

High level dialogues: Ways Forward

Dialogue 2 - New Buildings

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The Role of Stakeholders in Implementing Decarbonization from Design to Operation in the Building Sector

Speech by UIA President Regina Gonthier



IS THE ARCHITECTURAL SECTOR READY TO DECARBONISE?

Thank you for the invitation addressed to the International Union of Architects to be part of this high-level dialogue dedicated to new buildings.

The building sector must decarbonize and is partially also ready. Architects are very much aware that they are not the only actors in the built environment responsible for the environment and the future of Humanity and that it is a matter of shared social, ethical and political responsibility among governments, public and private sector, civil society and professionals.

Considering the global impact of our built environment the solution cannot only be “green buildings”, but must also be “green practices”, “green policies” and “green procurement”. The discussion though should be about “green built and living environment;” to include people and culture.

High quality Baukultur as defined by the Davos Declaration in 2018 propagates a holistic approach and puts culture on center stage in order to achieve sustainable and vibrant communities with a better quality of life and well-being for all. It is about quality as long-term value.

Against the challenges of sustainability and climate change, it is our duty to advocate for the best solutions for the built environment, while improving the quality of life of people.

Our collective approach must be multidimensional:

- Respecting culture, society, identity, nature, biodiversity and humanity.
- Advocating for responsible land use and settlements, energy efficiency, and for the use of durable construction materials and methods during the whole life cycle, in harmony with local culture.

As architects, we are trained to coordinate the knowhow of other disciplines and specialists, to use technology intelligently and to find solutions within the given economic and legal framework. But, as designers within the interdisciplinary team, we are the only specialists challenged to understand the needs of both users and investors and interpret them in special solutions in the interest of society.

The stakeholders of the building sector must, prioritise quality in policy and investment decisions and recognise that high-quality Baukultur supports sustainable economic growth, while improving the resilience and liveability of our natural and built environment.

The strategy for resilience must be a multifaceted one.

- Moving towards zero emission buildings whilst understanding the need for different approaches in different climates
- Fostering collaboration to ensure that solutions are scalable and adaptable.



Energy efficiency must become a top priority.

- By employing passive design techniques and renewable energy.
- By valuing traditional know-how.
- By incorporating robust materials and technologies to endure environmental challenges.

The word “quality”. should not be confused with luxury and high cost. Quality should no longer be understood as the prerogative of a privileged few, but as a prerogative of all. Cooperation between stakeholders such as engineers, architects, legislators and community members, is vital.

It is important to promote public awareness on the advantages of resilient construction and zero-emission buildings, and broaden education systems accordingly.

It is also important to advocate for appropriate funding and use financial tools to encourage implementation of resilient building, which has evident competitive benefits like significant savings in operating expenses and greater property value. Near-zero and resilient buildings provide businesses with both financial rewards and strategic advantages.

In particular, building sustainably will provide social benefits. It will offer safer and more resilient living environments, increasing the health and productivity of inhabitants and advancing social inclusion.

As a federation of national professional organisations, working to influence public policies and advance architecture in service to the needs of society, the UIA will perform its role in this global endeavor and will continue:

- Engaging in climate diplomacy.
- Lobbying for policy changes to support sustainable building practices and the retrofitting of existing structures for better energy efficiency.
- Promoting capacity and information sharing.
- Working on public engagement and awareness, by supporting global campaigns about the importance of zero emissions and resilient buildings.
- Will develop guidelines for architects that integrate principles of zero emissions and resilience into the design and construction process.

We will do our share in promoting sustainable architecture that is resilient, cost-effective, and beneficial for societies around the globe.

But let us not forget that sustainability requests a holistic approach. We should not focus only on buildings neglecting urban planning and land use. That is where the problem starts.

