



General Assembly

Seventy-second session

Official Records

Distr.: General
29 November 2017

Original: English

Second Committee

Summary record of the 19th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 18 October 2017, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10. 05 a.m.

Agenda item 20: Implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations Conferences on Human Settlements and on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) (A/72/8, A/72/311, A/72/360 and A/72/516)

1. **Mr. Clos** (Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)), speaking via video link, introduced the report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlement Programme (A/72/8); the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations Conferences on Human Settlements and on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) (A/72/311); the note by the Secretary-General (A/72/360) transmitting the report of the coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda; and the note by the President of the General Assembly (A/72/516) containing the summary of the high-level meeting on the effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the positioning of the UN-Habitat in that regard.

2. He said that he was pleased to be addressing the Committee on the first anniversary of the adoption of the New Urban Agenda. The New Urban Agenda heralded a shift from a reactive approach that mainly addressed the failures of urbanization, to a proactive approach that considered urbanization as a tool for development. Since the adoption of the New Urban Agenda, UN-Habitat — as a focal point for sustainable urban development and human settlements within the United Nations system — had continued to support implementation efforts and had expanded its operational and normative work in many countries and cities.

3. The report of the Secretary-General (A/72/311) contained a summary of activities undertaken by UN-Habitat during the reporting period at the global, regional, national and subnational levels. It provided information on the work of the Governing Council, an update on financial developments, an update on the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), and information on the independent assessment of UN-Habitat undertaken by the High-level Independent Panel to Assess and Enhance the Effectiveness of UN-Habitat.

4. Document A/72/516 contained a summary of the high-level meeting on the effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the positioning of UN-Habitat in that regard convened by the President of

the General Assembly early in September 2017. In her opening statement to that meeting, the Deputy Secretary-General, had indicated that urbanization must be put at the centre of development efforts and that the United Nations system had to be reformed to respond more nimbly to the needs of cities and Governments and incorporate a new approach to urban areas. She had also noted that the reform of UN-Habitat should go hand-in-hand with efforts to ensure greater coherence and collaboration in United Nations urban work. The overwhelming majority of Member States had supported that position and a consensus was emerging that the operational and normative mandates of UN-Habitat could not be separated. It was critical that Member States reached a consensus on how to develop a revitalized UN-Habitat that was able to more effectively support Member States and other stakeholders in implementing the New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

5. Following its adoption at Habitat III, the New Urban Agenda had been endorsed by all Member States through General Assembly resolution 71/256 on the New Urban Agenda. Its ongoing implementation was supporting the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework on Climate Change, and other global frameworks. It was important to build on the broad participatory approach taken at Habitat III, since sustainable urbanization would only be achieved if citizens and all levels of government were involved in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. A series of actions had been taken to promote its implementation, including a resolution adopted by the Governing Council of UN-Habitat at its twenty-sixth session in May 2017 encouraging the further development of the action framework for implementation of the New Urban Agenda. The Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development in December 2016 had outlined the way forward for countries in the region to implement the New Urban Agenda, and the Assembly of Ministers and High-level Authorities on Housing and Urban Development in Latin America and the Caribbean in June 2017 had also made commitments in that regard. African countries had also adopted a common African position towards Habitat III.

6. Through its activities UN-Habitat was demonstrating that well-planned and financed urbanization, together with proper urban legislation, constituted an effective and transformative tool for sustainable development, prosperity and job creation, particularly for the most vulnerable populations. Turning to some of the achievements of UN-Habitat over the reporting period, he said that the global sample

of cities had been produced to illustrate global and regional aggregates of selected indicators, and was assisting in the monitoring and reporting of the 2030 Agenda. The City Prosperity Initiative provided a platform for monitoring progress in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda, and was being applied in more than 400 cities. In collaboration with international partners, UN-Habitat had launched a global national urban policy programme. It was supporting 39 cities in their sustainable urban planning efforts and helping many municipal authorities to improve their revenue-generating capacity. The Secretary-General's report (A/72/311) also highlighted the work of UN-Habitat on crisis response, housing, urban basic services, legislation, land and governance, and on cross-cutting issues such as women's empowerment and youth.

7. While urbanization offered many opportunities, such as accelerated opportunities for prosperity, it also presented a number of challenges, including increased inequalities and social conflict, and had implications for climate change. The United Nations system had succeeded in bringing about a paradigm shift with respect to urbanization and its linkages to sustainable development, peace, human rights and climate change. In order to maintain the momentum generated, efforts must be made to strengthen UN-Habitat. When discussing the relevant draft resolution, the Second Committee should bear in mind that the normative and operational functions of UN-Habitat could not be separated; they constituted an integrated framework and were essential for transformative and strategic change in cities.

8. Noting that the governance architecture of UN-Habitat was a matter for Member States, he said that the Secretary-General's ongoing reform of the United Nations Development Group would offer Member States new opportunities to agree on a powerful and efficient governance model for UN-Habitat, learning from the governance models used in other United Nations funds and programmes. Action to improve the management tools for UN-Habitat, including through the adoption of procedures used elsewhere in the United Nations system, could increase transparency, accountability, efficiency and productivity at no extra cost.

