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**Normative and operational activities of UN-Habitat,
including reporting on the programmatic activities of
UN-Habitat in 2022 and the implementation of
subprogrammes, flagship programmes and technical
cooperation activities**

Need for and possible benefits of the development of the Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification

Report of the Executive Director

I.   Introduction

1.   In paragraph 15 of decision 2022/6, adopted at its second session of 2022, the Executive Board of UN-Habitat requested the Executive Director to report on the need for and the possible benefits of the development of the model of Sustainable Development Goals-related Cities certification at the first session of 2023 of the Executive Board.

2.   It is evident that most of the Sustainable Development Goals will not be met by 2030[1] and it is urgent to step up action. Sustainable urbanization is central to achieving global goals, including those of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement, as well as peace and human rights. Local and regional governments are increasingly articulating their commitments to the global agendas, for example through voluntary local review, and have expressed a clear demand for certification as a mechanism to support their journey.

3.   When piloting its Sustainable Development Goals Cities flagship initiative,[2] UN-Habitat found that certification, initially introduced to mark progress by cities engaged in the initiative and ensure consistent quality, was also welcomed as a recognition of effort and found to be a motivating factor. UN-Habitat also found that certification at key stages helped frame, communicate and achieve key milestones in connection with the development of inclusive, evidence-based strategic frameworks, effective plans and governance and measurable impact, in line with the guidance of the New Urban Agenda.[3]

4.   Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification responds to the urgent need to help cities get on track with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by promoting a systematic approach, marking key milestones in the process and recognizing efforts and achievements. Its possible benefits

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* HSP/EB.2023/1.

[1] *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021* (United Nations publication, 2021).

[2] https://unhabitat.org/programme/sustainable-development-goals-cities.

[3] General Assembly resolution 71/256, annex.

include increasing cities' awareness of the Goals and motivating them to engage with global agendas; promoting a human rights-based approach to sustainable urban development that leaves no one and no place behind; outlining a clear process for cities to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, with certifiable stages supported by user-friendly technical tools; promoting the alignment of local development with national policy and global agendas; and attracting Sustainable Development Goal impact investment to cities by signalling their commitment to implementing the Goals and strengthening enabling environments. Moreover, demand by cities for certification, accompanied by a more systematic way for cities to identify and articulate their technical support needs for achieving the Goals, may help align the technical advisory services of consultancies, academia and others with the Goals and help strengthen United Nations entities and country teams to "deliver as one" in supporting Sustainable Development Goal localization in cities. Certification may thus help scale up the availability of Sustainable Development Goal advisory and technical support to cities.

5.   Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification is not a system for rating cities and comparing their achievements in relation to the Goals, nor is it a system to dictate how cities should develop.

6.   Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification will require UN-Habitat to work closely with the United Nations system and credible partners, including academia.

II.   Background

7.   With under eight years left to achieve the commitments of the 2030 Agenda and less than 15 years for those of the New Urban Agenda, local action has never been more central to achieving global goals. Cities currently host 56 per cent of the world's population, a proportion that is rising rapidly and is expected to reach 68 per cent by 2050.[4] Urbanization has a major impact on global development. Cities generate 80 per cent of the global economy[5] and by bringing together a diversity of people, ways of life and ideas, they are hotbeds of innovation. At the same time, cities are responsible for 75 per cent of the world's energy consumption and over 70 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions,[6] and increasing inequality in cities[7] has resulted in a billion people living in slums or informal settlements.[8] It is therefore recognized that the "battle for sustainable development will be won or lost in cities".[9]

8.   Local and regional governments are increasingly acknowledged as peers in a process in which global goals, national resources and local implementation are expected to work seamlessly together. Their role in responding to growing and interconnected challenges, whether economic crisis, the climate emergency, growing inequality or an unexpected health crisis such as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, is evident. Many are taking action to localize the Sustainable Development Goals in their territories, and an increasing number are reporting on their achievements through voluntary local reviews.

