The Second International Conference on National Urban Policy, co-hosted by the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN Habitat), is the second in the series of International Conferences on National Urban Policy. The first Conference, entitled National Urban Policy: Towards Smarter and Greener Cities, was held in South Korea in 2015 and co-hosted by UN Habitat, the Korea Research Institute for Human Settlements, and the Korea Institute of Civil Engineering and Building Technology. It attracted more than 250 policymakers from more than 25 countries.

The Second International Conference on National Urban Policy entitled National Urban Policies: Implementing the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda, will be the first opportunity following the Habitat III Conference in Quito, and during the ongoing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) process, to consider in an international forum the role of National Urban Policy (NUP) in the global urban agenda. The Conference will also be the first official event of the National Urban Policy Programme, a joint initiative of UN Habitat and OECD and Cities Alliance, aimed at working together to support the development and implementation of NUPs globally.

The goals of the conference will be firstly, to evaluate, between the national and city levels, to what extent progress is being made on developing and implementing NUP to support sustainable urbanization through the SDGs, the New Urban Agenda and other global agreements and secondly, to enhance the understanding and capacities of stakeholders to develop and implement National Urban Policy to support the implementation of a global urban agenda. It will be of interest and benefit to a broad base of stakeholders: policy makers, government officials, and non-governmental actors that are working in areas of urban policy.

In order to achieve the above goals, the Conference participants will engage through Regional discussions, bringing together different stakeholders to discuss the importance of NUP in their region, thematic sessions, discussing the importance and impact of NUP in different thematic areas, country experience sessions, capacity development and a French field tour.

The Conference is supported by different entities such as the Government of South Korea, the Government of France and includes partners such as Cities Alliance and Next City.
The New Urban Agenda – defined at the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) – identified National Urban Policy as a key instrument for guiding sustainable urban development in a country.

In the New Urban Agenda, UN Member States agreed that “we will take measures to establish legal and policy frameworks, based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination, to enhance governments’ ability to effectively implement national urban policies, as appropriate, and to empower them as policymakers” (New Urban Agenda, 2016: 13)

The Expert Group of Policy Unit 3, National Urban Policies, formed in order to inform the Habitat III process, recommended that National Urban Policy (NUP) should always be a tool for the implementation of global agendas related to urbanization:

“National urban policy has proved to be valuable for implementing the Habitat Agenda and should be further mainstreamed as a critical instrument to implement the New Urban Agenda. The normative base of a national urban policy should additionally reflect existing international agreements” (Policy Paper, Policy Unit 3)

By engaging both top down and bottom up policy processes, a NUP can help to create an enabling, collaborative and cooperative institutional environment, assist with the mobilization of stakeholders, assess and build capacities, and importantly, define an urban vision and plan for a country with jointly defined and transparent responsibilities. A NUP does not replace sectorial or sub-national urban policies, but complements them. In this way, NUP can create an overall, cross-cutting vision of the systems that integrate cities and regions in the process of a country’s development. In many countries, however, there is often a lack of the supporting national and subnational policies and frameworks that can leverage the urbanization process for increased development gains, and ultimately guide it towards sustainable patterns.

ICNUP2 will therefore aim to be a forum where NUP stakeholders can discuss how NUP can assist in addressing urban challenges and opportunities and in implementing international frameworks such as the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda.