



VNR LABS

HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM

2026 High-Level Political Forum

CONCEPT NOTE

VNR Lab: Ensuring the Right to the City through a Socially Responsible and Inclusive Local Energy Transition: A Participatory Approach to implementing SDG 7 and SDG 11

Date and time: Monday 13 July 2026, 13:15-14:45

Venue: UN building, Dag Hammarskjöld Library (DHL), 1st Floor Reading Room, L-105

Organizers: German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE), Ministry of Cities, Brazil/ CJUR International Association of Urban Legislation, Habitat Professionals Forum

Format and Modality: In-person meeting held under the Chatham House Rule in English

Description

In the context of climate change, geopolitical instability, and growing energy insecurity, cities, municipalities, citizens and professionals are becoming key actors in advancing socially inclusive, rights-based, and resilient energy transitions. Addressing the nexus between SDG 7 (“Affordable and Clean Energy”) and SDG 11 (“Sustainable Cities and Communities”), this session explores how local governance, participatory planning, and human rights-based urban policies can contribute to sustainable, affordable, secure, and equitable energy systems while ensuring the “Right to the City” for all residents. The Lab will examine access to affordable, renewable energy not only as a technical service or economic commodity, but as a fundamental condition for social inclusion, the effective enjoyment of human rights and last but not least (local) resilience and energy sovereignty.

The Lab brings together perspectives from Latin America, particularly Mexico and Brazil, grounded in a new urban paradigm and from Germany. Drawing on Latin American experience in legislation and urban planning rooted in the Right to the City approach, together with insights from Germany’s local heat transition strategies, the session will examine how municipalities, professionals, and residents of cities and human settlements can balance climate goals, social justice, affordability, democratic participation, legal accountability, public-interest-oriented urban development, and equitable access to energy.

Latin America’s contribution will address the Right to the City legal framework as a basis for strengthening urban planning, territorial governance, social responsibility, and the connection between human rights and access to affordable energy. This perspective highlights the need for urban professionals from the public, private, and social sectors to become sensitive to a new legal and urban paradigm in which energy access is understood as a core issue of urban

planning and legislation, as well as a condition for the realization of rights and the democratic production of cities.

A joint statement of the German Council for Sustainable Development together with approximately 30 German Mayors, members of the 'Sustainable City Dialogue', will showcase opportunities and challenges in implementing local energy and heat transition strategies. Particular attention will be given to the relevance of energy sovereignty, local resilience, democratic participation, and the prevention of social exclusion and green gentrification in local transformation processes.

By bringing together policymakers, municipal leaders, urban professionals, the event aims to foster international dialogue on how participatory and inclusive local energy transitions can strengthen resilient communities, reduce fossil fuel dependencies, and frame access to affordable energy as a central issue of urban planning, urban legislation, and the Right to the City, while supporting equitable urban development through rights-based planning and urban justice.

Agenda

00' Welcoming / Introductory remarks

- **Prof. Dr. Kai Niebert**, Member of the German Council for Sustainable Development

05' The New Latin American Paradigm of Legal Urbanism applied to Access to Affordable Energy

- **Lawyer Fernanda di Moraes**, Ministry of Cities Brazil
- **Urban Lawyer Pablo Aguilar Gonzalez**, President CJUR International Association of Urban Legislation
- **Javier Sandoval Felix**, CJUR International

40' A Reliable, Cost-effective, and Socially Responsible Approach to Implementing the Energy Transition in Germany – Joint Recommendations from the German Council for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable City Dialogue

- **Andreas Humbert**, Mayor of Lamspringe

55' Inclusive Local Energy Transition as Driver for Resilient (Local) Communities: Germany's path towards a renewable future in times of geopolitical shift (tentative)

- **Rita Schwarzelühr-Sutter**, Parliamentary State Secretary, Federal Ministry for the Environment, Climate Action, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMUKN)

70' Open discussion with participants

Designing the future: Interactions between the Right to Energy and the Right to the City from legislation, planning, municipal management, professionals, activities and governance

85' Concluding remarks

Prof. Dr. Kai Niebert, Member of the German Council for Sustainable Development