9. On financial matters, he said that nearly 85 per cent of the UN-Habitat annual budget of around \$200 million was made up of technical cooperation and earmarked funding. The core budget made up the remaining 15 per cent of the annual budget. However, unearmarked voluntary contributions to that part of the budget were declining. Despite cost-reduction efforts,

including with respect to staffing costs, further support for the core budget was required to ensure that normative capacity and support to least developed countries, which were those urbanizing at the greatest rate, were not affected.

10. He called on Member States to reach consensus on a workable solution to enable UN-Habitat to continue to develop its expertise and retain its capacity to support cities, human settlements and Member States in addressing the challenging requirements of urbanization.

11. **Ms. Edison** (Nigeria) asked what measures had been taken in the context of the New Urban Agenda to enable countries in sub-Saharan Africa to address such issues as poverty, job creation, affordability and decent housing in relation to urbanization, particularly for the young population. She also asked what plans and policies UN-Habitat had in place to build the capacity of African States to produce the scientific and disaggregated data necessary to monitor implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Another issue was how technology, innovation and best practices could be transferred to developing countries through partnerships to facilitate research and development to build the infrastructure necessary for decent settlements.

12. **Ms. Klaus** (Observer for the European Union) said that she had been heartened to hear that the administrative and management modalities of UN-Habitat could be improved within existing resources and asked what steps in that regard had been taken or were anticipated.

13. **Ms. Kacyira** (Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)), replying to questions, said that the issue of urbanization in sub-Saharan Africa was critical. The Nigerian Government had provided valuable support for the development of the common African position towards Habitat III, which took into account the New Urban Agenda and Africa's Agenda 2063, and provided a platform to address issues relating to urbanization in sub-Saharan Africa. UN-Habitat had, in collaboration with other United Nations entities, developed a number of tools to assess and monitor implementation at the local level, including the City Prosperity Initiative, which provided a means of monitoring progress in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda, and was already being applied in a number of countries. It was planned to scale up the Initiative, but additional core funding would be required. Efforts were also being made, in partnership with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, to roll out the implementation of the New Urban Agenda through a global national urban policy

programme; over 20 countries in Africa had already registered and some were even contributing financially to relevant projects. In some cases, urbanization was not prompted by development, but by crisis, and should be used as a means for making the peaceful transfer from crisis to development. The forthcoming ninth session of the World Urban Forum in Kuala Lumpur would showcase the efforts made and provide an opportunity to build networks and partnerships to implement the New Urban Agenda and the urban dimension of the 2030 Agenda.

14. Noting that the European Union was one of the main donors to UN-Habitat in terms of earmarked funding, she said that UN-Habitat had begun as a small agency with a normative research function. However, its operational function had evolved over time and UN-Habitat now straddled the development and humanitarian branches of the United Nations system. Unfortunately, the growth in operational activities had not been accompanied by the relevant administrative and financial rules and procedures, and UN-Habitat was sometimes obliged to outsource to other United Nations entities. Although a recent independent assessment had shown UN-Habitat to be effective, efficient, transparent and accountable, it should be given access to the rules and regulations to enable it to work in field-based operations.

15. **The Chair** invited the Committee to engage in a general discussion on the item.

16. **Mr. Cadena** (Ecuador), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that sustainable urban development and human settlements could be key drivers of sustainable development at the national and subnational level. The Group was fully committed to the implementation, follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda that recognized the role of cities and human settlements as a positive force for sustainable development.

17. The current United Nations institutional system had reached the point of exhaustion and lacked the effectiveness and cohesion necessary for the comprehensive implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Every effort must be made to improve the way in which the United Nations system addressed human settlement issues, and its leadership, accountability collaboration, efficiency and results on such matters. The conclusions and recommendations set out in the Secretary-General's report (A/72/311) provided useful information for Member States in that regard.

18. Enabling policy frameworks at all levels, participatory planning and management of urban spatial development, effective means of implementation and

international cooperation were essential to achieve the commitments set out in the New Urban Agenda. Further efforts must be made by the international community to eradicate poverty, narrow the wealth gap and inequalities, and promote inclusive and sustained economic growth to lay a solid foundation for urbanization. Cities should be scientifically planned, and improvements made to infrastructure, public services and accessibility. Practical difficulties, especially in developing countries, should be addressed, and developed countries, in particular, must honour their commitments with respect to funding, technology transfer, human resources, market access and debt relief.

19. **Mr. Ismail** (Brunei Darussalam), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that implementation of the New Urban Agenda was crucial given the importance of well-planned and managed urbanization for sustainable development and sustained and inclusive economic growth. Sustainable urbanization was a growing priority for ASEAN, particularly given the anticipated increase in urban migration. ASEAN members were developing and sharing sustainable urbanization strategies within the context of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025. The importance of cooperation and coordination within States, with the involvement of local governments, national agencies and citizens, had also been recognized.