9.   The local implementation of the 2030 Agenda in cities is guided by the New Urban Agenda, which represents the global commitment to "people-centred urban development for social inclusion and ending poverty"[10] and provides a blueprint for harnessing urbanization as a positive force for sustainable development. The continued relevance of the New Urban Agenda, particularly in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to strengthen resilience to health emergencies, climate crises, disasters and conflicts, was recognized by the High-Level Meeting to assess progress made in implementing the New Urban Agenda, held by the General Assembly in April 2022.[11]

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[4] UN-Habitat, *World Cities Report 2022: Envisaging the Future of Cities* (Nairobi, 2022).

[5] World Bank, "Urban Development". Available at
https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/overview.

[6] United Nations, "UN Chief Promotes 'Enormous' Benefits of Greener Cities", story, 3 October 2021.

[7] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Urbanization: Expanding Opportunities, but Deeper Divides", news, 21 February 2020.

[8] https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/goal-11/.

[9] United Nations, "Battle for Sustainable Development Will Be Won or Lost in Cities, Deputy Secretary-General Tells Mayor's Forum", press release, 9 June 2015.

[10] Ibid., para. 26.

[11] "High-Level Meeting to assess progress on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda: summary by the President of the General Assembly" (2022). Available at https://www.un.org/pga/76/wp-content/uploads/sites/101/2022/06/Final-HLM-on-NUA-PGA-Summary.pdf.

10.   Importantly, the New Urban Agenda identifies the following "drivers of change" through which the transformative potential of cities to drive sustainable development can be achieved:

(a)   Urban policies at the appropriate level;[12]

(b)   Urban governance;[13]

(c)   Long-term integrated urban and territorial planning and design;[14]

(d)   Effective, innovative and sustainable financing frameworks and instruments.[15]

11.   The New Urban Agenda also emphasizes the importance of a "full and meaningful participation for all individuals and communities"[16] and of participatory data, mapping and evidence-based governance and planning at all levels.[17] Knowledge, innovation and capacity development for local institutions are further emphasized as key enablers of urban transformation.[18]

III.   Key local drivers and enablers of sustainable development

12.   Harnessing urbanization as a positive force for sustainable development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in cities requires policy-setting and conducive regulatory and governance frameworks at the national and subnational levels, complemented by key enablers at the city level, as follows:

(a)   *Data.* To take full advantage of the transformative potential that urbanization offers, and to ensure that no one, including women and vulnerable groups, is excluded, decision-making processes in cities require data that is adequately detailed, disaggregated and harmonized with global agendas. Given that cities tend to have pockets of vulnerability, including in informal areas, it is important that data is disaggregated spatially, thus leaving no one and no place behind. The United Nations system-wide global urban monitoring framework,[19] endorsed by the Statistical Commission in 2022, offers a simplified set of indicators and metadata through which cities' performance on the Sustainable Development Goals and other global goals can be measured.

(b)   *Development vision and strategy.* Strategic development frameworks[20] for cities must be responsive to local needs and coherent with national and subnational development policies and global agendas. It is important that they be evidence-based, reflect economic, social and environmental dimensions and address long- and short-term priorities. They should be locally owned through effective, inclusive engagement of all groups of residents and stakeholders, including civil society and community organizations, and thus able to withstand local leadership transitions.

(c)   *Urban and territorial planning.* Urban and territorial planning and design should enhance economic opportunities for all, increase accessibility and connectivity, facilitate sustainable mobility, protect the natural and built environment and strengthen rural-urban linkages, thus supporting local economic growth, social inclusion and environmental sustainability.

(d)   *Urban governance.* Governance represents the norms, values and rules by which public affairs are managed in a manner that is transparent, participatory, inclusive and responsive. It requires coordination across levels of government, structures and institutions to implement coherent urban and sectoral plans and services.

(e)   *Finance.* The financing gap to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals is in the trillions of dollars annually. Intergovernmental fiscal transfer systems remain an important funding source but are rarely sufficient to meet local development needs. Cities can avail themselves of additional resources by optimizing own-source revenue systems and attracting external investment; Cities need effective public revenue and financial management systems that demonstrate investment credibility, and capacity or support in preparing and de-risking investment-ready projects.

