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**Executive Board of the United Nations  
Human Settlements Programme**

**First session of 2020**

Nairobi, 31 March–2 April 2020

Item 6 of the provisional agenda\*

**Status of implementation of the resolutions and decisions  
adopted by the UN-Habitat Assembly at its first session**

**Implementation of a review process for the United Nations  
System-Wide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human  
Settlements: Concept note\*\***

**I. Background**

1. It is now accepted that safety is a prerequisite for the realisation of sustainable urban development. There is no sustainable urban development without safety; and vice versa there is no safety without sustainable urban development. As well contrary to common perception, we now know that urban crime and violence impacts most on the urban poor. We also now know that urban crime and violence are not just issues for urban agglomerations. Globally, 44 per cent of residents in small cities face epidemic levels of violence and therefore too, secondary cities become a key focus for future work. Notwithstanding, contrary to popular opinion, most cities experienced high crime and violence are not confined to conflict and crisis areas; rather the vast majority of lethal violence takes place in areas ostensibly at peace in non-conflict cities.

2. In line with Resolution 1/2 of the UN-Habitat Assembly on “UN systemwide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements” contained in document HSP/HA.1/Res.2, Member States have directed the Executive Director, to provide the Executive Board with a concept note, including financial costing, on the implementation of a review process for the Guidelines in a manner that enables Member States to share their experiences and best practices.

3. In doing so, this concept note seeks to inform a future decision of the Executive Board to adopt a Terms of Reference of the Mechanism for the Review process of the UN systemwide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements, including conduct and reporting of country reviews in their experiences and practices in the implementation of the guidelines. It takes into consideration the lessons from practice of the 25 years of work of the Safer Cities Programme and as well the implementation of the UN-Habitat Strategic Plan 2020-2023 in which safety is a cross-cutting theme. It also takes into account the necessary capacitation needs of the agency to effectively drive a UN systemwide process engaging member states, as a focal point for the UN system on sustainable urbanisation.

4. UN-Habitat’s Safer Cities programme was far ahead of the curve, anticipating this new consensus on the urgent need to address urban safety and security some 25 years in advance. UN-Habitat’s Safer Cities Programme has implemented programming in 77 urban areas in 24 countries around the world, supporting local authorities to adopt city-wide crime prevention and safety strategies and action plans. The Safer Cities Programme has contributed to the corpus of evidence underpinning the central role of municipal governments in addressing urban safety and security for all,

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\* HSP/EB.2020/1.

\*\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

and the importance of partnerships between governments and other stakeholders. The Safer Cities Programme has foregrounded a systematic, participatory approach in which analysis, development of strategies grounded in evidence, and institution-strengthening are key, now evident in the UN systemwide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements. The programme has also promoted extensive regional and international debate on urban crime prevention within its international network of partners, embodied since 2012 in the *Global Network on Safer Cities (GNSC)*, with growing regional and national forums for urban safety being established; and growing number of UN agencies and international organisations now programming on urban safety.

5. The adoption of UN systemwide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements is the first outcome of the UN systemwide Strategy for Sustainable Urbanisation. It offers a unique opportunity to ensure the integrity of urban safety approaches draw on lessons from practices worldwide to inform urban safety innovations in the 2030 Agenda and New Urban Agenda. In this respect, the establishment of an expert peer review mechanism/process by member states provides a key platform to leverage on the expertise, longevity, and investments of the UN-Habitat Safer Cities Programme, to fully capitalize on the current global policy focus on urban safety and security and as a means of attracting a wider and more diverse portfolio of funding for implementation of local government safety interventions in countries.

## II. Rationale

6. The UN systemwide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements highlights the need for establishing a review mechanism and process to assess progress in a manner that enables Member States to share their experiences and best practices and to assist member states in implementing the Guidelines. In addition, to ensure the Guidelines remain a living document that captures the state of the art of the ‘safer cities and human settlements’ approach in its ongoing implementation in countries and propose amendments to the Guidelines where necessary to ensure it remains relevant and effective for implementation.