20. The ASEAN region was particularly vulnerable to the risks of climate change and natural hazards, particularly in urban low-elevation coastal zones. It therefore appreciated the close cooperation with UN-Habitat on environmentally sustainable cities and climate change within the framework of the ASEAN-United Nations Plan of Action for 2016–2020. It also welcomed support from UN-Habitat for the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response. A number of regional mechanisms in support of environmental sustainability were also in place, including the ASEAN Initiative on Environmentally Sustainable Cities, which prioritized low carbon technologies and a carbon neutral economy, and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025. Given that a significant proportion of the population from ASEAN countries lived in rural areas, ASEAN attached importance to developing urban-rural linkages and connectivity. Investing in sustainable agriculture would also contribute to sustainable food security and sustainable urbanization.

21. ASEAN looked forward to the forthcoming ninth session of the World Urban Forum in Kuala Lumpur, which would provide an opportunity to review the global commitments set out in the New Urban Agenda

and share experience and best practices on sustainable urbanization.

22. **Mr. Herrera Molina** (El Salvador), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that CELAC was committed to the shared vision of cities for all set out in the New Urban Agenda and acknowledged the efforts of some national and local governments to provide for the “right to the city” in their legal architecture. CELAC noted with satisfaction the best practices, success stories and recommendations set out in the report of High-level Independent Panel to Assess and Enhance the Effectiveness of UN-Habitat (A/71/1006). Although the recommendations to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and oversight of UN-Habitat were welcome, CELAC would have preferred further options on areas such as governance of urban sustainable development in order to develop strategic, ambitious and long-term agreements. CELAC recognized the urgent need to reform UN-Habitat, but any decision on increasing the efficiency of that entity must be taken in conjunction with the efforts concerning the repositioning of the United Nations development system. Before a decision was taken on creating UN-Urban, all the information regarding efficiency of and challenges associated with existing coordinating mechanisms should be provided. Moreover, there would be no need to establish UN-Urban as a provisional mechanism once the entire United Nations system had been aligned around the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda.

23. CELAC looked forward to the implementation of the new development framework and New Urban Agenda. It remained committed to sustainable urban development as a critical step for sustainable development, and welcomed the conceptual shift to a more territorial focus on urban issues. It was essential to develop an effective country-led follow-up mechanism that promoted the full and inclusive implementation of the New Urban Agenda while keeping in focus the directive to leave no one behind as part of a human rights approach. Efforts must also be made to ensure that cities and human settlements were recognized as areas for human development and that all persons, without discrimination, had access to the benefits and opportunities they offered and could participate effectively in decision-making processes on urban and land development. A gender perspective should be incorporated into urbanization, and measures taken to facilitate equal access for persons with disabilities.

24. CELAC trusted that the work of the High-level Independent Panel would identify the path to be followed to ensure that UN-Habitat was able to meet the

huge challenges inherent in transforming human settlements around the world, and fit for purpose to support States in implementing the New Urban Agenda.

25. **Mr. Islam** (Bangladesh), speaking on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries, said that although urbanization presented challenges, it offered great potential for economic growth, social cohesion, environmental outcomes and sustainable development. The least developed countries had been experiencing rapid urbanization, primarily as a result of urban migration and population growth, and their urban population was expected to double in under 15 years. However, because of inadequate urban planning and management capacities at the national and local levels, slums and informal settlements were expanding, and income inequalities increasing.

26. There were a number of measures to be taken if the least developed countries were to address challenges with respect to sustainable cities and human settlements, implement the New Urban Agenda and achieve Sustainable Development Goal 11 by 2030. Better urban planning would help to prevent slum development and improve access to affordable housing, land, infrastructure and basic services. Appropriate mechanisms should be made available at all levels to provide for capacity-building and direct access to financial assistance for urban adaptation, and the least developed countries should receive enough support to fully implement the New Urban Agenda. A supportive regulatory framework should be developed to ensure better land management systems, and efforts must be made to mitigate natural disasters at the city level and to promote energy-efficient cities. Steps must also be taken to improve transportation infrastructure. Lastly, a multisectoral and multi-stakeholder approach must be put in place and efforts made to ensure that the least developed countries were given the significant financial and technical support and the level of technology transfer they needed to build capacity and improve access to land, housing and basic services.

27. **Mr. Blair** (Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that small island developing States, particularly CARICOM members, faced overwhelming challenges from rapid urbanization, including a housing deficit, which had resulted in a large share of the population living in informal settlements that were disproportionately affected by landslides, flooding and storm surges. With the majority of the population in the Latin America and Caribbean region expected to be living in urban areas by 2030, human settlement development must be addressed in the context of the three pillars of sustainable development. Key concerns

for the region included protecting homes against rising sea levels, addressing rapid urbanization in a context of disaster risk to minimize impact on lives and livelihoods, and ensuring environmentally sound basic infrastructure and services.

