Can Smart Cities effectively win the fight against poverty? The race towards smart cities often brings to mind a distinctly over the top science fiction imagery, but it doesn’t have to lose its main perspective: ensuring well-being for all and keeping the fighting poverty as a priority, together with the elimination of slums – a problem that affects a large number of megapolises.

More than half of the world population is urbanized, while the gap between urban and rural areas is constantly increasing. Large pockets of poverty remain, with the paradoxical consequence that, in urban areas, edibles must be imported from great distances while famines are more likely to occur in fertile but not adequately exploited territories.

The disparities, mostly due to informal socio-economic assets, produce growing urban masses in complete disarray, a source of desperation, emigration and violence: empowering cities with modern technologies, capable of providing decent living and welfare conditions for all, means taking a large step towards the achievement of the objectives of sustainable development indicated by the UN. This is the topic that will be discussed in the XIX edition of the Infopoverty World Conference, on April 12th in New York at the UN headquarters in videoconference with the European Parliament Liaison office in Milan.

The Infopoverty Program, created by OCCAM in 2000, has been fighting poverty for 18 years creating digital solutions and innovative models such as ICT villages founded in various countries, including the Millennium Village of Sambaina in Madagascar in 2000, empowered by platforms able to provide telemedicine, food security, e-learning services to the poorest communities, through the World Health & Food Security e-Center, that operates in collaboration with over 20 universities and centers of excellence, including Italian ones. In its XIX edition, the Infopoverty World Conference focuses on the dynamics of formation and management of megapolises – where poverty is endemic and puts civil coexistence at risk – placing it in relation to the precarious conditions of rural communities, in order to find solutions that lead to a balanced and supportive development.

In Africa the demographic pressure, which has not had adequate development capacity in the agricultural field, pours masses of deracinated people in urban areas that feed increasing migratory waves towards the Mediterranean, destabilizing local structures of very fragile governance and causing imbalances even in developed countries.

The digital revolution, where everyone is connected and there are virtual frontiers, has to a certain extent accelerated these dynamics - albeit not having bothered to extend these new opportunities to everyone, having oriented its solutions towards the wealthy classes. Now that even the poorest people use mobile phones as a tool for work and emancipation, the Conference wants to demonstrate, through the best professional practices, how these immense potential can translate into terms of education, health and food security services capable of transferring skills to create jobs and alleviate the conditions of the most disadvantaged communities. Smart Cities have now become the center of the digital revolution, subject to very strong investments in research and innovations in various fields: mobility, home automation, clean energy, clean water, climate change, e-governance. It will therefore be the task of the Conference to debate on how appropriate it would be to extend these solutions to the whole territory and, in particular, to the rural populations in order to implement agricultural production and feed the cities, giving way to win-win processes of circular economy.

The agenda will not be the aposthesis of the new super technologies for cities inhabited by ever richer classes, but a commitment to the ideal of safeguarding environmental values and the promotion of human rights, in the assumption that no city can ever proclaim itself a Smart City if it does not have concrete solutions in its plans to combat poverty and eliminate slums.

This is the challenge that the XIX Infopoverty World Conference faces, involving the best thinkers and operators (innovators, managers of public and private institutions, universities and research centers, large companies) to focus on convergent and easily applicable solutions at minimum costs, as a concrete contribution by the digital world in order to accelerate the achievement of the UN’s sustainable development goals.
10:00-10:30 (NYT) – Opening Session
Alison Smale, Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications Department of Public Information
H.E. Angela Zappia, Italian Permanent Representative to UN
H.E. Manlio Di Stefano, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Italy (Videomessage)
H.E. Hesham El Nakib, Ambassador Extraordin. of Egypt in NY
H.E. Toshiya Hoshino, Japanese Ambassador to the UN

General Introduction: Pierpaolo Saporito, President of OCCAM and Infopoverty

10:30 - 12:00 (NYT) – First Session
Next development plans as an aid or an investment?
Helping endogenous development means transferring knowledge and technologies, providing e-services, and transferring capital for productive investments in the medium to long term, overcoming the psychological block created by financial parameters: money no longer creates money, but only social hardship, increasing migrations and poverty.

