanding of human settlements and encourages excellence in their planning, development and management.

SUBMISSION TO THE GOVERNMENT ON THE FOREIGN POLICY WHITE PAPER

Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda

This submission is made on behalf of EAROPH Australia, and proposes that an important context for the proposed White Paper should be the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the New Urban Agenda. Australia is a signatory to these initiatives, and there are inherent issues for Australia to address in relation to the way it interacts with the rest of the world.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) replace the previous Millennium Development Goals, also incorporating principles from UN Agenda 21 on Sustainable Development. The New Urban Agenda (NUA) provides strategic directions for urban development in order to transform towns and cities into inclusive and sustainable settlements, capable of supporting the wellbeing of their inhabitants. Both initiatives require changing the way that we develop human settlements, with implications for rural and urban policy and implementation.

Around 40 Australians attended Habitat III in Quito, at which the New Urban Agenda was finally endorsed by the Australian Government and others. EAROPH Australia had previously provided an opportunity for Australian professionals to contribute to the development of the New Urban Agenda through the General Assembly of Partners, and we provided policy proposals on the topics of Local Economic Development and Local Fiscal Arrangements. EAROPH is a UN accredited member of the Habitat Professionals Group, and through this group we will have a role in implementing the new strategies as well as monitoring implementation outcomes at the global level.

We have found that there are a number of areas for which Australian professionals have a leading edge within the Asia Pacific Region, including significant expertise in Sustainable Asset Management, Local Economic Development and Greening Cities. At the international level, the EAROPH Secretariat is developing an Asia-Pacific training framework within which Australian professionals can export their expertise in these and other areas. We will seek funding support for this initiative, particularly so that capacity building programs are affordable for participants in those countries most in need, including Indonesia as a high priority. EAROPH Australia and the Indonesian EAROPH members are in close collaboration to identify capacity building demands.

The Pacific Region has some distinct challenges for which a well targeted approach to foreign policy is required. We fully support Australia's past initiatives in the areas of security/safety and health, which are entirely consistent with the SDGs and NUA. Other investments can deliver good outcomes. Some EAROPH members have been involved in working with women vendors in fresh produce markets across Melanesia, and we are aware of the astounding economic and social benefits for women and their families that can be achieved through supporting good governance as well as physical improvements to these markets. There is some excellent foundation research as well as awareness raising within local governments that can support further work in this areas, but donor funded initiatives to date have often missed the mark. It is also apparent that Pacific Island planning professionals need significant support in capacity building, particularly in relation to implementing sustainable urban development plans. Australian professionals have previously supported Pacific Island planners in various ways, but a more co-ordinated and well resourced initiative would be of considerable benefit. Previous attempts to establish peer support groups for professionals across the Pacific region have foundered for lack of funding and infrastructure support.

We draw your attention to an opportunity for Australia to promote its strategic approach to implementing the SDGs and NUA at the forthcoming World Urban Forum being held in Kuala Lumpur, February 2018. The WUF is held every two years, and provides a forum for presenting and discussing new ideas, as well as a physical exhibition space. Many national governments use the exhibition space as an opportunity to promote what they are doing globally, encouraging engagement with other nations and sectors around issues of mutual interest. The Australian Government has not previously sought this profile, though some Australian organisations have gained benefit from doing so.

EAROPH Australia would be pleased to discuss these issues with Government representatives as appropriate, and to assist in developing Australia's role in the Asia Pacific Region.

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