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[12] Paras. 81, 86 and 88.

[13] Paras. 85, 89, 90, 92, 104, 151, 152 and 156.

[14] Paras. 94–102 and 152.

[15] Paras. 130–141.

[16] Para. 61; paras. 86, 90, 92, 105 and 114.

[17] Paras. 158–160.

[18] Paras. 133 and 150–157.

[19] UN-Habitat, *The Global Urban Monitoring Framework: A Guide for Urban Monitoring of SDGs and NUA and Other Urban-Related Thematic or Local, National and Global Frameworks* (Nairobi, 2022).

[20] This may include such things as city development strategies, city visioning and action plans.

13.   These enablers combine to make cities better able to deliver equitably distributed, environmentally sustainable infrastructure and basic services, such as roads, green public spaces, electricity, lighting, water and sanitation, education, health, recreation and affordable housing. This reduces inequality, strengthens local economies, protects the environment and biodiversity and provides opportunities for all. This way, cities are able to accelerate progress on the urban Sustainable Development Goals in line with local, national and international agendas and enable city residents to access an adequate standard of living, ensuring that no one and no place is left behind.

IV.   Sustainable Development Goals Cities definition and theory of change

14.   In line with the New Urban Agenda, UN-Habitat recognizes that cities should do the following:

(a)   Have effective inclusive institutional systems and capacities in areas highlighted by the New Urban Agenda as "drivers of change" (governance, planning, municipal finance) and in service delivery;

(b)   Have reliable baseline data on Sustainable Development Goal achievement;

(c)   Identify strategic priorities for achieving the Goals by 2030 through inclusive, participatory processes;

(d)   Translate the above into transformative action, including regulatory action, spatial planning and infrastructure development;

(e)   Finance and implement critical infrastructure development through improved own-source revenue systems and improved access to external sources of capital;

15.   By doing so, they will accelerate the global achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and improve the well-being of urban dwellers and those in surrounding territories, because, as per the New Urban Agenda, those factors combine to set cities on a sustainable development trajectory.

Sustainable Development Goals Cities theory of change

Data

Strategic planning

Updated local plans and regulations

Project development, financing and implementation

Sustainable Development Goal impact

Strengthened institutional capacity
- **Inclusive governance**
- **Planning**
- **Municipal finance**
- **Service delivery**
  - **Solid waste management**
  - **Water/sanitation**
  - **Mobility**

V. Need for and purpose of Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification

16.   As outlined above, as the world continues to urbanize there is an urgent need to step up the realization of the transformative potential of cities as a positive force for sustainable development. UN-Habitat and other United Nations entities working with cities recognize that:

(a)   Not all city governments are aware of the Sustainable Development Goals, their benefit globally and locally and the significance of the role of cities in achieving them;

(b)   Not all city governments are motivated to go beyond their immediate tasks and engage in the implementation of global agendas;

(c)   Not all city governments are aware of the guidance of the New Urban Agenda for achieving sustainable development locally, or the key steps, as outlined above, that can translate that guidance into action.

17.   There is therefore a need for an attractive and simple mechanism to increase the awareness of cities and their authorities of the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals and cities' role in achieving them, to guide clear steps for action in line with the New Urban Agenda and to recognize the efforts of cities and their leaders, institutions and stakeholders in accelerating local achievement of the Goals.

