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**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)****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)****Report of the Secretary-General***Summary*

The present report, submitted pursuant to paragraph 17 of General Assembly resolution [72/226](#), provides an overview of the activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) since the issuance of the previous report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations Conferences on Human Settlements and on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development and on the strengthening of UN-Habitat, including the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals ([A/72/311](#)).

The report summarizes the activities undertaken by UN-Habitat during the reporting period at the global, regional, national and subnational levels; presents a thematic and regional overview of the programme's seven subprogrammes and cross-cutting issues; and provides an update on the work of the Member States-led deliberations on strengthening their oversight of UN-Habitat, in particular through the open-ended Working Group established pursuant to General Assembly resolution [72/226](#).

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\* [A/73/150](#).



## **I. Introduction**

1. The present report, submitted pursuant to paragraph 17 of General Assembly resolution [72/226](#), provides an overview of the activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) since the issuance of the previous report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations Conferences on Human Settlement and on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development and on the strengthening of UN-Habitat, including the implementation of the New Urban Agenda ([A/72/311](#)).

2. Following the arrival of the new Executive Director of UN-Habitat, Maimunah Mohd Sharif, in January 2018, the programme embarked on a change exercise with the objective of making UN-Habitat fit-for-purpose and maximizing its value added to United Nations system-wide efforts in order to effectively support Member States as they tackle the challenges of sustainable urbanization. The expected outcome of this process is a UN-Habitat that (a) is trusted, transparent and accountable; (b) operates effectively, efficiently and collaboratively; and (c) uses its expertise in a way that is relevant, valued and in demand.

## **II. Governance of UN-Habitat: work of the Governing Council and its intersessional and subsidiary bodies**

### **A. Committee of Permanent Representatives**

3. During the reporting period, the Committee of Permanent Representatives, the intersessional body of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat, held its 66th, 67th, 68th and 69th regular meetings on 27 September and 14 December 2017 and 21 March and 21 June 2018, respectively. At its 67th regular meeting, the Committee elected its new Bureau for the period 2018–2019 and elected Brazil as Chair; Malawi, the Republic of Korea and Serbia as Vice-Chairs and the United States of America as Rapporteur. The Committee expressed appreciation for the work of the outgoing Bureau, in particularly its Chair (Rwanda), and bid farewell to the outgoing Executive Director, Joan Clos. At its 68th regular meeting, the Committee formally welcomed the new Executive Director, Maimunah Mohd Sharif.

4. During the reporting period, the Committee monitored the implementation of Governing Council resolutions, including through the work of its subcommittees. In line with resolution 26/3 (2017) of the Governing Council, the Committee continued to monitor the implementation of the UN-Habitat strategic plan 2014–2019 and reviewed the annual progress report on the implementation of the strategic plan for the 2017.

### **B. Open-ended Working Group**

5. The open-ended Working Group was established by the Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UN-Habitat, in response to the request of the General Assembly in paragraph 6 of its resolution [72/226](#), to examine different options for strengthening oversight of UN-Habitat by Member States, including but not limited to new governance options presented in the New Urban Agenda and the High-level Independent Panel to Assess and Enhance the Effectiveness of UN-Habitat. In the same resolution, the Assembly advanced the possible establishment of a focused Executive Board or a universal Urban Assembly structure and decided that the mandate of the Working Group should also include consideration of the

appropriateness of financial rules and regulations and of personnel, procurement and budgetary matters for the most effective functioning of UN-Habitat.

6. The Working Group held eight formal meetings between 26 February and 18 June 2018. In addition to the formal meetings, an informal “Friends of the Chair” group was established, which met three times between 6 and 18 June 2018.

7. At its 8th and final meeting held on 18 June 2018, the Working Group agreed on a document entitled “Findings and Recommendations of the Open-ended Working Group”, which, inter alia, proposed a hybrid option of governance for strengthening Member States oversight of UN-Habitat. The “Findings and Recommendations” document was shared with the Committee of Permanent Representatives on an informational basis at its 69th regular meeting on 21 June 2018. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/226, the Chair of the Committee transmitted the findings and recommendations of the open-ended Working Group to the Assembly on 26 June 2018 for consideration at its seventy-third session.

### **C. Working group on programme and budget**

8. In May 2017, the mandate of the working group on programme and budget, originally established in 2015 by the UN-Habitat Governing Council in its resolution 25/7, was extended for two years by Governing Council resolution 26/1. Regional groups renewed their representation to the Group by reconfirming their representatives or electing new ones. Over the reporting period, the working group held one formal meeting, on 11 and 12 October 2017. At that meeting, the group discussed (a) the financial situation and the budget report of UN-Habitat; (b) the programme implementation of the UN-Habitat strategic plan 2014–2019; (c) the work of the High-level Independent Panel to Assess and Enhance the Effectiveness of UN-Habitat; (d) the UN-Habitat account for 2016; (e) and the implementation of the recommendations of the working group to the Executive Director. The working group is expected to actively resume its deliberations during the second half of 2018, following the conclusion of the work of the open-ended Working Group.

## **III. Update on financial developments**

9. During the reporting period, UN-Habitat continued to work on strengthening its financing structures. In this context, the newly appointed Executive Director led strategic dialogues with Member States during the ninth session of the World Urban Forum, including through discussions with members of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and bilateral meetings with Government ministers on the organization’s governance and reforms. In March 2018, the Executive Director held a consultative dialogue with key donors from Germany, Japan, Norway, Sweden and the United States, as well as with representatives of the European Union. Feedback was positive and promising, especially on the need for core resources. Following the personal engagement of the new Executive Director, some Member States expressed interest in providing financial support for the change agenda, in particular to strengthen the efforts of UN-Habitat in its focal point role in supporting the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and delivery of the urban dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals. This resulted in some financial pledges for institutional reforms.