28. CARICOM countries remained optimistic that the adoption of the New Urban Agenda would contribute to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, notably Goal 11. An inclusive and integrated approach, supported by nationally-owned, nationally-led and targeted policies, was essential for the Agenda's full implementation. Priority should be given to building adequate capacity at the regional level, including through the sharing of experiences and the development of a common regional policy. The promotion of sustainable patterns of consumption and production, taking into account the economic and social needs of developing countries, was also important for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

29. CARICOM members called for continued efforts to strengthen the Habitat Agenda and support to developing countries in such areas as urban legislation, planning and design, housing and slum upgrading and capacity-building. Strong political will from all partners was critical, as was a strengthened and more predictable and reliable finance system for human settlements, including technical support to assist developing countries in addressing the negative effects of rapid urbanization.

30. **Mr. Sinha** (India) said that much of the projected global urban expansion would take place in developing countries, and considerable resources and policy development would be required to manage the opportunities and challenges of urbanization and ensure sustainable urban expansion.

31. In India, urbanization had become an important determinant of rapid economic growth and poverty reduction. With its urban population expected to reach 575 million by 2030, his country was taking a number of innovative and dynamic measures to address the challenges and opportunities of urban expansion. A "Smart Cities" mission to drive economic growth and improve quality of life had been launched in over 60 cities. Connectivity to smaller cities was being improved through infrastructure development, and efforts were being made to invigorate the bond market with a view to meeting the massive investment requirement in the urban infrastructure sector. The Clean India Mission had been launched in 2014, and a green urban mobility scheme was under consideration to promote transportation using green energy.

32. India welcomed the proposal of the High-level Independent Panel to Assess and Enhance the Effectiveness of UN-Habitat to introduce universal membership through the creation of an Urban Assembly. However, some of the recommendations, including the proposed establishment of UN-Urban, the Policy Board, the Committee of Local Governments and the Committee of Stakeholders, required further consideration. Concerns about declining funding to UN-Habitat must be addressed before the organization could act more effectively and efficiently as a hub among United Nations entities on cross-cutting issues relating to the New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Agenda. UN-Habitat could only provide greater value to Member States in operational activities through adequately resourced country offices with enhanced technical skill sets. India trusted that UN-Habitat would be strengthened in the context of the wider reforms of the United Nations so that it would be fit for purpose to facilitate the implementation of the forward-looking New Urban Agenda.

33. **Mr. Gadait** (Malaysia) said that his country looked forward to hosting the ninth session of the World Urban Forum in February 2018. The New Urban Agenda was particularly relevant to Malaysia, which was expecting the percentage of people living in urban settlements to reach 99 per cent by 2050. The Government was focused on ensuring that its citizens were engaged and empowered to contribute to the planning and development of cities and urban areas. It was committed to providing adequate, quality and affordable housing for poor, low- and middle-income households and was on track to build one million affordable homes by 2018.

34. Malaysia acknowledged the need to increase synergies and linkages among the New Urban Agenda, the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. It had launched several policies related to urban environmental protection, including the low carbon cities framework and assessment system, which sought to promote greener solutions for sustainable low carbon cities.

35. **Mr. Lu Yuhui** (China) said that international cooperation should be strengthened to help developing countries address the daunting challenges they faced with regard to human settlements. The international community, notably the developed countries, should fulfil its obligations in such areas as funding, technology, human resources, market access and debt relief. Linkages should be established between the New Urban Agenda, which charted a course for the sustainable and people-centred development of cities,

and related Sustainable Development Goals and targets in the 2030 Agenda, and the international community should support the role of UN-Habitat in promoting sustainable urban development worldwide.

36. In China, around 57 per cent of the population lived in urban areas, and urbanization had become an important driving force for economic growth. His Government was committed to enhancing urban infrastructure development and improving the urban living environment. It attached priority to resolving housing problems among poverty-stricken communities, including through the renovation of shanty towns, and the provision of public and subsidized housing. It also actively supported “World Cities Day”.

37. **Ms. Ponce** (Philippines) said that, while the relatively high pace of urbanization in her country had ushered in unprecedented levels of economic growth, it had also brought a number of challenges. The sporadic and unplanned growth of urban areas had resulted in poor management of solid and liquid waste, air quality and transportation, as well as social exclusion. With eight out of ten Filipinos expected to be living in cities and urban agglomerations by 2030, increasing urbanization had to be properly managed. Safe, secure and decent housing was particularly important.

38. The Philippine Development Plan 2017–2022 provided for an inclusive and sustainable urban development framework. Strategies had been developed to target poverty eradication in rural areas by increasing connectivity to growth centres. Projects were being implemented to promote better livelihoods, tourism and community development, and emphasis had been placed on building resilience, given the role of climate change in natural disasters.

39. UN-Habitat had a crucial role to play in implementing the New Urban Agenda. The Philippines supported the efforts to make UN-Habitat more fit for purpose and had made a voluntary contribution of \$15,000 in support of its programmes. Many technical cooperation projects funded by UN-Habitat under operational work had inherent normative functions, and the Philippines would support a more strategic and programmatic approach to the management of projects under earmarked funds to maximize their normative value and contributions. The Philippines appreciated the work of UN-Habitat in providing advisory and capacity-building support, and its assistance in drafting national urban policies. With eroding trust in UN-Habitat a recurring theme in the discussions, it might be useful to learn from organizations at the grass-roots level that had developed excellent synergies with UN-Habitat. The Philippines would support the incorporation of a robust

implementation, coordination and monitoring mechanism that would assist Member States in meeting the challenges of urbanization and poverty.