18.   Given that globally recognized certification can motivate action and help consolidate efforts of diverse actors towards common objectives, Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification is aimed at helping set cities on the course to accelerated achievement of the Goals through guiding an effective local urban development process, in line with the New Urban Agenda, and recognizing the achievement of key milestones and inclusive, effective processes. The certification process will assess key enablers and drivers of change as per the New Urban Agenda and guide cities towards available technical tools, resources, support and learning communities (cities and institutions with similar challenges and solutions) so that they are better equipped to address challenges and bottlenecks. The certification is envisioned to be issued iteratively based on the following milestones:

(a)   Cities have effective data that takes account of the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and disparities that may exist from one urban location to another, and have evidence-based, inclusive, participatory and strategic development frameworks for 2030 that:

(i)   Are aligned with the 2030 Agenda;

(ii)   Are aligned with local development priorities;

(iii)   Are coherent with relevant national, subnational, cross-border and sectoral policies and priorities;

(b)   Cities have effective "drivers of change": they have taken stock of their governance, and revenue systems, plans and regulations and assessed the performance of key basic urban services providers and, as relevant, demonstrate progress in strengthening them;

(c)   Cities are generating Sustainable Development Goal impact: they demonstrate measurable progress in achieving their strategic development frameworks.

VI. Suggested criteria guiding certification

19.   UN-Habitat will consult with United Nations Member States and local and regional governments, United Nations system partners and other credible partners such as city networks, academia and civil society to define the criteria and approach for certification. The approach will need to be simple but meaningful and involve firm but not over-bearing engagement of cities. Subject to further consultation, the suggested certification criteria reflect the stages described below.

A.   Qualification (candidate city)

20.   The city demonstrates commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and has taken stock of progress, including through the following:

(a)   The city has taken stock of relevant national, subnational and sectoral policies, local data, strategic frameworks and actions plans and progress towards the achievement of the Goals;

(b)   The city has identified the levels of certification it intends to achieve and has outlined a work programme for achieving them;

(c)   The city has made a public commitment to prioritizing the achievement of the Goals, to leaving no one and no place behind and to ensuring accountability to residents and stakeholders in that process.

B.   Inclusive, evidence-based processes

21.   The city has appropriate data and an evidence-based, inclusive 2030 strategic framework[21] that reflects the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, in line with the 2030 Agenda, as follows:

(a)   The city's baseline data is reliable and incorporates the environmental, social, economic, cultural and governance domains, as guided by the global urban monitoring framework or the Sustainable Development Goal indicators;

(b)   The 2030 strategic framework is coherent with relevant national, subnational and sectoral development policies;

(c)   The 2030 strategic framework is demonstrably based on participatory approaches that ensure the inclusion of all social groups in the city and demonstrates the principle of leaving no one behind through applying a human rights-based approach. This includes women, children, young people, older people and people with disabilities and drives equity by including priority actions to improve the standard of living in the most deprived parts of the city;

(d)   The 2030 strategic framework places commensurate emphasis on economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development;

(e)   The 2030 strategic framework is designed to demonstrate impact, measured against the city's baseline.

C.   Effective enabling environment

22.   The city has taken stock of institutional capacity, regulatory and planning gaps, as per the New Urban Agenda "drivers of change", and of the performance of local services providers. It demonstrates, as relevant, progress in addressing gaps, including through the following:

(a)   The city has undertaken a diagnostic assessment of key institutions working in areas of governance, planning, revenue and financial management, and equitable, inclusive basic urban services delivery;

(b)   The city demonstrates improved performance in areas identified as requiring capacity strengthening;

(c)   The city has reviewed relevant plans and local legislation and regulations;

(d)   The city has progressed in relevant planning and regulatory actions, in line with its 2030 strategic framework and associated plans.

D.   Impact

23.   The city demonstrates measurable progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and human impact, including through the following:

(a)   Evidence of implementation of updated plans and regulations, in accordance with its 2030 strategic framework;

(b)   Evidence of Sustainable Development Goal alignment, financing and implementation of key investment priorities as relevant to the 2030 strategic framework;

(c)   Evidence of progress against the baseline assessment, in line with the milestones articulated in 2030 strategic frameworks, including reducing inequality;

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[21] "2030 strategic framework" is a generic term that encompasses statutory plans, city development strategies, sectoral development plans and strategies, forward-looking voluntary local reviews and local planning documentation.

(d)   Evidence of increased satisfaction in the context of standard of living, environmental protection and social inclusion among city residents, particularly those most at risk of being excluded.