10. Meanwhile, demand for UN-Habitat's support on country programmes and for its normative services and products remained strong. New income acquired<sup>1</sup> for the 2016–2017 biennium for earmarked normative programmes (special purpose account of the Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation) exceeded the biennial budget by 28 per cent, while income for regional and country programmes (technical cooperation) stood at 89 per cent of the biennial budget. As at June 2018, contributions for earmarked programmes stood at \$112.2 million, 8 per cent higher than the previous year, showing continuing growth in demand for the organization's assistance in urban programmes.

11. Although in 2017, voluntary non-earmarked contributions increased by 13 per cent, from \$2.3 to \$2.7 million, and four new government partners made voluntary non-earmarked contributions to the general purpose account of the Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation, a significant shortage in this area persists. Some Governments continued to link future non-earmarked contributions to the successful completion of governance reforms. As of June 2018, non-earmarked contributions stood at \$1.1 million, representing only 8 per cent of the annual budget of UN-Habitat of \$13 million. In view of the significant shortfall, the organization initiated financial reforms and austerity measures to bring expenditure on the general purpose account in line with revenue and made efforts to improve systems and processes to enhance efficiency, transparency and accountability.

## IV. Activities at the global level

### A. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals

12. In order to localize the New Urban Agenda and urban-related targets and indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals, UN-Habitat continued to develop innovative methods, approaches and guidelines for data collection, analysis and monitoring of implementation.<sup>2</sup> The organization has conducted training in over 50 countries on the disaggregation of quantitative and qualitative data, including gender and sex indicators, to inform urban policymaking and ensure that no one, and no place, is left behind.

13. Taking advantage of its unique role in carrying out both normative and operational work, and the long-standing cooperation with various countries and development partners, UN-Habitat continues to refine its tools for effective knowledge-sharing and policy guidance. Using its experience in providing technical support to countries that are formulating national urban policies<sup>3</sup> and related plans, UN-Habitat has helped to optimize urban planning models to maximize economic productivity, resource efficiency and social integration.

14. Global UN-Habitat programmes, including the City Prosperity Initiative, the City Resilience Profiling Programme, the Safer Cities Programme and the Global Land Tool Network, are potential tools for countries and cities to connect data and information to decision-making. The City Prosperity Initiative is a global initiative

<sup>1</sup> Income acquired rather than revenue is quoted to represent the full value of earmarked agreements signed with development partners.

<sup>2</sup> See United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) (2016), "Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" (metadata report on Goal 11 indicators).

<sup>3</sup> See UN-Habitat and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2018), *Global State of National Urban Policy*, 76 of the 150 countries analysed have adopted explicit national urban policies with strong connections to the New Urban Agenda.

based on a composite index made up of six dimensions designed to provide city authorities, investors and other stakeholders with the data and information necessary for adopting more informed and comprehensive policies.<sup>4</sup> The Initiative can be adapted to national and local levels, providing a general framework that allows cities, countries and the international community to measure progress and identify possible constraints in the growth of cities. The City Resilience Profiling Programme reorients the conventional understanding of risk reduction towards a holistic diagnosis of the concept of “the city”. This people-centred approach, which produces profiles and not indexes, is action-oriented, providing a framework for local governments to collect data, evaluate it and generate a resilience profile that is unique to the urban context of each individual city. The Global Land Tool Network is an alliance of partners (international civil society organizations, research and training institutions, bilateral and multilateral organizations and international professional bodies) committed to increasing access to land and tenure security for all, with a particular focus on the poor and women. Together, partners work towards poverty alleviation and inclusive development through land reform, improved land management and security of tenure, enabled by land information systems. These tools and knowledge-sharing by UN-Habitat advance the understanding of the importance of spatial analyses and city-based data and information for evidence-based decisions.

15. During 2017, UN-Habitat adopted an incremental and inclusive process for the production, management and dissemination of qualitative and quantitative data and information in order to depict global urbanization trends and conditions and to obtain a better understanding of the nature of emerging issues. This mechanism builds on existing efforts led by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Statistics Division, as well as the work of other United Nations entities and development partners.

16. As part of global monitoring and reporting systems, UN-Habitat will continue to support countries and development partners in the preparation of national and local reports through an incremental approach that focuses on four interrelated elements: (a) reinforcing systems for the production of user-friendly and participatory data platforms; (b) building on existing dynamic platforms for engagement, participation and partnership, and integrating partners into the process to produce data, knowledge and reporting; (c) strengthening partnerships with relevant entities of the United Nations system to ensure a system-wide coordination mechanism; and (d) developing capacities to monitor and report on the global urban agendas.

17. The first in a series of five quadrennial reports on the progress on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda was considered by the Economic and Social Council in July 2018 (A/73/83-E/2018/62). The report was supported by a synthesis report,<sup>5</sup> profiling progress in the implementation of Goal 11, which was discussed as part of the 2018 high-level political forum on sustainable development. Jointly, the two reports are a key component of the follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the New Urban Agenda and other regional urban agendas. Both reports highlight the need for the global community to confront several emerging urban challenges, including the urgent need to halt uncontrolled urban sprawl, reverse the growth of urban slum populations, institute smart, safe and efficient urban transport systems, improve urban environments through creating safe public spaces, manage air pollution and municipal solid waste and promote sustainable buildings, ecosystem corridors and consumption and production patterns. The Goal 11 synthesis report acknowledges the need for countries to monitor

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<sup>4</sup> The City Prosperity Initiative is currently being implemented in more than 500 cities across the world.

