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Office: (212) 854-5479 coh@ei.columbia.edu**ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION to LAUNCH URBAN SUMMIT, with EARTH INSTITUTE, to ADDRESS GLOBAL URBAN CHALLENGES**

New York, NY, February 19, 2007— This year marks the first time in history that half of the world's population lives in urban regions. By 2030, this proportion is expected to climb to more than 60 percent. In an effort to highlight innovative solutions to the complex urban challenges resulting from this major demographic transformation, the Rockefeller Foundation, along with the Center for Sustainable Urban Development, part of The Earth Institute at Columbia University, is sponsoring a month-long series of themed conferences and a high-level ministerial workshop.

The Urban Summit, to be held in July 2007, will convene leaders from the private and public sectors to explore opportunities to foster healthy and sustainable cities. The high-level workshop will be held in September 2007 and will bring together ministerial leaders from the sectors of finance, health, transport, environment, and housing to discuss how urban innovations identified during the summer Summit can reach greater scales.

As a global institution committed to reducing poverty and vulnerability, the Rockefeller Foundation conceived of the Urban Summit as a way to address the critical issues of public health, shelter, water, sanitation, planning and adaptation to climate change that, because of the accelerated growth of cities, require urgent attention. Indeed, in the developing world, increasing numbers of migrants are moving between rural areas and crowded urban centers, as well as between cities. These cities, however, often lack the infrastructure or capacity to absorb more residents.

The Urban Summit will illuminate and leverage the work already underway in the public and private sectors, among nongovernmental organizations and other stakeholders, in preparing cities, especially those in the developing world, to effectively cope with the dramatic growth that has occurred because of globalization and the significant changes in local demographics. Attention to new effective ideas and opportunities for investment will be at the center of the Urban Summit's agenda; there will also be a priority on highlighting successful examples that could be replicated or scaled up in different urban settings.

“The Rockefeller Foundation is keenly interested in cities because so many of the world's poor and vulnerable live in urban areas,” said Darren Walker, Vice President of Foundation Initiatives at the Rockefeller Foundation. “The resilience of cities is a critical variable in the reduction of global poverty, especially in the developing world. If there is faulty infrastructure and inadequate public systems, weak markets and limited opportunity, it becomes exceedingly difficult to build healthy cities where people can have a realistic chance to move out of poverty,”

As a partner with the Rockefeller Foundation for the Urban Summit, the Center for Sustainable Urban Development will collaborate with the Foundation to identify organizations and individuals that are pioneering innovative solutions to the problems of cities in developing countries. In addition, there will be a series of separate conferences specifically focused on urban regions in the United States and a meeting of urban researchers from the developing world and the U.S. These concurrent meetings will be held at the Rockefeller Foundation's international conference and study center in Bellagio, Italy.

“The Rockefeller Foundation has a long and inspiring history in finding trailblazing solutions to some of the world's most formidable problems, including global poverty and disease,” said Elliott Sclar, Director of the Center for Sustainable Urban Development. “We are thrilled to have been invited to work with them on this important new venture in tackling urban challenges.”

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The Rockefeller Foundation was established in 1913 by John D. Rockefeller, Sr., to "promote the well-being" of humanity by addressing the root causes of serious problems. With assets of more than \$3.5 billion, it is one of the nation's largest private foundations. The Foundation works internationally to expand opportunities for poor and vulnerable people and to help ensure that the benefits of globalization are shared more widely.

The mission of the Center for Sustainable Urban Development (CSUD) is the creation of physically and socially sustainable cities. CSUD's initial project, funded by the Volvo Research and Education Foundations (VREF), is to establish ongoing research and educational exchanges in cities in developing countries focused on land use and transport planning with the goal of designing plans and policies for sustainable growth. Founded in 2004, CSUD is one of six Centers of Excellence established by VREF to conduct interdisciplinary research on coping with the increasing complexities of urban transportation.