Cities are the keys to a sustainable future for humanity -- and will be vital to the future of the rest of our natural world. Only by making cities more efficient, equitable, and healthful can Earth's expanding human population be accommodated in ways that protect the ecological fabric which our society relies upon. Finding sustainable solutions requires that we integrate lessons from all facets of science, technology, and design.

To bring together leaders from these varied realms, and to advance the process by which smart cities can emerge, a new online platform WorldSmartCity is being launched in January 2016 by the IEC, in partnership with ISO and ITU. As the foremost standard development organizations in the world, the International Electrotechnical Commission, International Organization for Standardization and the International Telecommunication Union, are jointly convening this core group of leaders to participate in a six-months long debate and discussion.

Among those participating on-line at WorldSmartCity are investors, utility and technology companies executives, consultants, city planners/designers, providers of safety/security solutions.

Collectively, IEC and ISO and ITU have been working for many years to solve complex problems – with many successes to show for the effort.

The focus of WorldSmartCity’s on-line discussions are the ‘pain points’ that hinder smart city development, as well as the tools - including International Standards - that can help accelerate progress towards smart city goals.
There are 4 “pain points” which can (and must) become big opportunities for overcoming the obstacles which prevent smart cities from emerging and succeeding:

- Transportation/Mobility for smart cities
- Water for smart cities
- Energy for smart cities
- Cybersecurity and privacy for smart cities

I have been asked by the IEC to moderate both the WorldSmartCity online community and also the WorldSmartCity leadership summit when it convenes on July 13, 2016 at the Marina Bay Sands Conference Centre in Singapore. The World Smart City Forum will be co-located with the World Cities Summit and the Singapore International Water Week.

A select group of Community Ambassadors have been invited to help launch the discussions and focus the debates. Their contributions will be invaluable; they will help to stimulate the online discussions, and they will directly influence the Forum’s program when it culminates in Singapore on July 13, 2016.

How will WorldSmartCity debates contribute to the smart cities revolution? Here are a few of the ideas which will inform WorldSmartCity’s discussions:

Cities on all continents are adapting to the Big Data revolution. How and where are successful cities making the changes, upgrading their capabilities and infrastructures? Which cities are actively harnessing the power of multiple urban innovations to advance their economic, social and environmental sustainability goals? During this afternoon session we intend to explore key elements of the formula for urban success, including the tools, the policies, and the strategies.

Leaders around the world – in urban transport, urban energy, and related fields – are working hard to make their cities smarter. Looking around the world at these experiments, one lasting impression emerges: the truly ‘smart cities’ are the ones seeking to improve both their sustainability and resilience.

Sustainability is the long-term goal of every worthwhile effort aimed at sustainable development. It refers to any state in which the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept of sustainability is continually evolving. As such, sustainable development is a strategic goal with environmental, social and economic aspects; it’s relevant to all organizations; it should be addressed by continual improvement under the conditions provided by good governance.
Resilience is the adaptive capacity of any organization operating in a complex and changing environment. As such it's also a strategic goal for all organizations, best addressed by continual improvement, seeking an optimal mix of preventative measures, emergency preparedness and over-specification.

Sustainability is the destination; resilience is the characteristic; smart is the accelerator.

Cities keen to distinguish themselves are struggling to open themselves to new solutions, especially those which embrace the power of information/communications technologies. Countless companies are keen to supply them with those solutions, and they've adopted “smart cities” and “smart infrastructure” as the description for this activity. Smartness is the means to contribute to sustainable development and resilience, through soundly based decision-making and the adoption of a long and short-term perspective, which is addressed in terms of performance, relevant to technologically implementable solutions.

Characteristics of a smart city should, ideally, include being:
* people-centric (citizens, businesses, workers, residents, visitors, etc.);
* well-led and governed;
* inclusive and open (to all people and to new ideas);
* transparent in communications and operations;
* enabling the security of personal information;
* supported by integrated services and infrastructure; and
* pro-active in learning and developing.

Different cities in different geographies and at different stages of development may wish to tailor these characteristics to suit their local context and priorities. Hence, a smart city should be described as one that:
- dramatically increases the pace at which it improves its sustainability and resilience;
- by fundamentally improving how it engages society, how it applies collaborative leadership methods, how it works across disciplines and city systems, and how it uses data and integrated technologies;
- in order to provide better services and quality of life to those who live in the city and to those involved with the city (residents, businesses, visitors).

*Special thanks to the ISO Smart Cities Strategic Advisory Group for insights.*