7. The Review process is one tool aimed at enhancing the effective delivery of the work of the UN system. This is purposed to engage willing member states in a regular, non-binding and consistent manner with a view to catalyse effective local implementation of the guidelines to make cities and human settlements safer. It is proposed that the review cycle lasts within the phase of one Assembly session to the next in four years. Member states will exchange measures taken in implementing the Guidelines and the difficulties encountered by them in doing so. Through this process, member states will also identify and substantiate specific needs for technical assistance and promote and facilitate the provision of such assistance. In addition, the review process will further promote and facilitate international cooperation, providing the Executive Board with information on successes, good practices and challenges of member states in implementing and using the Guidelines, promoting and facilitating the exchange of information, practices and experiences gained in the implementation of the Guidelines.

8. Based on experiences of other UN agencies that have engaged member states in similar processes, review processes of this nature are often as transparent, efficient, non-intrusive, inclusive and impartial; non-adversarial and non-punitive, without any form of ranking; providing opportunities to share good practices and challenges; are technical, promoting constructive collaboration; and complements existing international and regional review mechanisms.

9. Since 1996, the UN-Habitat Safer Cities Programme has been the institutional framework guiding and providing technical support and advisories to member states and local governments in the implementation of citywide crime prevention and urban safety policies. This level of engagement has been based upon member states request for technical assistance to the agency, upon which extrabudgetary resources have been mobilized for project development and implementation, based on the normative tools developed by the agency. Further, the growth of a network of other implementing partners in and outside the UN system providing technical support to cities and local governments on safer cities has led to the establishment of the Global Network on Safer Cities (GNSC), as a mechanism to enhance structured dialogue of nonstate actors with state actors on the systematization of experiences in urban crime and violence prevention that largely contributed to the drafting of the UN systemwide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements. This has led to joint programming and joint project interventions and leveraging resources through partnerships for local implementation.

10. This will be the first time UN-Habitat formally engages member states through the governing bodies in such a technical expert review process, of an inter-governmental nature, in support of ongoing normative and operational activities. It unlocks the value of the enhance participation of the governing bodies in the work of the agency in a manner that will drive increased capacities of

conceptual underpinnings in the debates of the bodies on the implementation of the guidelines. It has the potential as well to scale up the mobilisation of country resources for local implementation of the guidelines, paving the way for catalyzed actions towards the realization of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and the New Urban Agenda.

11. UN-Habitat will seek to mobilise at least 10 to 15 champion countries to engage and undertake this review, ideally shaped as a peer review exercise and in an inter-governmental process, engaging as well UN-Habitat's network of implementing partners and other UN agencies in the select champion countries, also considering the UN Common Country Assessments (CCAs) and the UN-Habitat Strategic Plan 2020-23. The focus of this peer review will be in-country within the select group of countries on the policy and practices being developed in the implementation of the UN systemwide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements.

12. Such a review process will ensure that safer cities interventions build on lessons from practice to contribute towards the objectives of i) reduction of spatial inequality, ii) enhanced prosperity and improved sustainable quality of life for all iii) sustainable urban development and improved urban environment and iv) enhanced integration and resilience in cities - identified in UN-Habitat's strategic Plan 2020-2023. The initiative will directly contribute to the implementation of SDG 5 on Gender Equality, of SDG 16 on Peace, Justice and Governance, SDG 17 on Partnerships and SDG 11 on Sustainable Cities and Communities particularly target 11.7.2. It will enable member states to progressively deliver urban safety in a holistic and comprehensive manner, drawing from promising practices generated in cities and human settlements worldwide.

### III. Objective

13. This review process aims to assist member states in the implementation of the UN systemwide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements.

14. In this regard, the review process, inter alia, shall:

- (a) Promote the vision and conceptual framework of the Guidelines as set out in its article II and III;
- (b) Provide the Executive Board with information on the measures taken by member states in implementing the Guidelines and the difficulties encountered by them in doing so;
- (c) Help member states to identify and substantiate specific needs for technical assistance and to promote and facilitate the provision of technical assistance;
- (d) Promote and facilitate international cooperation in the prevention of urban crime, violence and insecurity and the enhancement of urban safety and security for all;
- (e) Provide the Executive Board with information on successes, good practices and challenges of member states in implementing and using the Guidelines;
- (f) Promote and facilitate the exchange of information, practices and experiences gained in the implementation of the Guidelines.