40. **Mr. Momeni** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that enabling policy frameworks, participatory urban planning and management, effective means of implementation, international cooperation and capacity-building were required to achieve the transformative commitments set out in the New Urban Agenda. The different needs and priorities of developing countries must be taken into account in the United Nations system. Ongoing efforts, including through the United Nations development reform process, should result in a UN-Habitat that was strengthened, more efficient and better able to serve developing countries in implementing the New Urban Agenda and the urban dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals.

41. His country was taking steps to overcome the challenges of sustainable urban development planning, including under its Vision 2025 document and its sixth national development plan for the period 2017–2021. The right to adequate housing was recognized under the Constitution and a comprehensive plan addressing different housing problems had been developed. The seventh Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on Housing and Development, to be held in Tehran in 2018, would strengthen South-South cooperation, promote the exchange of experience and provide an opportunity for the region with the most rapid rate of urbanization to review the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

42. **Ms. Nuran** (Indonesia) said that the battleground to combat poverty had moved to cities and urban areas that were growing at an unprecedented rate and posed serious challenges to development. An absence of effective urban planning and a failure to address the rapid pace of urbanization would affect efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and implement the New Urban Agenda. As a small island developing State, Indonesia was severely impacted by climate change. It was committed to providing capacity-building, and the means of implementation, including finance, in order to achieve environmentally sustainable and resilient urban development, and fully supported the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

43. Indonesia urged others to prioritize efforts to save, stabilize and strengthen UN-Habitat. It supported the recommendation of the High-level Independent Panel for universal membership of UN-Habitat, accompanied by a strong, accessible and transparent management structure. Future operational work of UN-Habitat should be more demand driven, with a clear linkage to normative priorities and a closer connection to overall

strategic policy. Stronger coordination between the United Nations entities working in the urban and human settlement fields would lead to coherent and effective delivery on the ground, and Indonesia would welcome the establishment of a stronger coordination mechanism.

44. **Mr. Naumkin** (Russian Federation) said that sustainable development could not be achieved without comprehensive solutions to urban issues. The United Nations system should provide support to countries, where necessary, in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 11, and the New Urban Agenda should provide essential guidance in that regard for both countries and the United Nations development system. It was appropriate that UN-Habitat, which was the focal point in the United Nations system for sustainable urbanization and settlements, was recognized in the New Urban Agenda. For over 40 years, UN-Habitat had accumulated expertise and experience in assisting countries in the proper planning of human settlements and management of the urban environment. To further improve its performance, efforts should be made to strengthen its financial position and human resources through the more effective use of existing structures, rather than the creation of parallel platforms.

45. Key elements of the reform of UN-Habitat were as follows: to strengthen the link between UN-Habitat headquarters in Nairobi and the New York Liaison Office in order to increase coordination with other United Nations entities in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda; to promote closer coordination between UN-Habitat and United Nations regional commissions; and to retain the voluntary nature of contributions to the budget of UN-Habitat, but to attract new donors from civil society, companies and philanthropic funds.

46. His country was striving to develop sustainable human settlements in accordance with the New Urban Agenda. The population was being directly involved in the implementation of all stages of a recently launched priority programme on housing, utilities and the urban environment. A variety of actions were being taken in municipalities across the country with over 1,000 inhabitants, with finance provided from federal and regional budgets and private investors. UN-Habitat recommendations on the development of public space adapted to the Russian context would form some of the guidance material for the programme. The conference on public space as a place for dialogue, which had been held in St. Petersburg in June, had provided an opportunity to discuss the implementation of the New Urban Agenda in the Russian Federation and the Commonwealth of Independent States region.

47. **Ms. Shurbaji** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that efforts must be made to improve coordination in the United Nations system, particularly given the fundamental link between the 2030 Agenda, the New Urban Agenda and global peace and security. Her country, which had received valuable technical support and cooperation from UN-Habitat that had resulted in improvements in urban planning, was well aware of the challenges facing that entity. The focus should be on improving the performance of UN-Habitat through the identification of innovative sources of financing.

48. Her country was facing serious challenges as a result of conflict and terrorism. However, it was difficult for her Government to rebuild the infrastructure due to the unilateral measures imposed on the country. She called on UN-Habitat and other relevant programmes to provide assistance, noting the right of all to development. She also called for technology transfer to strengthen urban development plans and for developing countries to be given the technical assistance they needed to build capacity in human settlement and infrastructure development.

49. **Princess Al Saud** (Saudi Arabia) said that sustainable urban development played an important role in improving quality of life, and the New Urban Agenda would have a positive role on urbanization. Evidence-based policies, capacity-building, training and the sharing of success stories would facilitate its implementation.

50. UN-Habitat should assume the main role in the United Nations system in providing guidance on urban issues, but other entities also had a role to play. Steps, including internal reform and restructuring, should be taken to make UN-Habitat more effective and fit for purpose. The recommendations made by the High-level Independent Panel, including the establishment of UN-Urban, should be implemented in conjunction with other reform efforts, and a balance must be struck between institutional reform and implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Other sources of funding for UN-Habitat, including from the private sector, civil society and academia, should also be sought.

