



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

ECE/HBP/2009/3
14 July 2009

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND LAND MANAGEMENT

Seventieth session
Geneva, 23-25 September 2009
Item 3 of the provisional agenda

**WORK OF THE BUREAU AND THE HOUSING AND URBAN MANAGEMENT
ADVISORY NETWORK (HUMAN)**

**REPORT ON THE MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE COMMITTEE ON
HOUSING AND LAND MANAGEMENT**

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This note contains the report of the meeting of the Bureau of the Committee on Housing and Land Management, held in Sofia on 22 April 2009. It provides information supporting the annotated agenda of the meeting (ECE/HBP/ 151) as well as the programme of work for 2010–2011 (ECE/HBP/2009/4), as many of the issues and proposals agreed at the Bureau meeting will be presented and considered at the seventieth session of the Committee.

I. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. The Bureau of the Committee on Housing and Land Management met on 20 April 2009 in Sofia. The secretariat of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) was represented at the meeting.
2. The meeting was opened by the Chairperson of the Committee, Ms. D. Andoni.
3. The secretariat introduced the annotated agenda for the meeting, which was agreed without amendment.

II. PROGRAMME OF WORK 2008–2009

A. Country profiles

4. A representative of the secretariat reported on the finalization of the country profiles of Belarus and Kyrgyzstan as well as on preparations for the country profile of Azerbaijan and the related fact-finding mission. The secretariat also made reference to contacts made to identify countries that might request a country profile, e.g. Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Ms. Jokhadze (Bureau member from Georgia) reported on the launching event of the country profile of Georgia, to take place in July 2009. With reference to the country profile of Azerbaijan, Mr. Khanlarov (Bureau member from Azerbaijan) stressed the crucial challenges facing Azerbaijan connected with illegal housing, the condition of existing housing stock, the need for multifamily housing refurbishment and related poor living conditions.
5. Further to the decision of the Committee on Housing and Land Management made at its sixty-ninth session, the secretariat informed the Bureau about the proposed modular approach designed to make the country profiles and land administration reviews more tailored to country-specific needs. The Bureau expressed its appreciation for the approach and commented on the document, which would also be considered by the Working Party on Land Administration at its sixth session. A consolidated version containing comments from both the Committee's Bureau as well as the Working Party session would be presented to the Committee's seventieth session.
6. Discussions of the modular approach also led to a consideration of options for future follow-up actions related to outdated country profiles (e.g. the 1996 profile of Bulgaria). Participants suggested focusing follow-up exercises, pending availability of secretariat resources, only on the relevant issues needing updating and not on all areas covered by profiles.

B. Urban environmental performance

7. Information was provided on the finalization of the publication on informal settlements, *Self-Made Cities: In Search of Sustainable Solutions for Informal Settlements in the UNECE Region*, to be launched in June 2009 during the sixth session of the Working Party on Land Administration.
8. The Bureau endorsed *Self-made Cities* and discussed possible follow-up activities for the publications, including its dissemination at the national level and a proposal to organize a Working Party workshop in Turkey in 2010.

C. Land registration and land markets

9. The secretariat reported on preparations for the sixth session of the Working Party on Land Administration (18–19 June 2009). The Secretary to the Working Party reported on progress made vis-à-vis the workplans of the Working Party and the Real Estate Market

Advisory Group. He announced that the next Working Party workshop (“Transparency in Land Markets”) would be held on 1 and 2 October 2009 in Baku.

10. The Bureau stressed the need for more interaction between the Working Party and the Committee, and invited the development of activities that could involve both bodies.

D. Housing modernization and management

11. Energy efficiency in housing. The Committee’s sixty-ninth session had agreed to address, as part of its programme of work, the issue of energy efficiency in housing by analysing relevant data trends, assessing the situation in the region and providing policy advice. To this end, it decided to hold two workshops in 2009, the first one. The outcomes of the first workshop (Sofia, 21–22 April) would constitute the basis for the second (Vienna, 23–25 November 2009). The topic of energy efficiency in housing was discussed at length by Bureau members, notably:

- (a) The relevance of buildings in the context of climate change and emission reduction, and the potential savings in energy production that could be obtained through appropriate refurbishment;
- (b) The need for relevant ministries to recognize their responsibilities and to increase their involvement with the issue, as well as the need for Committee members to increase their participation in relevant meetings on the topic (to this end, the identification of energy efficiency focal points within housing Ministries could be helpful);
- (c) The need to connect the issue of energy efficiency in housing with the refurbishment of the housing stock in the region;
- (d) The important role that public awareness campaigns on the topic could have in terms of sensitizing citizens to the issues;
- (e) The importance of appropriate legal frameworks, including building codes and standards, to enhancing energy efficiency in housing.

12. The representative of Austria briefed the meeting on preparations for the second workshop in Vienna. It was agreed that a draft programme would be prepared by the delegation of Austria and circulated by the secretariat shortly, in order to start identifying possible speakers for the workshop as soon as possible.

13. Multifamily housing. The Bureau was informed about a project developed for Slovakia. The project could provide the basis for development of general guidelines for the management and refurbishment of multifamily housing.

14. The Bureau agreed that the Housing and Urban Management Advisory Network (HUMAN) would submit a revised project proposal to the Bureau by mid-June. The proposal should be based on the Slovak case and should include methodology to replicate the project in other countries.

15. The Slovak case, as well as guidelines for its replicability, would be presented at the Committee’s seventieth session.

