



200

Participants



18

International Organisations



17

countries



IMPLEMENTING
THE NEW
URBAN AGENDA

The pursuit and desire for a better life is universal. Global agendas such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda recommend that we must “leave no one and no place behind”. This includes facilitating rural revitalisation, allowing rural and urban areas alike to simultaneously share the fruits of modern civilisation, alleviating urban problems, providing a more ecological and healthy way of life, and promoting sustainable development.

The First International Forum on Urban-Rural Linkages was held in Songyang County, Lishui City, Zhejiang Province, China from November 11 to 13th, 2019. The forum was co-hosted and co-organised by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), Zhejiang Provincial Department of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, Lishui Municipal People’s Government and the Songyang County People’s Government. The theme of the forum was “Rural Revitalisation through Innovations and Valorisation”. The forum has brought together more than 200 officials, experts, and scholars from 17 countries

and 18 international organisations. The forum probed topics of rural architecture, innovations in tourism, agriculture culture and heritage, rural economic development, among other topics, focusing on systematic thinking and innovative practices of rural revitalisation in the context of ecological conservation. It explored how to achieve urban and rural sustainable development through rural revitalisation and valorisation.

The forum showcased Songyang’s and other places’ innovative practices of reframing the rural value system and commitment to rural revitalisation. We are not alone in revitalising rural areas. The forum was organised in response to Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG11) among other SDGs in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which calls for cities and human settlements to be inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. In this context, the forum explored redefining urban-rural relations, strengthening cooperation, and exploring the positive links between urban and rural economy, society, and environment, in order to promote the sustainable development of urban and rural communities alike.

Challenges brought about by rapid urbanisation have made us reflect on the importance of rural areas. We realize that rural areas are indispensable in the development of humanity. The form of rural areas is undergoing major and profound

changes. Some countries and regions in the world have begun to explore rural revitalisation practices and have achieved preliminary results. Rural development is full of new hope, and people are full of expectations for the future of rural areas.



We, the co-organisers have therefore reached the following consensus:

First, rural value systems are essential to restore rural vitality. The countryside is the cradle of human civilisation. The ecological civilisation provides hope for rural and urban revitalisation. Therefore, it is necessary to give priority to rural development. Beautiful rural environments with clean water, green landscapes, vibrant biodiversity and ecologies and thriving communities have become scarce. The countryside is no longer only a place for agriculture; it also has other important functions, including ecological conservation, climate resilience, leisure and sightseeing, and unique cultural experiences. Countryside will become once again a space for people to improve their health and settle down after retirement, to innovate and start businesses, and to live in dignity and well-being. The economic, environmental, social, and cultural values of the countryside will regain prominence. Attaching importance to rural reconstruction using the “acupuncture” approach and restoring rural vitality will help improve the ecological environment, reduce poverty, increase employment opportunities, improve the quality of life, enhance social equity, and promote the development and prosperity of humanity and the environment.

Second, we shall strengthen the reform of the rural economic development model. Sustainable economic revitalisation is an important cornerstone for rural revitalisation. We will build a diversified economic system integrating the development of the primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors to achieve simultaneous value enhancement and benefits for rural and urban areas. The pursuit of a harmonious green development “metabolism” between humanity and nature will help form new economies of scale for efficient and integrated development across the urban-rural continuum, eradicate poverty, and achieve sustainable development. Rural areas can not only engage in agriculture, but also become an ideal place for developing modern enterprises including in health, environment, culture, tourism, and high-end service, which together will form functional territories through sustainable social and economic harmonious development. Through adjustment of production and lifestyle, people can enjoy employment opportunities and achieve a better quality of life. This new economy, with strong interactive urban-rural circulation, will expand the potential of rural development, and attract new population growth to the countryside of villages, towns and the rural landscape.

Third, rural culture is recognised as the “root” and “soul” of rural areas. Through creative transformation and innovative development, culture becomes the driver of rural revitalisation. Culture can awaken people’s love for rural life and regain their confidence in rural areas. We need to pay more attention to the role of culture in promoting rural development. Culture can enrich rural areas, regain people’s faith, pass

on civilisations’ heritage, and inject lasting inner strength into rural areas. It is necessary to protect, utilize, and pass on the tangible and intangible natural and cultural heritage of countryside. The integration of traditional culture with concepts of modern lifestyle and the application of science and technology in rural areas will form a more diverse and vibrant contemporary rural civilisation.



Fourth, both urban and rural areas are human settlements indispensable for sustainable development. We need to reshape and promote interaction between urban and rural development, economic integration and mutual promotion, and cooperative coexistence. We should treat urban and rural areas as an organic whole, optimise overall regional planning and rural development planning, and support local institutions to ensure land rights and smooth channels for

rational and efficient two-way flow of talent, finance, science and technology, among other human resources that flow between urban and rural areas. We will promote the co-construction and sharing of urban and rural infrastructure, establish and improve policies and mechanisms for urban-rural integration, and transform urban-rural relations from mutual isolation through integration to mutual promotion.

Fifth, rural resources are essential for social development. Everyone should be encouraged to actively participate in rural revitalisation. It is necessary to ensure equal rights and opportunities in rural areas and share the fruits of rural revitalisation on an equal footing. We should respect the position of villagers, stimulate villagers’ enthusiasm for independent development, strengthen the cooperation between villagers, and transform fragmented and parallel operations into efficient and supportive cooperation model.

It is necessary to give full attention to the role of each individual, so that all will have a sense of belonging and ownership and jointly build fair, safe, healthy, convenient, resilient and sustainable living spaces. Also, we need to protect the rights and interests of the elderly, women, children, youth, and other vulnerable groups, leaving no one behind. We shall protect the equitable provision of social amenities and services to all classes of the population and interest groups in urban and rural areas alike.

Sixth, we promote the development, documentation and dissemination of inspiring practices on strengthening rural revitalisation and urban-rural linkages.

Therefore, the International Forum on Urban-Rural Linkages serves as a platform to call upon urban and rural residents around the world to cooperate and exchange, promote the establishment of coordination bodies for cooperation and liaison, formulate

corresponding action plans, and form exchange mechanisms to jointly build sustainable urban and rural communities, protect rural areas' original distinctive characteristics, culture, and ecology, and to achieve a balanced, inclusive, peaceful, and prosperous development.

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