51. **Mr. Pinto Damiani** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that planned and environmentally respectful urban development should contribute not only to the Sustainable Development Goals, but should also seek to address inequalities, including access to housing for the most vulnerable, which would promote poverty eradication, stability and peace.

52. The right to housing had been recognized in his country's Constitution in 1999. Since then, considerable efforts had been made to tackle the housing deficit, including the construction of 1.8 million houses, and

social policies covering the construction, purchase and extension of housing were in place. Means of implementation for projects relating to housing and urban development were essential. International cooperation, notably action by the developed countries to honour their commitments concerning finance and technology transfer, would support efforts concerning human settlements and the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

53. **Mr. Simon** (Ethiopia) said that a comprehensive approach and enhanced synergies with the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction 2015–2030 were required if the international community was to implement the New Urban Agenda and transform cities as catalysts for inclusive and sustainable development. The United Nations development system had to be strengthened and UN-Habitat reformed to be fit to support Member States in their endeavours. The international community should extend further political and financial support to UN-Habitat to increase the organization's efficiency and effectiveness.

54. His country had already begun to implement the New Urban Agenda and incorporate it into the national development plan, particularly the Urban Development Package. Existing initiatives in the country included the integrated housing development programme, which had been implemented since 2008 to address the housing shortage, and had resulted in the construction of more than a quarter of a million homes, stimulated employment, and decreased slums. An entrepreneurship strategy was also being implemented to address urban unemployment, and social and physical infrastructures were being expanded with the participation of the private sector and support of development partners. The City Prosperity Initiative was also being applied in Ethiopia. His Government was committed to redoubling its efforts at all levels to addressing the multiple urban development challenges that Ethiopia continued to face, with the participation of all stakeholders.

55. International partnerships within the framework of North-South and South-South cooperation should be further enhanced to promote the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, should be supported through the provision of urban finance and the transfer of technology.

56. **Ms. Pardungyotee** (Thailand) said that well-planned human settlements and urbanization could support ongoing efforts to eradicate poverty, reduce

inequality and prevent environmental degradation and violence. The New Urban Agenda served as an important tool for policymakers to address the immense challenges faced by urban inhabitants around the world and could serve as a road map for implementing other international commitments.

57. UN-Habitat had an important role to play in supporting the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and in forging partnerships within the United Nations system and at the domestic level. Donors and governments should help maintain the balance between the normative and operational activities of UN-Habitat, and Thailand supported the recommendation that UN-Habitat should further strengthen the complementarity and coherence between its normative and operational work. The New Urban Agenda had to be implemented at all levels if sustainable urbanization was to be achieved, and UN-Habitat could play a leading role in supporting countries in sustainable urban planning and in the development of relevant legislation.

58. With the pace of urbanization in Thailand increasing, a specific urban development strategy had been incorporated into the National Economic and Social Development Plan (2017–2021), and her Government was empowering people to find their own solutions for sustainable development within their communities in line with its sufficiency economy philosophy. Legislation and other measures to enhance accessibility for persons with disabilities and older generations had been enacted. Her Government was also in the process of passing legislation to tackle the problem of land tenure and was implementing a 10-year strategic plan for housing development to provide housing for low-income earners and other vulnerable groups.

59. **Mr. Poudel Chhettri** (Nepal) that sustainable human settlements and cities constituted a prerequisite for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Coherence between the 2030 Agenda and the action-oriented New Urban Agenda must therefore be maintained.

60. Nepal was a landlocked least developed country emerging from conflict and the devastating earthquakes of 2015, and its settlement and post-disaster reconstruction plans had to be comprehensive and forward-looking. Steps were being taken to integrate Sustainable Development Goal 11 into urban planning, and promulgation of the new Constitution in 2015 had opened paths for development. The use of local knowledge and materials for construction was very important, as was international cooperation and support,

including through the provision of finance, investment and technology transfer.

61. The high vulnerability of Nepal to disasters and climate change impacts had taught it the importance of resilience building at all levels of the national development architecture. Infrastructure should be high quality, resource efficient and capable of mitigating the risks and impact of disasters. Steps must be taken to upgrade slums and informal settlements in order to create a safe, peaceful and sustainable urban environment.

62. Lastly, the efforts to enhance the effectiveness of UN-Habitat to make it fit for purpose to facilitate implementation of the New Urban Agenda would add value to the broader discussions on United Nations reform.

63. **Mr. Doumbeney Ndzigna** (Gabon) said that his country, as a member of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat, attached particular importance to the implementation of the Habitat III outcomes and to strengthening the role of UN-Habitat in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Gabon welcomed the operational activities of UN-Habitat, particularly in assisting developing countries with their national urban planning, and had appreciated the assistance it had received on a national urban housing and development strategy in connection with the Millennium Development Goals.

