



**Executive Board of the United Nations
Human Settlements Programme
Second session of 2021**

Online, 15 and 16 November 2021
Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

**Financial, budgetary and administrative matters,
including the implementation of the resource mobilization
strategy in accordance with the strategic plan**

Ongoing restructuring of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme

Report of the Executive Director

I. Introduction

1. In February 2018, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) launched a reform process to transform the governance and strategic and substantive focus of the Programme, underpinned by the following four pillars:

- (a) A new governance architecture;
- (b) The development of a new strategic plan;
- (c) An internal change process;
- (d) An organizational restructuring.

2. The first session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat Assembly) was held in Nairobi from 27 to 31 May 2019. At its first session, the UN-Habitat Assembly adopted a new strategic plan for the period 2020–2023 and the Programme initiated its internal change process.

3. UN-Habitat remains actively engaged in the implementation of the fourth pillar of reform, an organizational restructuring designed to maximize fulfilment of its mandate to support Member States and partners to implement and monitor the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda at the local, subnational and national levels, to leave no one and no place behind.

II. Organizational structure and staffing

4. Full implementation of the new organizational structure involves the alignment of the Programme's presence at locations away from headquarters to ensure optimal deployment of an array of regional policy and operational assets to help countries to deliver on the 2030 Agenda.

5. A principal objective of the process is to identify means by which to optimize the support provided by UN-Habitat to Member States in mobilizing for a decade of action, including through enhanced financing, and the strengthening of national implementation and the institutions necessary to achieve the objectives of the 2030 Agenda.

* HSP/EB.2021/12.

6. Alignment of the UN-Habitat programmatic presence will be further informed by the imperative from Member States for the overall reform of the United Nations development system to encourage integrative, effective and agile ways of working to ensure impact at the country and regional levels. The goal of restructuring the regional architecture is to enable the organization to best leverage its assets and deliver on its integrated mandate as part of “one coordinated United Nations”. In that respect, UN-Habitat will be guided, inter alia, by reports of the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council on repositioning the United Nations development system.

7. The Executive Director wishes to bring to the attention of the Executive Board the following developments:

(a) An internal policy paper on guiding principles to realign and enhance UN-Habitat’s regional architecture was presented to the UN-Habitat Executive Committee in February 2021 and endorsed by the Executive Director. The policy provides guidance on all UN-Habitat field presence, whether at the project level or in country, subregional or regional offices. It also includes guidelines for the sustainable operation of liaison offices, information bureaux and global programme offices.

(b) Drawing on the principles set out in the policy paper, a regional strategy for UN-Habitat’s presence in Europe, including the Central Asia subregion, was presented to the UN-Habitat Executive Committee and endorsed by the Executive Director in March 2021. Among other things, the strategy provides guidance for UN-Habitat’s existing presence in the region, including the UN-Habitat Office in Brussels, which has primary responsibility for engagement with UN-Habitat’s major donor, the European Union; the UN-Habitat Office in Geneva; and the global programme offices in Barcelona, Spain, and Bonn, Germany. The strategy also provides a recommendation for the establishment of a new UN-Habitat presence with dedicated responsibility for activities and operations in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia subregions.

(c) UN-Habitat’s regional strategy for its presence in Latin America and the Caribbean was presented to the Executive Committee and endorsed by the Executive Director in May 2021. The strategy provides guidance for UN-Habitat’s presence in the region by tailoring engagement based on the distinct subregional contexts of Central America, the Caribbean, and South America. As the region is composed primarily of middle-income countries, the strategy calls for close cooperation with Member States to meet specific needs, including integrated planning to support climate adaptation and nature-based solutions; closer partnership with other United Nations entities to support the Safer Cities programme; provision of technical advice on the financing of sustainable infrastructure through the Cities Investment Facility; and the enhancement of basic urban services, provision of adequate housing and reconstruction work (“building back better”) in lower middle-income countries.

(d) UN-Habitat is refining its regional strategy for its presence in the Arab States. It is anticipated that the strategy will be submitted to the UN-Habitat Executive Committee in September 2021 for its consideration. Regional strategies for the Asia-Pacific and Africa regions are also planned.

(e) As core funding for UN-Habitat remains low, the ability to implement the recommendations set out in the regional strategies is limited, and any new presence for the Programme is envisaged only where it can be financially self-sustaining. The use of digital technologies to provide virtual delivery of technical advisory services, whilst limited to locations with good connectivity, offers the benefit of providing a cost-effective alternative that the Programme will be exploring in greater depth. In every situation, UN-Habitat will continue to be guided by the Secretary-General’s reform agenda and the “One United Nations” initiative.