24.   The terminology of Sustainable Development Goals Cities silver, gold, platinum and diamond may be adopted for certification stages.

VII.   Implementation

25.   The model implementation process will be developed through detailed consultation with a credible group of partners that includes Member States, local and regional governments, the United Nations system, academia, civil-society organizations and private-sector actors. A Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification digital platform will be established, providing templates and diagnostic tools[22] and enabling a self-assessment process where cities enter data and upload relevant supporting evidence. An independent technical team will review and validate inputs and supporting evidence; their work will be assisted through the technical capacity of the platform. Reports for each stage will be generated to indicate whether criteria have been met and which gaps should be addressed. A certification committee will decide on the issuing of certification based on these reports, undertaking spot checking as necessary. When not eligible, cities and local institutions will have the option to consult with UN-Habitat and United Nations partners involved in Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification on actions to meet certification requirements. As far as possible, they will be guided to available open-source technical and capacity development tools to help the bridge gaps. To that end, the platform will include a search engine that supports identifying most relevant tools and case studies,[23] drawing on the Urban Agenda Platform currently being developed and open-source materials of other United Nations entities and academic partners. Cities may additionally solicit technical assistance, including from consultancies, UN-Habitat's catalogue of services,[24] United Nations country teams and United Nations expert entities. The platform will also help connect cities and institutions facing similar challenges. In places where internet coverage is limited, cities will be provided with a USB device through which they can access the certification system.

26.   Two implementation models are being considered:

(a)   A national certification mechanism, whereby a national entity such as a ministry (e.g., urban development, local government, planning) adapts the certification criteria to the national context, with the endorsement of UN-Habitat, working with United Nations system partners. A national technical team independently reviews and validates certification applications, supported by the technical capacity of the platform, and provides recommendations on eligible candidates to a national committee, which awards the certificate. The technical team could be an academic institution and the national committee should comprise a variety of stakeholders, including civil-society organizations and local and national government representatives, reporting to the ministry and collaborating with UN-Habitat to ensure quality control, such as by spot-checking applications. The national committee will be monitored by and report to a global certification committee;

(b)   A global certification mechanism with technical teams in various countries, one for each United Nations language, to independently verify applications, and a global multi-stakeholder certification committee comprising representatives of academia, civil society and government to ensure consistent quality control and certification endorsement. The certification committee will sit approximately four times per year, rotate periodically and be supported by a secretariat.

27.   The two implementation models will operate side by side, enabling Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification to be contextualized through national mechanisms and allowing participation of cities in places where national mechanisms do not exist.

28.   The role of the secretariat involves coordinating meetings and agendas of the global certification committee. Its role will be simplified as much as possible through the technical capacity of the platform, which, for example, will randomly auto-select applications for spot-checking, periodically call for meetings and generate meeting reports.

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[22] Examples include UN-Habitat assessment tools for city planning, legislation, revenue and governance systems.

[23] This is being built through the Sustainable Development Goals Cities flagship initiative.

[24] UN-Habitat, *2022 Catalogue of Services* (Nairobi, 2022).

VIII. Costs

29.   Cost efficiency will be achieved through self-reporting made possible by the Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification platform. Pro-bono corporate social responsibility support from technology companies may be sought. For national certification mechanisms, costs may be borne by the country or a donor interested in supporting Sustainable Development Goal localization in that country. The Local2030 Coalition may consider hosting the global certification and secretariat functions, enabling coherence between its mandate and Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification. The Local2030 Coalition might also launch calls for cities, countries or consortia to host those functions as a specialist Local2030 hub. Cities may also be required to contribute to costs, through fee structures that do not exclude cities in lower-income countries.