64. A number of steps were being taken by the Government to ensure decent housing for all, including the development of an ambitious housing and urban development policy, the creation of a national agency for urbanism, topography and land registry, the establishment of a land registry information system and a national company for the construction of social housing. The Government, which was seeking to build new sustainable cities around economic growth centres through public-private partnerships, had recently adopted a three-year economic recovery plan for the period 2017–2019 and guidelines for urban development.

65. If the New Urban Agenda was to be properly implemented, UN-Habitat would have to play a more active role in capacity-building. Transparent and responsible financial mechanisms based on multilateral partnerships would also have to be established.

66. **Mr. Andambi** (Kenya) said that cities were engines of economic growth and wealth creation. However, without proper planning, good governance and an ability to respond to economic and social needs and environmental challenges, urbanization would

simply lead to the ruralization of cities. The New Urban Agenda offered a viable framework for planning, developing and managing robust cities and human settlements, and fostering the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 11.

67. His country was proud to host the headquarters of UN-Habitat and reiterated the importance of enhancing that organization's effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and oversight, particularly in view of its additional responsibilities in following up and reviewing the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Kenya would welcome the creation of UN-Urban in view of the role and importance of UN-Habitat within the United Nations system as a focal point for sustainable urbanization and human settlements. As UN-Habitat was among the least funded of all United Nations agencies, Kenya supported the call for the identification of innovative funding sources, including through the establishment of a global trust fund, the scaling up of voluntary contributions from traditional and new donors, and the development of a cooperation strategy with other relevant stakeholders. Resource mobilization efforts by the international community for enhanced capacity-building, technical assistance and technology transfer must be accompanied by strengthened local and international partnerships and collaboration with a view to developing smart cities across Africa.

68. **Mr. Almeida Cunha Costa** (Brazil) said that, with over 80 per cent of its population living in urban areas, Brazil was fully committed to sustainable urban development in accordance with the main principles of the "right to the city". The New Urban Agenda provided a road map for the achievement of sustainable cities, and the focus should now be on its implementation and on accelerating the achievement of the urban-related Sustainable Development Goals and their targets. The active involvement of multiple stakeholders, particularly local governments and civil society was required, as was action to strengthen United Nations agencies and programmes involved in urban development, in particular UN-Habitat.

69. Brazil commended the work of the High-level Independent Panel to Assess and Enhance the Effectiveness of UN-Habitat. It noted the increasing discrepancy between the normative and operational functions of UN-Habitat and between its non-earmarked core funding and technical cooperation funds. Brazil supported the recommendations concerning prioritization of attention to equity, vulnerability and exclusion in urban development and a conceptual shift to a more territorial approach. In view of its complex implications, the framework for a possible reform of

UN-Habitat should form the subject of specific negotiations that took into consideration the broader process of repositioning the United Nations development system

70. **Ms. Edison** (Nigeria) welcomed the framework for monitoring progress in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda and said that she also welcomed the call for Member States to provide support to UN-Habitat, particularly as urbanization was posing a critical threat to equitable and sustainable development, notably in developing countries. If current trends persisted, the percentage of the population living in cities was expected to double to around 90 per cent by 2050. One of the main concerns was the identification of strategies for the provision of safe, affordable, inclusive and sustainable human settlements to address the housing deficit.

71. Her Government remained committed to the Abuja Declaration for Habitat III, which set out Africa's priorities for the New Urban Agenda. It was taking measures to promote sustainable urban development and address urban inequalities, including through policies, programmes and funding to encourage decent housing for all. Her Government was grateful to the Republic of Korea for pledging to support Nigeria in the development of a national urban policy, and called on the United Nations system to enhance efforts aimed at promoting global partnerships to facilitate the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and ensure that Africa was not left behind.

72. **Mr. Dewar Viscarra** (Mexico) said that the discussions on UN-Habitat were taking place at very special time for the organization: on the one hand, the implementation of major normative agreements in the area of sustainable development was beginning while, on the other, the process of repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda was in full swing. In order to ensure that UN-Habitat was well suited to the outcome of the repositioning process and to avoid duplication of work, it might be preferable to wait until the Secretary-General's report was made available in December.

73. Turning to the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel, he said that Mexico would support a conceptual shift to a more territorial approach, focusing on metropolitan regions, including the cities, towns, peripheral areas and villages. The recommendation on establishing the Urban Assembly should be evaluated in the light of the experience of the United Nations Environment Assembly, particularly its mechanism for working during the intersessional period. There were

practical problems associated with holding overlapping sessions of the United Nations Environment Assembly and the General Assembly, including the fact that the national authorities responsible for the environment were not always the same as those responsible for sustainable development. The recommendation on the creation of UN-Urban should be incorporated into the series of measures on repositioning the United Nations development system and the work of the United Nations Development Group.

74. **Ms. Alsuwaidi** (United Arab Emirates), speaking on behalf of the youth of the United Arab Emirates, said that with many as 60 per cent of all urban dwellers by 2030 expected to be under the age of 18, young people must be given a role in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

75. The population of the United Arab Emirates had tripled over the past 15 years, and a number of important lessons had been learned, including the need to encourage tolerance, integration and cultural pluralism; the importance of peaceful coexistence within the urban context; and the importance of involving young people, particularly those with disabilities, in urban development processes. Gender equality was another important consideration that should be taken into account at all levels of implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Sustainable urban development could not be achieved without women's empowerment and legislation providing for equal pay for equal work.