<sup>5</sup> See [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/194452018\\_HLPF\\_Thematic\\_Review\\_of\\_SDG\\_11\\_UNHabitat\\_12\\_June\\_2018\\_original.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/194452018_HLPF_Thematic_Review_of_SDG_11_UNHabitat_12_June_2018_original.pdf).

implementation locally, but to report progress on cities and human settlements at the national level since as urban issues are an entry-point for deliberation on many other Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

18. UN-Habitat prepared the two reports in close consultation with other entities of the United Nations system, Member States and partners, including by convening an open partners' meeting to produce the quadrennial report during the ninth session of the World Urban Forum, held in Kuala Lumpur from 7 to 13 February 2018. More than 40 partners participated in the preliminary meeting, during which a permanent working team was created to integrate inputs into the report. A second partner consultation in the form of an expert group meeting was organized in Granada, Spain, from 20 to 23 March 2018. Attendees, including representatives of all five United Nations regional commissions and 30 development and research partners, participated in a participatory drafting process for the report. United Nations specialized agencies were given an opportunity to review the first full draft, and over 20 United Nations entities contributed to the report. These contributions were recorded in a separate document.<sup>6</sup>

## **B. World Urban Forum**

19. The World Urban Forum, established by the General Assembly in its resolutions [56/205](#) and [56/206](#) and convened by UN-Habitat biennially since 2002, is the world's premier conference on cities and sustainable urbanization. The ninth session of the Urban Forum, in 2018, focused on the theme "Cities 2030 — Cities for All: Implementing the New Urban Agenda". The Forum is a highly participatory, non-legislative United Nations conference: some 75 per cent of the estimated 23,000 participants identified with a stakeholder group, and some 40 per cent were under 32 years of age.

20. The ninth session of the World Urban Forum provided stakeholders with a space to meet with government representatives, mayors, local leaders and United Nations officials, as well as representatives of other international organizations, to discuss how cities and towns can be better planned and managed, and to carry out their role as drivers of sustainable development. The outcome of over 500 events is reflected in the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Cities 2030,<sup>7</sup> which places a strong focus on arrangements and actions for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Many delegates and participants emphasized the importance of public, private and civil society cooperation in order to fully achieve the goals of the New Urban Agenda. A report on the ninth session will be presented to the UN-Habitat Governing Council in April 2019.

21. The tenth session of the World Urban Forum will be hosted by Abu Dhabi in 2020.

## **C. World Habitat Day and World Cities Day**

22. World Habitat Day 2017, celebrated on 2 October 2017 under the theme "Housing Policies: Affordable Homes", underscored the housing needs of the poorest and most vulnerable. The theme sought to underscore the role of sound housing policies in meeting challenges related to climate change, energy consumption, mobility and resilience.

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<sup>6</sup> Available at: <http://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/>.

<sup>7</sup> Available at: <http://wuf9.org/kuala-lumpur-declaration/>.

23. The theme of World Cities Day, held on 31 October 2017, “Innovative Governance, Open Cities”, emphasized the role of technology, innovative practices in urban planning, building and management and the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. The global observance of the day was held in Guangzhou, China, with a World Cities Day Forum, an exhibition on innovative city governance practices and other activities.

#### **D. World Urban Campaign**

24. The World Urban Campaign continued to engage urban stakeholders and UN-Habitat partners during 2017 by conducting, inter alia, a new “Urban Thinkers Campus” series, engaging more than 20,000 individuals across the globe in 59 partner-led events. Activities focused on the development of action plans for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In its video series “Urban thinkers voices”, the Campaign interviewed key urban stakeholders on their views on “The City We Need”.

#### **E. Other partnership activities**

25. During the reporting period, UN-Habitat finalized a stakeholder engagement policy and collaborative mechanism, as mandated by the Governing Council of UN-Habitat at its twenty-sixth session in May 2017. A voluntary reference group on a stakeholder collaborative framework was established to support this process. Separately, on 28 and 29 November 2017, UN-Habitat, in partnership with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, organized an Asia and Pacific regional partners workshop on the New Urban Agenda, which identified data collection and municipal finance as critical areas of work. Partnership events were also organized at the ninth session of the World Urban Forum, including a special session on inclusive multi-stakeholder platforms, a dialogue on multi-stakeholder transformative partnerships and strengthening partnerships for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda for representatives of grassroots and informal sector organizations.

### **V. Outcomes at the regional, national and subnational levels in support of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda**

#### **A. Cooperation with the regional commissions**

26. During the reporting period, UN-Habitat continued to work closely with the five regional commissions of the Organization, and supported regional ministerial conferences in Africa, the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean. The commissions are key partners in reaching out to Member States, civil society and other urban stakeholders in the regions for the effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities.

27. In 2017, in the Asia and the Pacific region, UN-Habitat participated in the United Nations Development Group Task Team on Urbanization, including the conduct of a review, with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) as co-chairs, of progress towards the targets established in the New Urban Agenda and the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals. UN-Habitat also collaborated with ESCAP to organize a regional partners consultation and a regional partners forum,

which focused on local financing and improved data for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. UN-Habitat and ESCAP also continued their cooperation on the joint implementation of a regional project on integrating climate change into national urban policies and contributed to the development of a plan of action on the environment for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. UN-Habitat and ESCAP have established a multi-partner collaboration to prepare the next regional “State of Cities” report for the Asia-Pacific under the UN-Habitat series, which will support the Asia-Pacific Urban Forum to be held in 2019.