### IV. Outcomes, Initiatives and Results

15. In collaboration with other UN Agencies, as well as state and non-state actors, this review process is expected to achieve the following outcomes:

- (a) Outcome 1: Local authorities and government undertaking urban safety and security policies and programmes according to guidance provided by UN global standards for safer cities, which promote a holistic, integrated and spatially based approach, mainstreaming human rights and a culture of lawfulness, fostering inclusion across gender, age and culture identities, as well as the co-production of safety and security for all, leaving no one behind.
- (b) Outcome 2: Enabling institutional environments created at country and local level for sustainable and contextually appropriate safer cities policies, strategies, plans, investment models, legal and financial frameworks, and inclusive safety governance mechanisms that provide for the rights to participation for all inhabitants.
- (c) Outcome 3: Established and operating strategic networks at national, regional and global levels, building multi-stakeholder partnerships and community action to demonstrate inclusive and sustainable urban safety and security, particularly for the most vulnerable communities in deprived urban areas and other human settlements.

16. **Outcome 1** will be achieved through a variety of initiatives, including:
- (a) Mapping of global expertise and experiences, leading to the formulation of a virtual online knowledge repository on safer cities and human settlements;
  - (b) Development of an urban safety indicators matrix for identifying and assessing urban safety and security risks and resilience and their associated catalysts or causes in urban crime and violence;
  - (c) Effective country host and champion for global resources for the Global Safer Cities Programme
  - (d) Development of tools for substantive support of capacity building at the global, national and local level in areas related to urban safety and security through the Safer Cities Programme
  - (e) Reinforcement of the Global Network on Safer Cities as a community of practice;
17. **Outcome 2** will be achieved through a variety of initiatives, including:
- (a) Supporting capacity-building for urban safety actors towards the development of policies, plans and projects that advance the implementation of the Guidelines, promoting holistic and integrated approaches and partnership models for urban safety and guiding the development of territorial approaches that integrate crime and violence prevention measures;
  - (b) Formulating of adequate institutional follow-up mechanisms, including monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track achievement of safety-related SDG targets and the NUA at the city level;
18. **Outcome 3** will be achieved through a variety of initiatives, including:
- (a) Supporting local governments and key stakeholders in implementing urban safety participatory processes and plans and the strategic formulation of inclusive business models, upstream processes and cost-benefit analysis, including quality assurance;
  - (b) Providing targeted technical advice and capacity building on inclusive policy, legislation and methodologies on urban safety to key actors, with a focus on local governments, private sector and community-based organizations, targeting the national upscaling of local and city-wide initiatives in line with the various countries legal frameworks;
  - (c) Supporting the identification and implementation of short, medium- and long-term urban safety projects as well as the creation/capacity of urban safety actors.
  - (d) A results framework will be developed to track the impact of the implementation of the UN systemwide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements, including:
  - (e) By 2030, urban violence is reduced by half. In this respect, SDG target 16.1 sets a global ambition to significantly reduce all forms of violence and related deaths by 2030;
  - (f) Specific indicators to promote disproportionate benefit to target groups including women, children and youth, older people, those with disability and those in absolute or relative poverty;
  - (g) By 2030, 100 cities with reduced urban crime and violence measured by neighborhood safety indicators, populated from the police records, crime surveys but as well the characteristics of neighborhood vulnerability in planning, design and services provision;
  - (h) By 2030, 25 champion countries are expected to make measurable capacity or performance improvements in safer cities policies and programme interventions impacting an estimated 100 million people.

## V. UN-Habitat's Comparative Advantage

19. UN-Habitat intends to change the safety narrative still in public discourse as a policing and criminal justice issue alone, to safety as a key issue of urban transformation processes worldwide through a co-production approach. UN-Habitat's safer cities approach is unique because:
- (a) It has a strong foundation in social inclusion and integration.
  - (b) A city-wide participatory planning led approach to urban safety which serves the safety needs of all inhabitants in the city and not only the crime hot spot areas of the city with only serve forms of crime and violence.