76. **Mr. Almutawa** (United Arab Emirates) said that the creation of sustainable cities was particularly important for the younger generation who would inherit them, and young people must therefore be given a voice in decision-making, including at the government level. The United Arab Emirates had set a good example for others to follow in appointing a 22-year-old woman as the Minister for Youth Affairs.

77. Renewable energy and increased energy efficiency constituted a simple and inexpensive means of promoting economic and social development. The United Arab Emirates was developing the use of solar energy with a view to creating a sustainable environment and attached importance to green building. Renewable energies would also present employment opportunities for young people who must be properly trained to join the labour market.

78. His country looked forward to holding the tenth session of the World Urban Forum in 2020, which would provide an opportunity to review the implementation of the outcomes of Habitat III.

79. **Mr. Al Ghareeb** (Bahrain) said that his country had made considerable progress in sustainable urban

transformation since the adoption of the Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements at the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in Istanbul in 1996. Balanced urban development would promote the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Bahrain had aligned its national programme for the period 2015–2018 with the Sustainable Development Goals. It had adopted several initiatives for the management of urban development in the light of the outcomes of Habitat III, and attached importance to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

80. Bahrain attached high importance to human development, and was striving to promote the best standards of living for its people. Housing was a key issue, and his Government was preparing to revise its national housing policy in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme and UN-Habitat. Medium- and long-term housing projects had been developed for implementation through partnerships, including with the private sector, and new technologies and renewable energy were being used as widely as possible.

81. **Mr. Traore** (Senegal) said that the New Urban Agenda was a key tool for attaining the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, and the international community should leave no stone unturned in ensuring its full implementation. Given the damaging effects of rapid and often poorly planned urbanization, the need for urban development planning and land regularization to prevent a proliferation of informal settlements should be highlighted. Emphasis should be placed on developing resilient and energy-efficient cities and increased financial resources to facilitate the implementation of social housing policies and improve infrastructure.

82. Senegal was taking a number of steps to address the challenges of rapid urban expansion. The new national development policy and measures to promote communalization had increased the availability of social housing.

83. **Mr. Dzonzi** (Malawi) said that Malawi had made progress in implementing the Habitat III outcomes. The capacity of the Department of Land, Housing and Urban Development had been strengthened; a sustainable urban development programme for the country had been prepared to tackle issues of coordination; and the monitoring framework for the Sustainable Development Goals was being adapted to the Malawian context. The process of formulating the national urban policy had begun and the national housing policy would shortly be reviewed. A subsidy programme for building materials was being implemented to ensure that the rural poor had

access to decent and affordable housing. New land laws had recently been passed to ensure security of tenure, particularly for women.

84. UN-Habitat, which played a role as a focal point for sustainable urbanization and human settlements development, should be strengthened. The New Urban Agenda provided a road map for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 11, and a robust implementation, coordination and monitoring mechanism should be developed. Noting the effects of climate change and extreme weather phenomena on urban infrastructure, he called for partnership and collaboration for the development of resilient and sustainable infrastructure.

85. **Mr. Nour** (International Organization for Migration (IOM)) said that migrants contributed significantly to the expansion and prosperity of cities around the world, and migration trends were on the rise. IOM highly valued the New Urban Agenda, which recognized the positive role of migration in urban cities, the need for frameworks that enabled the positive contribution of migrants to cities, and sought to ensure that all city inhabitants, including migrants, could pursue a rewarding and dignified life.

86. IOM highly valued its partnership with UN-Habitat and recognized that organization's role in assisting Member States to implement the New Urban Agenda. It had been developing a toolkit to provide technical support for Member States in developing migration-sensitive programmes informed by the Sustainable Development Goals and New Urban Agenda, and the Migration Toolbox for Urban Governance had been welcomed by Member States at Habitat III.

87. IOM, UN-Habitat and the United Cities Local Governments network would be organizing the Global Conference on Cities and Migration in Belgium in November, which would give stakeholders an opportunity to take stock of their contribution to migration governance at the local and subnational levels.

88. **Ms. Kacyira** (Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)) expressed her gratitude to Member States for their policies and programmes in support of the New Urban Agenda and the urban-related Sustainable Development Goals and said that she also welcomed the support expressed for strengthening the role of UN-Habitat in assisting Member States in the implementation of those commitments. The strengthening of UN-Habitat would be undertaken under the guidance and leadership of the Secretary-General and in accordance with the repositioning of the United Nations development system. The issues raised by the

High-level Independent Panel, particularly on integrating further the normative and research work of UN-Habitat with its programmes, was already being addressed. The process of enhancing coordination of the work of UN-Habitat within the United Nations system, and strengthening partnerships with the private sector, local governments and other stakeholders, was ongoing. She called on Member States to provide the necessary political and financial support to enable UN-Habitat to facilitate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.