28. In Africa, UN-Habitat supported the efforts of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) to integrate urbanization into national development planning, with a focus on strengthening economic and spatial policies. A ministerial dialogue on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, organized by UN-Habitat in May 2017, provided negotiated inputs into the harmonized regional framework for the implementation and monitoring of the New Urban Agenda in Africa, which aligns “Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want” of the African Union and Sustainable Development Goal 11. UN-Habitat, the African Development Bank and the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies of Erasmus University (Rotterdam, the Netherlands), with strategic guidance from ECA, completed a research partnership on foreign direct investments in African cities, published in the regional “State of Cities” report under the UN-Habitat series.

29. During the reporting period, in a joint effort, the League of Arab States, Arab Member States and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), with the technical assistance of UN-Habitat, designed the Arab Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development 2030 and its implementation plan as a regional framework for the implementation of the urban Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda to support the alignment of local and national development plans. UN-Habitat is also a member of the regional United Nations task force for the annual Arab Forum for Sustainable Development.

30. In the Latin America and the Caribbean region, UN-Habitat has established a solid collaboration with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. In 2017, UN-Habitat worked closely with the Conference of Ministers of Housing and Urban Development of Latin America and the Caribbean, other United Nations entities and ECLAC to formulate a regional action plan for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. In Cuba, Mexico and in the Caribbean, UN-Habitat worked with the World Bank, other United Nations agencies, ECLAC and the General Assembly of Ministers of Housing and Urban Development of Latin America and the Caribbean on localizing Sustainable Development Goals in the subregion. In the housing sector, a multi-stakeholder Urban Housing Practitioners Hub has become a key partners’ platform in the region to support the housing targets set out in the New Urban Agenda.

31. Within the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), UN-Habitat carried out a review of housing and regulatory policies in Albania, Bulgaria, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine, including a discussion of concrete legal provisions to create incentives for, inter alia, energy efficiency, inclusive zoning, housing finance and or social housing for the most vulnerable. UN-Habitat has also partnered with ECE and the International Telecommunication Union in its “United 4 Smart Sustainable Cities” initiative that is being implemented to address major urban issues in medium-sized cities.



## B. Normative and operational work at the regional, national and subnational levels

### Thematic work

32. UN-Habitat supports several countries, including Afghanistan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Cameroon, Cuba, Egypt and the Philippines, in adopting integrated approaches to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda to address the urban dimensions of Sustainable Development Goals. In terms of the New Urban Agenda and the local implementation of the urban Goals, effective governance refers to the central role of local and regional governments in urban policy development, ensuring that human settlements promote sustainable development. As the focal point for local and regional governments in the United Nations, UN-Habitat benefits from its long-standing collaboration with them and their regional and global associations to localize the urban-related Goals and to implement the New Urban Agenda. In 2017, based on a strong demand from local governments and their networks for practical tools for localizing the Goals, UN-Habitat collaborated with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Cities and Local Governments to launch a Knowledge Platform for Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>8</sup> UNDP and UN-Habitat also collaborated with the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments to build capacities of local authorities to make better use of data and monitoring systems in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. UN-Habitat also continued to document urban governance trends<sup>9</sup> and innovative practices.

33. Local and regional governments are already producing data and information as evidence of global progress on the New Urban Agenda. Voluntary national monitoring efforts are supported by many local governments and their collaboration platforms, including the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments, supported by United Cities and Local Governments. In 2017, 375 local governments and 374 urban observatories used UN-Habitat's flagship reports and best practices databases as policy guidance, while 52 partner national statistics offices used UN-Habitat tools and guidelines for urban data management. In addition to knowledge-sharing, UN-Habitat strengthened governance capacities by facilitating national dialogues between urban institutions on policy reforms and institutional restructuring and strengthened the capacity of local and regional governments to engage participants in multi-level approaches, including through support for the activities of the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments.

34. The planning, management and governance of safety in cities, especially in non-conflict countries, is an essential component for an environmentally sound, socially equitable and economically strong future for cities and countries. Effective crime prevention and safety enhances investments, valorizes assets and promotes competitiveness. The Safer Cities Programme continued to assist city authorities and their partners to design citywide crime prevention and urban safety governance policies and programmes in line with the New Urban Agenda, linking the safety-related targets of Sustainable Development Goal 11 with Goals 3, 5 and 16. While cities, countries and implementing partners in the Global Network on Safer Cities initiative are finalizing new United Nations system-wide guidelines on safer cities, lead pilot countries (Mexico, South Africa and South Korea) have been identified that will review their current urban safety and security policies at both the national and local levels, paying attention to prevention, participation and social cohesion to ensure alignment with the New Urban Agenda as well as to measure progress towards

<sup>8</sup> See: [www.localizingthesdgs.org](http://www.localizingthesdgs.org).

<sup>9</sup> See: [www.urbangovernance.net](http://www.urbangovernance.net).

implementing measures to ensure safety in cities. In this regard, South Africa has adopted the approach set out in the UN-Habitat Safer Cities programme and has mainstreamed safety indicators across the nine levers of change within its Integrated Urban Development Framework. UN-Habitat also provides technical support by helping implement the city safety index in Durban through a data-driven “urban safety governance in informal settlements” initiative to serve as pre-investment capacity-building to large-scale infrastructure upgrading.

