

**Zhenjiang Communiqué — Global Planners Congress
Zhenjiang, China, 30 October – 2 November 2008**

The GPN notes that:

At the 2004 World Urban Forum (WUF), a call was made to practitioners, politicians and citizens to work together to strengthen the international voice of planners and for planning to contribute more effectively to creating better human settlements of villages, towns and cities that cannot be achieved through purely local action.

In 2005, in anticipation of the 2006 Vancouver World Urban Forum, a Global Planners Network was created. The Network convened a World Planners Congress to immediately precede the WUF at which the Vancouver Declaration was created. It has now been signed by 25 organisations representing more than 150,000 planners. The Declaration commits signatories to work “together, and with others, to tackle the challenges of rapid urbanisation, the urbanisation of poverty and the hazards posed by climate change and natural disasters.”

The 2006 WUF endorsed the new direction pointed to by the Declaration and by the Network’s paper *Re-inventing Planning* and “placed a strong emphasis on planning as a tool for urban development and environmental management, and as a means of preventing future slum growth.”

Since then, in the lead up to the 2008 WUF and a second Network Congress held in Zhenjiang, members of the Network shared their experiences internationally and worked collaboratively. The Network also collected evidence about the state of planning globally, from over 1,500 grassroots planners from over 100 countries. The messages received are that the potential of planning is growing but remains under-utilised, and there is an overwhelming need to enhance capacity amongst planners and understanding amongst politicians, especially in rapidly urbanising countries.

Drawing from this work, the GPN says to the 2008 WUF that:

- Failures to plan contribute to today’s ailing settlements. Through planning governments can embrace and implement strategic and integrated approaches to the planning of human settlements so that development follows planned infrastructure, all can access shelter and services, the economic benefits created by urbanisation can be shared equitably and environmental impacts can be minimised. Often this will require changing planning legislation, procedures and techniques, engaging citizens and properly funding mandates.
- Harmonious settlements are inclusive, with public services and transport networks designed to give everyone security and mobility. We support UN-HABITAT’s advocacy of the “right to the city” and those administrations that reach out to marginalised people. We must work collaboratively to ensure policy and guidance on diversity and equality is turned into mainstream planning practice.
- Holistic planning is essential to mitigate climate change, adapt as required and drive post-disaster recovery. One impact of climate change is increased risk of natural hazards. Governments and civil society need to recognise that land use and building practices are critical to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and that we need to strengthen regulatory systems and policy frameworks accordingly.

- Responding to the needs of the urban poor requires an understanding of the changing urban/rural dynamic, a respectful approach to physical, social and economic planning and recognition of the importance of the informal sector.
- The contribution of tradition and local culture as a driver of planning needs to be recognised and supported.

Responding to the message from grassroots planners across the globe that urgent action is needed, as part of its Action Plan the GPN will:

Continue to champion and promote strategic, integrative, inclusive and pro-poor planning;

Concentrate on building capacity, opening up access to training and fostering education, research and a deeper understanding, as a sound basis for action;

Narrow the gap between the rate of urbanisation and our capacity to plan and manage settlements in an expeditious, affordable and harmonious way;

Broaden its reach, connect planners across the world and strengthen links with other professionals, politicians and civil society concerned with the future of human settlements;

Sustain and deepen its relationship with UN-HABITAT;

Forge partnerships with donor agencies and other bodies so that appropriate funding goes to well planned projects, and plans are financially realistic and create economic opportunity; and

Share and disseminate lessons and good practices, including by holding another Global Planners Network Congress in 2010, returning to the WUF5 to report progress against the GPN Action Plan and scoping further actions collaboratively.

In conclusion, the GPN, acknowledges the next UN-HABITAT report on human settlements will be on planning, and invites:

The World Urban Forum to re-assert the importance of planning as a tool for improving human settlements and environmental management, and in particular, as a means of slowing the rate of slum formation, reducing the impacts of climate change, mitigating hazards, and building safe and inclusive settlements;

Governments and planners at all levels to design and implement planning systems that respond to these priorities;

Donor agencies and other bodies to recognise that effective planning and appropriate regulation of urban development does contribute to poverty alleviation by creating economic opportunities and sustaining assets; and

Other professionals, civil society and the private sector to contribute their knowledge and skills to enhance capacity-building for practitioners, politicians and citizens and to work with planners locally and globally to make settlements everywhere more harmonious and sustainable.