

PRESS RELEASE



GDN 13th Annual Global Development Conference Urbanization and Development: Delving Deeper into the Nexus Budapest – Hungary 16-18 June, 2012

28 MAY 2012 — The **Global Development Network (GDN)** will hold its most anticipated event of the year – the 13th Annual Global Development Conference – in Budapest, Hungary, on 16-18 June, 2012. Titled "Urbanization and Development: Delving Deeper into the Nexus," it will be held in partnership with **Central European University (CEU)**.

About 350 participants are expected to attend, including influential researchers, corporate leaders and policymakers from transition and developing countries, plus representatives from the international donor community.

H.E. Dr. János Martonyi, Hungary's Minister of Foreign Affairs, will open the event at the **Hungarian Academy of Sciences** at 8:30 a.m. on Saturday, 16 June, 2012.

CEU President and Rector John Shattuck said that "CEU and GDN are both committed to research and training for development and democracy that can address the many interrelated challenges facing the world today."

Professor Gábor Kézdi, head of CEU's Department of Economics and member of the conference program and local organizing committee, said that "relevant research in economics must tackle important questions, provide new insights and produce credible evidence. That is how research can have global impact and improve local policies."

The keynote speaker for the three-day gathering is **Saskia Sassen**, a sociologist widely known for her analyses on globalization and human migration. Author of books including the much acclaimed *The Global City*, Sassen is the Robert S. Lynd Professor of Sociology and co-chair of the Committee on Global Thought at Columbia University. She has been ranked number 43 on *Foreign Policy* magazine's 2011 list of Top 100 Global Thinkers.

Other plenary speakers are **Isher Ahluwalia** (ICRIER), **Robert Buckley** (New School for Social Research), **Teresa Caldeira** (University of California, Berkeley), **Susan Fainstein** (Harvard University), **J. Vernon Henderson** (Brown University), **Matthew Kahn** (University of California, Los Angeles), **Ravi Kanbur** (Cornell University), **Christine Kessides** (World Bank Institute), **Eduardo Lora** (Inter-American Development Bank), **Mario Pezzini** (OECD Development Centre), **Thomas Sevcik** (Arthesia), **Simon Snoxell** (Canadian International Development Agency), **Carlos Vainer** (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro) and **Anthony Venables** (Oxford University).

GDN President Gerardo della Paolera emphasized the timeliness of the conference by saying that “Cities were, in the past, the natural place for social cohesion and progress. Today, the phenomenal speed of the process of urbanization presents a challenge to maintain that very precious characteristic of cities as an engine for social mobility and inclusiveness.”

Dr. George Mavrotas, GDN chief economist and conference director added: “The overall nexus between urbanization and development is expected to dominate the research and policy agenda for many years. The GDN Conference is envisaged to move the frontiers of knowledge to new directions in this absolutely vital area for the future of the developing world (and beyond).”

Since 2007, and for the first time in human history, more than 50 percent of the world’s population lives in urban areas. By 2030, various projections seem to agree that this will increase to almost 60 percent of total population, and to about 80 percent by 2050. With urban areas becoming the source of livelihoods for a majority of the population around the globe, a huge toll on resources is undertaken. Planning of urban areas, and their impact on the environment become extremely important issues of consideration. Development, in other words, becomes synonymous to Urbanization.

The future of the world will surely be urban and this is likely to be a good thing. Per capita incomes are five times higher and infant mortality rates are two thirds lower in those nations that are more than 50 percent urbanized relative to those countries that are less than fifty percent urbanized. While this correlation does not imply causality, it is almost impossible to imagine the world’s poorer countries becoming rich countries unless they too become largely urbanized. Urban concentration has historically enabled the flows of knowledge, the division of labor, the movement of goods and the combination of labor and capital that help transform poor places into prosperous ones.

But urbanization also creates enormous challenges, including contagious disease, congestion and crime, that often seem to be far beyond the capacities of many governments. Mega-cities (but also small ones) throughout the world struggle with providing decent living space, clean water and other amenities for their rapidly growing number of residents. These urban problems do not just harm the current residents of the cities, they stop also others from coming to cities and enjoying the economic benefits that can come from agglomeration. Making cities more livable is not just about quality of life, it is also about economic development.

Against this background, the conference aims to focus on the overall important nexus between urbanization and development by adopting a holistic, as well as interdisciplinary approach, and moving beyond approaches focusing only on the economic aspects of the urbanization process.

Central European University is a U.S.- and Hungarian-accredited institution of graduate education specializing in the social sciences, humanities, public policy, law, and business. It seeks to contribute to the development of open societies in Central and Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and emerging democracies worldwide through an educational system rooted in the creative, critical, and comparative examination of ideas. CEU is an advanced center of research and policy analysis that facilitates academic dialogue while preparing its graduates to serve as leaders and scholars.

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Please direct any press inquiries to Rama Arya, GDN Lead Communications Officer, at rarya@gdn.int

Please direct any other questions to Niharika Verma, GDN Conference Assistant, at nverma@gdn.int

For conference updates, visit the GDN website at www.gdn.int