

# FOREWORD



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***“Resilient cities in our interconnected interdependent world challenge us to work together to promote social cohesion.”***

Resilient cities are places where individuals, communities, institutions, businesses, and systems have the capacity to survive, adapt and grow no matter what stresses and acute shocks they experience. Social cohesion is essential to marshal the energies of all the players to enhance the resilience of cities.

In a recently published ground breaking book, Africa’s Urban Revolution, the authors make the point that African cities need to escape legacies of slavery, colonialism and apartheid that have continued to undermine the evolution of resilient inclusive cities as anchors of prosperity.

Africa is urbanizing at a breakneck pace. Obstacles that had impeded orderly urbanization have yet to be replaced by strategic policy interventions. The result is the sad spectacle of squatter camps that form the outer borders of most of our cities.

Africa’s urban revolution needs to be driven by five factors: the energy of youth and women; religious revival; explosion of modern arts; communications revolution; the African diaspora linked to sub-national identities.

The power and effectiveness of these factors would be enhanced by the extent to which our city communities are held together by the glue of social cohesion and inclusion.

Our own experiences of post-apartheid as South Africans over the last 24 years show just how the legacies inequities of the past continue to undermine the evolution of social cohesion and a shared national identity. Colour coded ethnic enclaves continue to characterise our cities. The poorer the darker the skin, the more likely one

is to reside furthest from the centres of our cities where most of the resources are to be found.

Africa’s population growth predictions place the continent’s population at 2.4 billion by 2050 making it a significant region in the global community whose vulnerabilities will have a considerable impact on the overall resilience. By 2100, more than half of the world’s growth is expected to come from Africa, reaching 4.1 billion people by 2100 to claim over 1/3 of the world’s population.

The global community’s fortunes are tied to those of the African continent. Africa as the cradle of humanity, demands that all its children work together to make our world much more resilient and sustainable.

Africa’s success inextricably lies in its ability to invest in, and promote talent development in its youthful population. It is linked with promoting equality of all citizens to free the human potential of every person to contribute to resilience.

Inequalities within the global community continue to undermine our resilience. In an interdependent interconnected world the Global North cannot sustain resilient cities without the Global South, nor can the Global West prosper in a sustainable way without the Global East.

Resilient cities in our interconnected interdependent world challenge us to work together to promote social cohesion by lowering the barriers to equal access to resources and opportunities to enable all citizens to take ownership of our global resources as custodians.

Africa is again in a position to challenge itself to be a trendsetter in human interdependence that made human evolution possible. We need again to look into each other’s eyes and see not only ourselves in “the other” but also to see future generations on whose behalf we are called to be worthy stewards of our global resources.