35. The regional and territorial planning work of UN-Habitat supports the implementation of the New Urban Agenda at the regional and territorial levels, thus ensuring the full alignment of its operational and normative work in urban planning — from normative to project implementation — with the New Urban Agenda, and ensuring that progress is clearly measurable. At the national level, urban policies are key instruments in promoting potential contributions of urban centres to national development. As reported by UN-Habitat and OECD,<sup>10</sup> 76 out of 150 countries analysed have adopted explicit national urban policies with strong connections to the New Urban Agenda. UN-Habitat continued to work towards increasing the implementation and monitoring capacities of national urban policies as well as increasing the number of high quality national urban policies adopted. The process of developing national urban policies in several Arab countries (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan and Tunisia) has been fundamental in rethinking how Arab countries manage urban development.

36. During 2017, the UN-Habitat International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning were further applied for effective spatial planning and in order to provide a set of recommendations for compact, socially inclusive, integrated, connected and climate-resilient cities and territories. Using the International Guidelines, several cities are integrating spatial or territorial dimensions into their existing planning systems, and others are creating new spatial planning systems. The value of better spatial planning for urban transformations is shown, for example, in the increased level of interest on the part of rapidly urbanizing Asian countries.

37. At the subnational level, UN-Habitat has also promoted integrated urban strategies and place-based interventions to achieve the targets of the New Urban Agenda, supporting the efforts of cities to achieve more efficient land use with planned city extensions and infills. Ghana, for example, is carrying out a planned city extension project in the Accra metropolitan area, while cities in Belize, Comoros, Kenya, the Philippines and Somalia are in the process of developing such strategies. UN-Habitat also continued its integrated settlement planning initiatives, including its initiative in Kalobeyei, Kenya.

38. During the reporting period, some Member States expressed interest in reviewing their legal and policy frameworks to align them with the New Urban Agenda, a time-consuming and costly effort if it is to be done effectively. Opportunities to address the more difficult political choices, particularly on the impact of development in equality and sustainable urban finance, remain elusive. The Planning Law Assessment Framework and Informal Settlements Law Assessment Framework developed by UN-Habitat are two tools that integrate several targets of Sustainable Development Goals 10 and 16, towards sustainability in Goal 11. In addition, UN-Habitat strengthened its “Urban Lex” legal instrument database during 2017.

39. UN-Habitat continued to assist city authorities and their partners in designing local economic development plans and strategies for effective municipal financing. The Global Municipal Database, a new online data resource on local financing

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<sup>10</sup> UN-Habitat, OECD (2018), *Global State of National Urban Policy*.

designed by UN-Habitat and the Lincoln Institute, helps to monitor change in subnational financial resources and analyse finance at the local level.

40. In 2017, UN-Habitat promoted its “Housing at the Centre” approach, shifting the paradigm to increase awareness about the right to adequate housing and promote access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing. This approach goes beyond physically building houses to focus on a comprehensive framework for housing development, taking socioeconomic factors into account. It seeks to position housing firmly within national development policies, and at the local level and reinforces the importance of inclusive housing for urban and human settlement planning. As part of its Global Housing Strategy, UN-Habitat has worked with close to 40 countries to integrate this housing approach into national legislation for the benefit of the most vulnerable.

41. Examples of UN-Habitat's projects in the housing sector over the reporting period show that by broadening the concept of housing from the construction of buildings to social and economic development, housing and slum upgrading initiatives support inclusive, sustainable development in communities. In Sri Lanka, for instance, technical cooperation, best practices and tools were developed through a participatory process, resulting in a community-led construction project that built 45,000 houses and created formal employment and skills in the construction sector for youth and women. It also better integrated internally displaced persons by improving access to community facilities and infrastructure. The UN-Habitat Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme continued to support inclusive policies and strengthened the financing capacities of national and local governments and slum-dweller groups.

42. In Afghanistan, collaboration between the Government and UN-Habitat resulted in “The City for All” initiative, part of the new “Inclusive Cities” programme in Afghanistan. The initiative, which will provide 1.3 million people with security of tenure, positions Afghan cities as catalysts for State- and peacebuilding by facilitating State-society relations.

43. All UN-Habitat programmes in urban basic services have, at their core, the human rights-based approach with its emphasis on the principles of equality, non-discrimination, inclusion and participation, and the need to pay attention to the needs and priorities of the most marginalized and disadvantaged groups. UN-Habitat hopes to mobilize \$60 million over the next five years through the Urban Basic Services Trust Fund to improve urban basic services provision in over 40 countries, and to build the capacity of over 300 service providers. The Trust Fund will also implement field pilot projects, mostly for the benefit of the urban poor in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. The Global Water Operators Partnerships Alliance, hosted by UN-Habitat, is an example of urban services sector cooperation with governments at all levels. The work of the Alliance, which is being harmonized with the New Urban Agenda, is to equip water utilities to make the right to water and sanitation a reality by providing knowledge and capacity support to public water operators. The Alliance has strengthened its global, regional, national and local mechanisms financially and operationally to fill the capacity gap and help to meet Sustainable Development Goal 6 (clean water and sanitation). In the area of urban mobility, UN-Habitat initiated work on planning for a rapid bus system in Cairo, with financial support from the national Government and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).