IX. Possible benefits of Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification

A. For city authorities

30.   Possible benefits of Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification for city authorities include the following:

(a)   *Incentivizing Sustainable Development Goals acceleration.* Recognition provided by a United Nations-mandated Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification will incentivize cities to implement the Goals in line with the principles and approaches of the New Urban Agenda;

(b)   *Providing direction.* Certification supports outcome-based planning and offers a structured process including key stages: data collection and analysis, strategic planning, institutional system strengthening and impact delivery. It helps cities identify where technical and capacity development assistance may be needed and links them to relevant technical resources;

(c)   *Enabling knowledge-sharing and capacity development at scale.* Diagnostic processes linked to certification stages can enable cities with common challenges and priorities to be grouped as "learning communities" where they can learn from each other and benefit from joint training support programmes. Moreover, the certification process brings to the fore successful initiatives and models that can be learned from;

(d)   *Attracting Sustainable Development Goal-aligned investment.* Certification may help attract Sustainable Development Goal impact investment to cities by signalling their commitment to implementing the Goals and strengthening enabling environments. Moreover, compatibility of Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification criteria and environmental, social and governance metrics should be explored to support finance entities' impact reporting mechanisms;

(e)   *Coherence with other city-based initiatives that support global agendas.* Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification should also be compatible with existing city certifications, programmes and initiatives with a thematic focus, and the certification process should allow the results achieved and reports generated in such processes to contribute to Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification.

B. For city residents

31.   Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification promotes a greater responsiveness of cities, their leadership and their institutions to the needs of residents in cities. It promotes a participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation processes, with special attention to the inclusion of those most at risk of being excluded (such as women and girls, persons with disabilities, older persons, children and young people, indigenous persons, refugees, internally displaced persons, stateless persons, migrants and persons working in the informal sector). It promotes strengthened institutional effectiveness and effective plans, regulations and infrastructure development that mainstreams human rights and social inclusion and achievement of the Goals. Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification thus contributes to the progressive realization of the right to an adequate standard of living for all city residents.

C. For national and subnational governments

32.   Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification promotes policy coherence for national and subnational governments. The certification process helps identify challenges and opportunities at the local level that should be taken up at the national and subnational policy level. It also provides a means

to assess the impact of national and subnational policy and governance frameworks at the local level. Furthermore, the option of establishing a national certification system provides an important opportunity to strengthen the implementation of national urban policies in cities.

D. For the United Nations system

33. Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification promotes the integration of United Nations system support at the local level. The United Nations system has developed a variety of mechanisms and tools to support localization of the Goals and promote sustainable development in cities, including the Local2030 Coalition, the United Nations system-wide strategy for sustainable urban development, the global urban monitoring framework and the New Urban Agenda. As well as generating demand by cities for United Nations technical assistance to accelerate the achievement of the Goals, Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification provides the opportunity for the United Nations system to harness those mechanisms coherently and systematically to support local action. United Nations resident coordinators may, for instance, be encouraged to establish integrated support initiatives for accelerating Sustainable Development Goal achievement and implementing United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks locally in cities, guided by the Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification process.

E. All-of-society policy coherence for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in cities

34. Possible benefits of Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification for promoting all-of-society policy coherence for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in cities include the following:

(a) **Multi-stakeholder coherence with regard to implementing Sustainable Development Goals in cities**. Cities are supported with technical advisory and planning services from a broad range of providers, including consultancy companies, academia, think tanks, United Nations entities and other specialist entities. Demand by cities for Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification will translate into the provision of technical advisory services aligned with the principles of the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda. Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification will thus facilitate Sustainable Development Goal alignment across a diverse spectrum of services providers, leveraging this to achieve the local implementation of the Goals at scale.

(b) **Aggregating Sustainable Development Goal investment for greater efficiency**. Data on cities' strategic development priorities can inform the development of aggregated investment portfolios, leading to greater possibilities and more efficient mechanisms to finance Sustainable Development Goal impact interventions, particularly benefiting smaller cities.

X. Frequently asked and open questions

A. The Sustainable Development Goals will no longer apply after 2030. Is there much point in this?

35. Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification provides a mechanism to help accelerate sustainable development in cities. Sustainable urban development will always require data, strategic planning, effective local institutions, plans and regulations and investment in impact. Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification can be evaluated in 2030 and adapted to the post-2030 development agenda.