E. Monitoring of implementation

16. Over the years, the Committee had developed a number of guidelines and tools to assist member States on issues related to housing and land management (e.g. the guidelines on

condominium management, guidance on housing finance, recommendations on spatial planning and guidance on informal settlements). To ensure that the Committee's guidance was effectively used by member States and to learn about constraints as well as success stories, advice was needed on possible monitoring activities.

17. The Bureau discussed how best to ensure monitoring of implementation of relevant guidance and recommendations developed by UNECE. The Bureau proposed discussing possible ways to monitor implementation at the next Committee session. The Bureau's suggestions included the annual selection of a number of member countries to report about implementation at the Committee session and the possibility of hearing from other stakeholders (e.g. non-governmental organizations, the private sector and local authorities) about how they had made use of UNECE guidelines and tools.

III. CROSS-SECTORAL ACTIVITIES

18. The secretariat informed Bureau members about a number of activities developed in cooperation with other UNECE programme areas, including the upcoming publication of the booklet, *Housing and Population*. The secretariat also informed the Bureau about current activities in support of gender, including input provided to the Beijing + 15 process and the inclusion of information on women and access to land in the country profile of Kyrgyzstan.

19. The secretariat reported about its participation in the workshop organized by the UNECE Timber Committee on green building (held at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome on 20 October 2008) following interdivisional exchanges on the topic. Given the keen interest in and ongoing work on the issue of green building, also currently being pursued by the Timber Committee, the secretariat informed the Bureau about possible options for interdivisional work at UNECE on the subject. The secretariat would notify the Bureau of further activities in due course.

20. The Bureau welcomed inter-agency and interdivisional activities. On the issue of green building, as the Timber Committee was currently taking a lead role vis-à-vis the topic, concerns were raised that the focus might be placed too much on timber as a green material, to the detriment of other materials and topics. The need to cover all building-related issues (e.g. energy efficiency, construction techniques, housing policies and use of local materials) was raised. The Bureau decided to discuss this issue in greater depth at the Committee session in September.

IV. HOUSING AND URBAN MANAGEMENT ADVISORY NETWORK

21. The representative of HUMAN presented the proposal for the inclusion of three additional members in the Advisory Group¹. The Bureau agreed to this inclusion. HUMAN agreed to report to the secretariat on current membership, including outgoing members, by no later than end-May 2009, so as to be able to present the current list of members to the Committee.

22. Questions were raised about the operational structure of HUMAN and about future possible contributions of the group to the Committee's work. In this context, and in accordance with the Guidelines for the Establishment and Functioning of Team of Specialists within UNECE (ECE/EX/2), the Bureau requested HUMAN to present the Committee's seventieth session with a report of its activities as well as a programme of work for the next biennium.

¹ Ms. A. Badyina, Ms. E. Morris and Mr. P. Gurtner.

V. SIXTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

23. The sixty-third session of the Economic Commission for Europe, held in Geneva from 30 March to 1 April 2009, consisted of two thematic sessions covering the issue of economic integration in the UNECE region. The sessions had examined the financial crisis as well as mitigation and adaptation to climate change. The secretariat informed the Bureau about issues of particular interest to the Committee.

24. Regarding climate change, presentations had highlighted by that, despite the obvious need and opportunities for reducing energy consumption in buildings, the potential remained largely untapped in most countries. Buildings were not properly reflected in the Kyoto Protocol as a sector for emission reduction, and there was a need to include the building sector in the post-Kyoto framework. The Bureau was also informed about the Commission's proposal to develop an Action Plan for Energy Efficiency in Housing.

25. The Bureau decided to draft a letter to all Committee members highlighting the need to properly reflect the potentials of the building sector in post-Kyoto negotiations. Members would be requested to forward the letter to their relevant counterparts in those ministries involved in the process leading to Copenhagen.

26. The Bureau welcomed the proposal of the Action Plan for Energy Efficiency in Housing and suggested that the Vienna workshop start elaborating and developing elements of such a plan. The programme for the Vienna workshop would be presented at the Committee's seventieth session for its consideration.

VI. PREPARATIONS OF THE SEVENTIETH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND LAND MANAGEMENT

27. The Chairperson of the Committee presented the draft agenda for the seventieth session, and the secretariat updated the Bureau on the status of preparations for the meeting (Geneva, 23–25 September 2009).

28. The secretariat updated the Bureau members on preparations for the seminar "Climate Neutral Cities", and introduced the outline of the background paper to guide discussion as well as a preliminary programme. The secretariat invited Bureau members to suggest additional speakers for the seminar.

29. The Bureau welcomed the preliminary programme and the background paper outline. It was suggested that the title of the seminar be modified to also reflect the contribution of "housing" to greenhouse gas emissions reduction.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS

30. Reference was made to the recent earthquake and its effect on the built environment in Italy. The Bureau discussed the issue of safety in building and construction and stressed the importance that the issue could have for the Committee's work. Despite the existence of advanced technologies in many countries, institutional, legal, financial and awareness issues still hindered the correct application of safe and secure norms and techniques. The representative of Azerbaijan underlined the relevance his country attaches to these issues, and invited the Bureau to further consider the topic.

31. It was agreed that an additional item on building and construction, safety and disaster preparedness would be added to the agenda for the Committee's seventieth session.

32. The Bureau briefly discussed the upcoming Shanghai Expo (2010). Bureau members stated they were not directly involved; however, in some countries the responsibility to provide countries' contributions lay with the Ministry of Trade. The Bureau felt that participation by UNECE in side-events would not provide more visibility to UNECE and/or the Committee, and urged the secretariat to concentrate on the Committee's programme of work.