44. In carrying out its crisis response and recovery efforts, UN-Habitat has maintained its primary focus on pre-crisis resilience-building. By engaging local authorities and working with and supporting communities, UN-Habitat has been able to strengthen the involvement of women and youth in this area, based on the principle

of “leave no one behind and reach those furthest behind first”. Most of the world’s refugees and internally displaced population are not living in humanitarian camps but in cities. As such, UN-Habitat’s partnership with local authorities and governance structures is critical for sustainable settlement. To support the many actors who have begun to understand the need for a human-rights based human settlements approach in humanitarian camp settings, UN-Habitat is developing tools and approaches to ensure that camps are more appropriately located with a view to making the settlements “life-changing” rather than simply “life-saving”. To help local governments, donors and other stakeholders provide strategic, tailored recovery assistance in conflict- and post-conflict situations, UN-Habitat prepared geospatial, data-assisted city profiles in Haiti, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya and the Syrian Arab Republic. The profiles offer a cross-sectoral, spatial view of damage and vulnerabilities in urban areas, informing planning, prioritization and policymaking in the urban recovery efforts of national and local authorities, civil society and the private sector institutions.

45. Related to this is the work of UN-Habitat in identifying and addressing risks and in building resilience. Through its City Resilience Profiling Programme, UN-Habitat is involved in ongoing collaborations with a number of cities and supports various initiatives, including programmes in: Asunción, to build resilience against water-related hazards such as flooding; Barcelona, Spain, to develop a resilience plan; Dakar, to respond to uncontrolled urban development and growth; Maputo, to build resilience in vulnerable informal settlements; Port Vila, to address vulnerability to numerous natural hazards; and in Yakutsk, Russian Federation, one of the largest settlements in the world built on permafrost, which experiences extreme changes in temperature between the summer and winter months, where, as part of the UN-Habitat programme, a local resilience committee is helping to develop an Arctic/Nordic cities resilience network.

46. Separately, the “Making Cities Resilient” campaign, which is being coordinated by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), with over 3,800 signatory cities, aims to increase local-level commitment to resilience. This campaign is supported by the Urban Resilience Hub, an online platform hosted by UN-Habitat that provides an open space for exchange of good practices, tools and resources for cities to build resilience. UN-Habitat is also a leading member of the Medellin Collaboration for Urban Resilience, a major global community of practice gathering international organizations to promote activities to build resilience in cities.

47. UN-Habitat continued to support cities in their efforts to achieve effective local migration governance and to harness the social and economic development potential of migrant populations. In 2017, in close consultation with United Cities and Local Governments, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, the International Organization for Migration and other partners, UN-Habitat contributed to: the formulation of the Mediterranean City-to-City Migration project policy recommendations, which were adopted by nine cities; the adoption of the Mechelen Declaration on Cities and Migration; and the publication of “Migration and Inclusive Cities: A Guide for Arab City Leaders”. UN-Habitat also continued its country-level work, with a strong migration component, in Jordan, Lebanon and Somalia.

### **C. Collaboration with the United Nations development system**

48. The vision of the New Urban Agenda is the basis of the UN-Habitat approach to partnerships within the United Nations development system. As of early 2018, 18 United Nations entities have developed a strategy or plan for implementing the Agenda, while another three entities were in the process of finalizing their implementation plans. UN-Habitat is now reviewing these plans to better map the

priorities and capacities of the United Nations system in advancing the New Urban Agenda.

49. In parallel, UN-Habitat is collaborating with the entities of the United Nations system in their respective fields to develop normative and operational responses to urban challenges. For example, UN-Habitat is working with UNEP, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Conference of Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and ITU on urban legislation. UN-Habitat, FAO and the World Bank are jointly advancing global and regional land tenure monitoring systems. UN-Habitat and UNEP also continued their collaboration on the Greener Cities Partnership.

50. UN-Habitat participates in the Inter-Agency Task Force on Finance for Development. During 2017, UN-Habitat's urban economy programme collated knowledge and data and supported capacity-building for city authorities to enable them to move beyond reactive interventions and to design integrated, long-term local economic growth strategies.

51. During the reporting period, UN-Habitat contributed to the work of the UN-Water and UN-Energy frameworks. Together with UNEP and the World Health Organization, UN-Habitat continued to play a leading role in the UN-Water mechanism on the development of a global framework for monitoring progress on wastewater, water quality and water resources management. Through the Global Expanded Water Monitoring Initiative, UN-Habitat worked on a mechanism to establish baselines and track progress in the implementation of relevant Sustainable Development Goals. With UN-Energy, the organization increased collective engagement between the United Nations energy-related initiatives and key external stakeholders. UN-Habitat also collaborated within the High-level Advisory Group of the Secretary-General on Sustainable Transport.

52. The increased efforts of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to go beyond humanitarian action and strengthen links to development, peace and security directly supports the objectives of the New Urban Agenda, which details the considerations of human settlements-related sustainability issues during crises, particularly in complex urban environments. While maintaining a focus on "lifesaving" action, the inclusion of development, peace and security aspects contributes also to emphasis of urban Sustainable Development Goals on increased prosperity rather than basic poverty reduction.

53. In its central role of monitoring the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 11 and other urban-related Goals and respective indicators, UN-Habitat worked with the United Nations Statistical Commission to advance progress on the monitoring and reporting on the New Urban Agenda and urban-related Sustainable Development Goals. UN-Habitat also developed a collaborative implementation framework intended to strengthen coordination of the activities of the United Nations development system on sustainable urban development, in line with UN-Habitat's focal point role in implementation of the New Urban Agenda. In addition, UN-Habitat worked actively with other agencies, the United Nations Development Operations Coordination Office, and the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office in the establishment of the joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund and supported the development of a potential urban thematic window. Furthermore, UN-Habitat and the World Bank launched the Multi-Partner Implementation Facility for Sustainable Urban Development to align the diagnostic tools, policy support and capacity-building of the United Nations development system with the investment portfolio on urban infrastructure and basic services of the World Bank.