B. How are the criteria and measurement derived?

36. Criteria development will be guided by the New Urban Agenda, the global urban monitoring framework, the international guidelines on urban and territorial planning[25] and other globally agreed normative documents developed by UN-Habitat and United Nations partner entities. UN-Habitat will engage United Nations entities, Member States, local and regional authorities, academia and civil society in developing the criteria and may establish an expert group of such entities for that purpose.

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[25] UN-Habitat, *International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning* (Nairobi, 2015).

C. How do UN-Habitat, the United Nations system and the Local2030 Coalition support cities in reaching certification levels?

37.   The Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification process helps cities to identify and articulate their technical support priorities for accelerating sustainable development. The Local2030 Coalition will bring together the Sustainable Development Goal localization tools and services of the United Nations system and partner entities and the Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification process will match cities' specific technical support needs with these technical support offerings, from open access digital tools and training courses to tailored advisory services. UN-Habitat has a range of digital self-supported tools and a catalogue of services for cities, covering technical areas of data, strategic planning, governance, spatial planning, basic urban service delivery, housing and participatory slum upgrading, that are responsive to thematic issues such as poverty, inequality, urban human rights, climate, gender, urban crisis and peace. These are complemented by specialist tools in a broad range of thematic areas and financing vehicles developed by (and with) other United Nations entities.

D. How does Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification align with the overall effort of UN-Habitat in Sustainable Development Goal localization?

38.   UN-Habitat Sustainable Development Goal localization support for cities has four components: the United Nations system-wide global monitoring framework; support for voluntary local reviews as a mechanism for cities to report on their progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the vision for 2030; the Sustainable Development Goals Cities flagship initiative that provides tools, resources and support for cities to accelerate achievement of the Goals; and the Local2030 Coalition, which brings together diverse networks and stakeholders, including the United Nations, in collaborative action towards the local achievement of the Goals. The Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification model will reinforce the urban monitoring framework to guide data and promote voluntary local reviews as a means for cities to take stock of progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. Options for integrating Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification support and channelling the work of the Local2030 Coalition to cities will be explored.

E. What is the unit of certification – is it the city, the neighbourhood or a specific project?

39.   The unit of certification is the city; however, in practice the term "city" can be applied to distinct urban regions or other spatial configurations that have a recognized differentiation within existing planning and governance frameworks. There is no certification for specific projects, but Sustainable Development Goal assessments of projects and project pipelines are included when certifying impact.

F. Is this something that UN-Habitat does alone or is it a consortium of some kind?

40.   UN-Habitat will work with relevant United Nations entities within the framework of the United Nations system-wide strategy for sustainable urban development, particularly those that are most relevant to the urban Sustainable Development Goal indicators defined within the recently endorsed global urban monitoring framework. Working modalities for a United Nations system-wide approach will be developed.

G. What are the next steps?

41.   The next steps include the following:

(a)   Identify a credible community of United Nations entities, academics, national and local governments, academia, civil-society organizations and private-sector actors to further develop the model and implementation modalities;

(b)   Identify a credible community of such entities to jointly deliver the Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification model;

(c)   Reach out to United Nations system partners, Member States (including the UN-Habitat Executive Board) and other stakeholders for feedback and review;

(d)   Engage the Local2030 Coalition in the process of further developing the Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification concept and consider the possibility of integrating Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification into the work of the coalition;

(e)   Further develop the business model and funding strategy and identify funding sources.

H.   Open questions

42.   Open questions include the following:

(a)   Can the Local2030 Coalition Secretariat host the Sustainable Development Goals Cities certification secretariat function and provide or outsource spot-checking functions, and can Local2030 Coalition hubs provide technical teams for the certification process?

(b)   Could organizations such as Association internationale des étudiants en sciences économiques et commerciales (AIESEC) organize secondments of young academics to technical teams?

(c)   Does Sustainable Development Goals certification have an expiry date and can it be revoked?

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