

## **Isfahan Urban Observatory**

Objectives, responsibilities, plans, and structure

### **The office of Vice Chancellor for Research, Programming & IT**

#### **Isfahan municipality**

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **Definition, international samples, objectives, and scientific principles**

##### **1- Introduction**

For about 50 years, the international institutions and organizations have identified a vital need for some specialized centers for collecting, processing, and providing information to the stakeholders engaged in urban management, to meet the needs of managers and urban planners, and also remove the probable barriers in making decision about the cities around the world. They've had a critical role in creating such centers for a lot of cities worldwide. Amongst such international centers we can indicate UN Habitat, which implements urban observatory development projects in more than 200 cities around the world (i.e., in 54 countries and all continents) providing an international network of urban observatories. The urban observatory is seeking for a mechanism to monitor the global progress in implementing the UN Habitat's agenda, and monitoring and evaluating the cities around the world. The current activities of the observatory are accomplished on the basis of a coherent network development of urban observatories. Such urban observatories around the world, actually, involve all politicians from different levels and organizations engaged in urban management who work consistent with sustainable urban development.

##### **2- What is an urban observatory?**

Urban observatories are places for creating a production cycle and knowledge synergy in the urban management realm. From the UN Habitat viewpoint, urban observatory is an indigenous urban network of organizations and institutions responsible for information provision, analysis, and diffusion utilizing a set of defined parameters, and at the same time, it reflects the priorities of sustainable progress and development. From the international organizations' viewpoint, the urban observatory is a place for taking advantage of all

statistics and information, as well as the required indicators in urban management realm, utilizing space-based infrastructures. Also, it is a place for intercommunication between service providers and decision makers in different levels, and a place for gathering information in the context of time to form a data warehouse for urban management.

The UN Habitat further adds in the wake of the local urban observatory definition: observatories are mostly accommodated in a single part of the city and in an administrative entity. In fact, the urban observatories are in charge with gathering information in the city and taking advantage of the achieved results for policy making on the basis of such evidence.

### **3- History**

Establishment of the urban management observatory primarily attracted the attention of the international organizations in 1970s, and since then it has been seriously taken into account in the UN Habitat agenda.

Currently, there are about 200 observatories in more than 50 countries worldwide at different urban, national, and regional levels which are performing urban observatory operations in a variety of fields.

### **4- An overview of the international experiences in urban observation**

According to the UN Habitat announcement, by far, cities from 54 countries worldwide, including 18 developed countries, 20 under-development countries, 6 African countries, and totally 200 cities around the world has joined officially to the global observatory establishment program through providing observatories in their cities. Vancouver, Toronto, Melbourne, Jeddah, Cape Town, Bogota, Nairobi, Lahore, and the national observatories of Japan and India are amongst the bests in the world.

The global observatory project has two major objectives:

- a) Promoting urban development standards around the world
- b) Monitoring and evaluating the cities around the world

The project is a linkage between the different urban observatories around the world, and it is a subcategory of the United Nations (UN).

## 5- Different types of observatories around the world

The UN Habitat has incorporated three different levels of the urban observatories in its agenda as the following:

**Level 1- Local urban observatories** have been developed within a city and made possible the information-based decision making, as well as knowledge synergy within the influencing parameters on the city for all stakeholders, providing information platforms required for urban managers in that city. Among these, we can indicate observatories such as Vancouver and Toronto urban observatories in Canada, Rio de Janeiro urban observatory in Brazil, Jeddah urban observatory in Saudi Arabia and ... which are operating within a city.

**Level 2- National observatories** are being operated within a country, providing information and observing the conditions of all cities around a country. For example, the national urban observatories are charged with the responsibility of providing information within the general city levels in the country.

**Level 3- Regional observatories** are being operated within several countries or a region in the world and observing the conditions of the cities in the member countries. Amongst the most significant ones, we can indicate Eurostat, North American Urban development center, Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI), as well as the regional economic and political organizations such as Asian Development Bank (ADB), World Trade Organization (WTO), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Tehran Urban Observatory is considered as a regional observatory. Ofcourse, it should be noted that, to present information in the regional observatories, the information about the suburban and neighboring cities and regions needs to be investigated completely to cover information about influencing parameters on the cities.