## D. Cross-cutting issues

54. The overall goal of mainstreaming UN-Habitat cross-cutting issues (gender, human rights, climate change and youth) is to maximize the impact of the UN-Habitat programme of work in these critical areas. Mainstreaming cross-cutting issues also increases the coherence of and synergies between UN-Habitat's programmes and allows for stronger monitoring and reporting on the programme results with regard to the most vulnerable people and communities.

### Gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of women

55. The strategic goal of UN-Habitat's gender policy<sup>11</sup> is “environmentally, economically and socially sustainable, gender-responsive, youth-aware, rights-based and inclusive urban development” to improve the living standards of the urban poor, male and female, young and old, regardless of their physical abilities, and to enhance their full and equal participation in the socioeconomic life of the city and other urban areas.

56. UN-Habitat's gender mainstreaming work is carried out in three ways: capacity-building; project support; and advocacy. In 2017, in-house capacity-building efforts focused on training, “brown bag” knowledge exchange gatherings and the strengthening of the gender focal point system. Externally, workshops took place in Afghanistan, Cameroon, Israel, Saudi Arabia and South Africa. The target groups of these workshops ranged from local communities and local authorities to international partners, to enhance gender-responsive urban planning and governance.

57. Mainstreaming cross-cutting issues in UN-Habitat is primarily done through the Project Advisory Group, a peer advisory mechanism that reviews all project proposals. A Gender Equality Marker has been established, as mandated by the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality. Since 2016, 195 projects have been improved, covering 100 per cent of new UN-Habitat projects. In 2017, 44 per cent of projects scored 2 and above on the Gender Equality Marker — an improvement from 27 per cent in 2016. This improvement relates to an improvement in both the quality of and engagement with gender equality, above and beyond the minimum requirements.

58. Advocacy efforts on gender focused on governments and international partners, highlighting the challenges and opportunities of achieving gender equality in cities. These efforts contributed to international discourse and standards surrounding urban planning and governance. Advocacy is undertaken in global, regional and national forums, including the Governing Council of UN-Habitat, the Commission on the Status of Women and various regional gender mechanisms.

59. The UN-Habitat Advisory Group on Gender Issues worked with the Huairou Commission to draft a guidance note on a gender-responsive implementation of the New Urban Agenda. In this regard, UN-Women and UN-Habitat continued their global gender cooperation, including within the “Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces” flagship programme of UN-Women.

### Human rights

60. Human rights mainstreaming at UN-Habitat builds on existing knowledge, improves the impact and sustainability of the work of the organization and ensures that its activities target those furthest behind. As with gender mainstreaming, this is

<sup>11</sup> A/66/8, annex, resolution 23/1: the resolution established the framework for the Policy and Plan for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in Urban Development 2014–2019 and the Gender Equality Action Plan 2014–2019.

done through the Project Advisory Group, training and capacity-building and activities at the country level. To ensure the quality and compliance with human rights principles in all work of UN-Habitat, every project proposal is reviewed and assessed against a human rights marker. This provides quality assurance and improved knowledge management on human rights issues. Since the adoption of the New Urban Agenda, 195 project proposals have been improved using the marker, and they now comply with minimum human rights requirements. Furthermore, a gradual progress in the quality of projects has been observed: project reviews during 2017 revealed that 38 per cent of UN-Habitat initiatives had achieved the “human rights sensitive” marker (compared to 27 per cent in 2016), attesting to a gradual improvement and concrete results achieved through capacity-building efforts.

61. In 2017, UN-Habitat, along with OHCHR, worked to increase the use of the human rights-based approach to sustainable urbanization. Regular “brown bag” lunch sessions engaged staff on human rights topics and standards, and a toolkit was developed to illustrate the link between international human rights instruments, the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda.

62. Implementation at the country level is reflected in various projects: in Somalia, UN-Habitat trained youth leaders on human rights at the “One-Stop Youth Centre” in Mogadishu, which led to the creation of a youth human rights committee in the country, which will continue human rights-related training activities. In Cambodia, the human rights-based approach was applied to the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All campaign with active participation of local stakeholders, leading to a national guideline for the integration of human rights to the water and sanitation sector. In Kenya, UN-Habitat partnered with the National Gender and Equality Commission to improve the mobility of vulnerable groups by improving their access to the Kenyan public transport system.

63. Finally, human rights mainstreaming in the urban context includes the prevention of forced evictions. To date, 20 partner countries have acted on the prevention of unlawful forced evictions. Notable examples include Brazil, Ethiopia, Kenya, Saudi Arabia and South Africa, all of which have shown political and legislative commitment to strengthen land tenure as a preventive method against forced evictions. This is supplemented by programmatic work on the ground, including programmes in Afghanistan to improve land tenure for returnees.

### **Climate change**

64. Throughout 2017 UN-Habitat remained active in the Founders Council of the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, the largest network of cities committed to climate action. In parallel with this global level engagement, UN-Habitat assisted two smaller cities, Moroni in Comoros, and Nacala in Mozambique, in complying with their commitments made under the Global Covenant. This exercise provides insight into the challenges faced by smaller cities in least developed countries, which in turn can help inform the policy and approaches adopted by the Global Covenant. At the same time UN-Habitat began developing new tools for building the climate resilience of informal settlements in developing countries, which have some of the most vulnerable populations, based on pilot experiences in five developing country cities. Similarly, climate resilience planning funded by the Adaptation Fund in a number of rural villages in some of the poorest parts of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic has provided insight into “getting to scale” while still engaging in participatory planning.

