



03 June 2015 – On the first day of the [European Development Days](#) , a panel discussion highlighted the challenges and opportunities for metropolitan governance, a crucial issue for development in today’s rapidly urbanizing world.

Cities around the world are growing like never before. Today, more than half of the world’s population lives in cities. This trend is expected to continue as more and more people flock to urban areas in search of opportunities and a better life.

By 2060, the world is likely to be fully urbanised, with more than 80 percent of the population residing in urban areas.

In this context, the panel addressed critical urban governance issues that underpin sustainable development.

Carmen Vogt, Head of the [GIZ](#) Sector Programme “Sustainable Development of Metropolitan Regions”, stated that – as cities develop more and more into metropolitan regions – there is a challenge of coordination with diverse locations cutting across administrative divisions and agencies.

How should we see this fragmentation of administrative divisions in terms of development?

Cooperation instead of competition

William Cobbett, Director of [Cities Alliance](#) , set the stage by saying that the defining feature of current urban growth is that it “is not planned, most of this growth is informal”.

In recognizing this, he emphasizes that there is a mismatch between policy and reality.

Mr Cobbett asserts that there is also a mismatch between jurisdictions and the functional city, with instances of competition between various jurisdictions from the same functional region.

As opposed to this competition – whether between tiers of government, or in terms of dominant thinking on the divide between urban and rural development – the Cities Alliance Director stressed the need for cooperation.

Such cooperation includes e.g. planning metropolitan areas with the support of national governments, rather than in competition.

This echoed an earlier statement by GIZ’s Verena Maier, who provided a summary of an upcoming joint study by GIZ and UN-Habitat on metropolitan governance. The main message here is: “cooperate, do not compete”.

The UN and urban governance

[Urban governance](#) is the software that enables urban hardware to function.

Governance is the enabling environment that requires adequate legal frameworks, efficient

political, managerial and administrative processes, as well as mechanisms, guidelines and tools to enable the local government response to the needs of citizens.

It is in fact a process of decision-making that engages various actors with different priorities to ensure that rules are made and enforced, development is realized and services delivered. It is therefore a continuous process that informs the success of a city system.

More information

Cities Alliance is a global partnership for urban poverty reduction and the promotion of the role of cities in sustainable development, falling under the [United Nations Office for Project Services](#) (UNOPS).

Its overall strategic objectives are to support cities in providing effective local government, an active citizenship and an economy characterised by both public and private investment.

To find out more about their work, visit their [website](#) , [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#) .