## VI. Champion Countries

20. The implementation of the safer cities approach over the past 25 years has been taken up in several countries in all regions of the world, both developed and developing, either through direct or indirect technical assistance. There however still exist opportunities for improvement particularly on monitoring and measurement of the impact of safety interventions. Countries will have to respond to the actual gaps in capacity and tools in each context.

21. The selection of champion countries and cities will be based on voluntary participation and contribution of resources to undertake implementation of the UN systemwide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements, to become part of a community of practice or peers. It will also take into consideration the UN Common Country Assessment Framework which will identify countries that have prioritized safety as a key issue for technical cooperation.

22. Initial identified pool of countries with strategic interest and ongoing interventions in urban safety relevant to the Guidelines: South Africa, Mexico, Canada, Colombia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Mali, France, UK, Spain, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Austria, Australia, Malaysia, India, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Serbia, South Korea, Lebanon, Iraq, Cote D'Ivoire, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, Vietnam, Egypt, USA, Italy, Switzerland, Rwanda, Morocco, Tunisia, DRC, Burundi, Cameroon, Nigeria, Cape Verde, Madagascar.

## VII. Partnerships

23. Partnerships for Safer Cities has been a rallying call that is gaining momentum all over the world. Unlike in 1996 when UN-Habitat Safer Cities Programme was the only international actor supporting cities in the development of citywide crime and violence prevention policies and programmes, today we have a plethora of stakeholders supporting cities including, international development partners, networks of local governments; civil society organizations, academia, urban professionals, financing partners, and the private sector.

24. The Review process will aim at consolidating the Global Network on Safer Cities for knowledge exchange and learning, leveraging resources through partnerships. This will also contribute to the coordination of urban safety interventions within UN Country Teams and regional coordination mechanisms.

## VIII. Reporting mechanisms and indicators of success

25. The indicators of success to be measured as follows:

- (a) number of joint tools being shared
- (b) number of joint tools being piloted
- (c) number of champion countries and designated focal points for safer cities
- (d) Amount of financial resources allocated for implementation of safer cities issues.
- (e) Improved awareness and understanding of safer cities issues within the Executive Board and by extension member states
- (f) number of substantive partners that join the Global Network on Safer Cities and its constituent bodies to support the peer review process.

## IX. Budget and Staffing Requirements

26. Given the scope of the review process at the global level with country implementation, it is estimated at \$50 million USD over a period of 10 years – divided in global (@ USD 25 million over 10 years) and local implementation (USD 25 million). *\*To be refined and detailed out in the consultation process.*

## X. Vienna 2020 Roundtable – Safer Cities 2.0: Towards UN agencies Joint Programming and Action

27. In line with the efforts towards the implementation of the UN System-wide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements, the Government of Austria has volunteered to host a RoundTable discussion to advance the conversation on joint programming on urban safety among global decision

makers. Member States representatives, as well as Civil Society, Academia and the Private Sector will be invited to discuss key issues towards developing a global programme on Safer Cities to realize the Review Process and accompany the implementation of the Guidelines.

## **XI. Next steps – Road Map for 2020**

28. 2020 First quarter:
    - (a) Online survey to assess the status of implementation of Safer Cities approaches by Member States
    - (b) GNSC Partners Meeting at UN-Habitat’s headquarters to receive inputs on the review process for the UN System-wide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements
    - (c) UN-Habitat Executive Board Meeting – discussion of the present concept note
  29. 2020 Second quarter: Expert Group Meeting on the Urban Safety Monitor to be held in Madrid, Spain, aimed at debating over an indicator framework for the implementation of the Guidelines
  30. 2020 Third quarter: Round Table on the Safer Cities Programme to be held in Vienna, Austria.
  31. 2020 Fourth quarter: Call for Expression of Interest to host the Safer Cities Programme/Secretariat of the Global Network on Safer Cities
  32. 2021 onwards: Implementation of the Global Programme on Safer Cities and establishment of the Country Peer Review Process.
  33. The results of the Country Peer Review Process will be presented at the next United Nations Habitat Assembly in 2023.
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