65. During the reporting period, UN-Habitat also collaborated to set up the “Planners for Climate Action” network, which was launched at the twenty-third session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on

Climate Change, held in Bonn, Germany, in 2017. The network, which is being further developed by UN-Habitat, gathers together partners and proposes concrete monitoring opportunities, indicators and activities while clarifying the linkages and partnerships around urban planning and design and climate change mitigation and adaptation. The network is intended, in part, to address Sustainable Development Goal 11, target 11.b, and to reinforce the language in the New Urban Agenda, which calls for city-level adaptation and mitigation planning. The network, comprising global, regional and national planning associations, collectively representing tens of thousands of planning professionals and educators, will engage in concrete actions, including the development of a global repository of planning curricula that address climate change and take stock of current planning practice, and will be registered on the Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action global platform of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

66. Research undertaken by UN-Habitat on sustainable urbanization in the Paris Agreement shows that out of the 164 nationally determined contributions reviewed, 113 contain explicit urban references and content. While this is a relatively high level, the survey also found that some of the most highly urbanized countries did not provide for urban action in their contributions. This finding suggests that in these countries, there is scope for increasing urban content in future iterations of their contributions.

### **Youth**

67. For the period from March 2018 until March 2019, UN-Habitat is a co-chair of the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, which comprises over 50 United Nations entities represented at the Headquarters level. The network aims to achieve greater collaboration within and increased impact of the work of the United Nations system on youth. It advances the issue of youth and sustainable urbanization by assuring its inclusion in the formulation of the United Nations strategy on youth, to be developed as a response to the request of the Secretary-General for the enhanced engagement of youth in the United Nations system. In April 2017, UN-Habitat organized an Asia Urban Youth Assembly, with the support of the state government of Melaka, Malaysia.

68. As part of the Asia-Pacific Inter-Agency Network on Youth, a regional workshop on evidence-based policies on youth development, as well as a regional consultation on youth, peace and security, were held in 2017 with contributions from UN-Habitat. Subsequently, a working group on urbanization and localization was formed to lead the preparations for the Children and Youth Assembly at ninth session of the World Urban Forum.

69. UN-Habitat also participated in the work of the United Nations Task Team on the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth. The initiative is part of the 2030 Agenda implementation support platforms for Member States. It promotes interventions with expanded partnerships and joint action. UN-Habitat's involvement assures that there is a strong focus on the advancement of decent job acquisition by urban youth.

70. During the reporting period, the Urban Youth Fund supported 285 projects in 172 cities. Initiatives, led by youth, focused on vocational training and credit mechanism to facilitate employment and entrepreneurship.



## VI. Observations and recommendations

71. Implementing the New Urban Agenda can accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The increasing collaboration within the United Nations system in this area, and the increased understanding of the central role that cities play in sustainable development is encouraging. Governments are invited to continue to work towards the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, and to support key priority areas such as capacity-building, access to information and the establishment of inclusive partnerships, especially with national and local governments. Noting that sustainable urbanization must be a joint effort of all levels of government for it to be successful, the increased participation of local and regional governments in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda is welcomed. UN-Habitat is invited to further support these efforts, in particular by aligning national urban policy review with enhanced capacity for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda at local levels.

72. The work of Member States to support the strengthening of UN-Habitat is welcomed, in particular the work and recommendations of the open-ended Working Group to examine different options for a proposed governance structure to strengthen oversight of UN-Habitat by Member States, as are the deliberations of the General Assembly on this item. The engagement between UN-Habitat and Member States has resulted in recommendations on improving the governance of UN-Habitat and has provided input for the 2018–2019 institutional reforms led by the Executive Director to make UN-Habitat more trusted, transparent, accountable, effective and efficient. The recommendations will be incorporated in the next strategic plan of UN-Habitat, for the period 2020–2025. The formulation of the plan will integrate lessons learned in the implementation of the current plan, as reflected in various assessments and evaluations, taking into account, within the mandate of UN-Habitat, the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, the New Urban Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Sendai Framework, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and other global mandates.

73. Collaboration with the regional commissions indicates that the regional action plans for the New Urban Agenda are an effective method for UN-Habitat to provide regionally appropriate implementation guidance, as well as to mainstream the New Urban Agenda at the national level. It is recommended that the United Nations system, regional entities and Member States continue to work together in this area.

74. The financial situation of UN-Habitat continues to be an area of concern. A reasonable balance between core funding and earmarked funding is particularly important for UN-Habitat in order to ensure that normative and operational activities are balanced and feed into each other, that the UN-Habitat normative work guides and is integrated into its operational work, as requested by the General Assembly, and that operational work and lessons learned also improve normative efforts. Member States are therefore encouraged to contribute financially, particularly through un-earmarked funds, to the efforts of UN-Habitat to catalyse collaboration on urban issues across the United Nations system.

75. Related to this is the innovative idea of the World Bank to establish the Implementation Facility for Sustainable Urban Development: its introduction as part of the urban window in the Sustainable Development Goals Fund is welcomed, and Member States are invited to utilize this initiative at national and city levels.

76. The ninth session of the World Urban Forum, which attracted the highest levels of participation to date, was a success: the non-legislative nature of the Forum offers a unique opportunity for highly participatory discussions, which should benefit Governments and civil society, academia and practitioners. The Kuala Lumpur

Declaration provides additional impetus to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda to achieve the urban dimension of the 2030 Agenda. The hosting of the ninth session by the Government of Malaysia is noted with appreciation, as is the offer of the Government of the United Arab Emirates to host the tenth session of the World Urban Forum in 2020.

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