New York, UN Headquarters Conference Room 12
10:30 - 12:00 (NYT) – First Session
Co-Chair: Melchiate Bukuru, Chief UNCCD Liaison Office UNHQ in New York
Alye P. Celić, Vice President, Consortium for Sustainable Urbanization
Alberto Padova, Chief, Strategic Engagement and Policy Integration Branch
George Hara, Chairman, Alliance Forum Foundation

12:00-13:00 (NYT) – Second Session
How urbanization can be sustainable
LDC are growing fast, and need to preserve his environment by a massive rural development, in order to feed the incumbent Smart Cities, with sustainable models for infrastructure planning territorial harmonization.

Chair: Chris Williams, Director, UN Habitat
Nikki Smithers, President of Smithers Foundation
Jimmy Roback, Advisor of the President of Congo
Narao Zurutuza, Applied AI and Information Poverty Lead, UNICEF Innovation
James Yusef Huggins, President American Global Trading Group Dept. For Africa
Eugene W. Grant, Mayor of Seat Pleasant, Maryland
H.E. Hipolito Arriaga Pote, Gobernador Nacional Indigena, Mexico
H.E. Inoussa Ousseini, Niger Permanent representative to UNESCO

14:30-16:30 (NYT) – Third Session
The Digital Revolution allows the Smart Cities and the ICT Villages to improve the country
Integrating villages with the facilities of Cities is now possible thanks to digital solutions, in order to share to all population the opportunities offered by the new technologies, expanding education, social welfare and businesses.

Chair: Patrizio Civili, IDLO Permanent Observer to the UN
Nasir A. Mogul, President of Sterling Global Investments
Ivan Shumkov, President of AcademyBuild Association
Joseph Di Pasquale, PhD Milan Politecnico and “OCCAM ArchGroup” Delegate
Lise Nathalie Beaune Nasim, Representative of IFI
Saurabh Dani, Senior Disaster Risk Management, World Bank
Makiko Tagashira, Officer of Division for Inclusive Social Development
Shinichi Yamanaka, N High School Kadokawa Dwango Co.
Ricardo de Guimarães Pinto, Liaison Officer UNESCO in NY
Rehan Noor Chaudhry, Global investor and Analyst, Altrinsic

16:30-17:30 – Fourth Session
Which digital services are useful for a balanced rural and urban communities?
The services, such as schools, hospitals etc., make citizens life well and prosper. At the same time they require competences and qualified personnel, who can be trained quickly with digital solutions, which make localisation and territorial interconnections equitable, in the contemporary spirit of “ruralising towns and urbanising the countryside”.

Chair: Maria Grazia Cavenaghi-Smith, Former Head of European Parliament Information Office in Milan
Hassan Ghazal, President of Moroccan Society for Telemedicine and eHealth
Manuel Gurrola Flores, Council President of Quimica Lucava
Mikio Kimura, CEO, TORUS, Inc.
Makoto Goda, CEO, Nippon Biodiesel Fuel Co., Ltd
Makoto Okubo, General Manager International affairs Government Relations Dept
Pietro Piccinetti, Director, Fiera Roma

17:30 (NYT): Fifth Session - Round Table
General Discussion
The results of the Conference are going to be defined in the Final Declaration, which will be delivered to the entire UN System and to the Governments.

FINAL DECLARATION

13:00-14:30 (NYT): Special Event
UNAFF, OCCAM and IFTC-UNESCO in the ambit of: The 9th Signs of Change and the 15th UNAFF Traveling Film Festival

Slums: Cities of Tomorrow
Director: Jean-Nicolas Orbon - Producer: Christine Falco
Today, one person in six lives in a slum, a squat, or any other precarious dwelling. Slums: Cities of Tomorrow seeks to address the housing problem in the age of urban overcrowding by looking at structures built on a human scale from a sociological and philosophical perspective. Introduced by Jasmina Bojic, Founder and Director of UNAFF