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Implementation of the normative and operational activities of UN-Habitat, including reporting on the programmatic activities of UN-Habitat in 2021 and the implementation of subprogrammes, flagship programmes and technical cooperation activities

Normative and operational activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, focusing on the people's process in Afghanistan, the global urban monitoring framework and work on climate change

Report of the Executive Director

I. Introduction

1. Effective and continuous transfer of knowledge between the field operations and normative development work of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) is critical for improving the organization's technical advisory cooperation with Member States, in line with the priorities set out in the UN-Habitat strategic plan for the period 2020–2023. The depth of the organizational competencies of UN-Habitat can be observed in its long-running priority work themes, such as community-led development in post-conflict and post-disaster situations, the monitoring of urban indicators and work on climate change in cities.
2. The present report begins by highlighting the achievements of “the people's process” that spearheads community-led development approaches, as applied in Afghanistan. This approach was developed by the UN-Habitat Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and has subsequently been adapted to and scaled up in other regions.
3. The report then presents updates on UN-Habitat's work on cities and climate change, focusing in particular on the follow-up to the Innovate4Cities 2021 conference, held online from 11 to 15 October 2021, and the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Glasgow, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, from 31 October to 12 November 2021; and on the roadmap towards the twenty-seventh session, to be held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, from 7 to 18 November 2022.
4. Finally, the report discusses a new framework for monitoring and assessing the success of development operations at the local level in cities. It introduces the latest progress on developing a global urban monitoring framework to support the implementation of the New Urban Agenda to support the achievement of the urban dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals.

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II. People's process in Afghanistan: looking ahead following 30 years of action

A. Background

5. "The people's process" refers to an approach that places the affected people at the centre of the recovery process. That means mobilizing the affected communities to take decisions on their recovery and supporting them. It is leading transition towards urban resilience. It is particularly relevant in countries experiencing disaster, conflict and other shocks. In such contexts, the people's process influences urbanization through a support paradigm that is led by communities, as opposed to the conventional control paradigm that is authority-led.

6. UN-Habitat has deployed the people's process in numerous country-level projects across the Asia-Pacific region over the past three decades. As applied by UN-Habitat, the people's process works as a democratic form of human development, in which beneficiaries are empowered to become the key decision-makers for their own development.

7. The UN-Habitat country programme in Afghanistan has delivered programmes on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus worth \$520 million since 2001. The programmes have been implemented with well-calibrated financial, technological and human resource capacities and contributions across the normative and operational spheres. The UN-Habitat signature people's process approach of community contracting has been driving these programmes, with remarkable development and humanitarian results at various levels.

8. The host government and beneficiary communities in Afghanistan have witnessed a transformation in human settlement endeavours across the urban-rural continuum, reaping the dividends of the people's process. Community Development Councils (CDCs) and Gozar Assemblies (clusters of CDCs) serve as key instruments of needs determination and solution development, prioritization, implementation and monitoring. These models, closely imitating and reforming the conventional tribal councils, have been introduced into Afghanistan's socioeconomic fabric as grass-roots-level community governance institutions and elements of an actively participating civil society.

B. Approach

9. What distinguishes the people's process from other contemporary community-centred development programming is a model that thrives on community contracting, which transforms the local social fabric by organizing neighbourhoods into community councils. In addition to instilling stronger social cohesion, which is a precondition for community resilience, this practice cultivates the culture of community entrepreneurship. Once a community council is elected by the people, change begins with social mobilization. Communities discuss prioritization of their critical needs and then plan community action. Extensive discussions lead to investment plans based on consensus, followed by testing of concepts and proposing of solutions.

10. To deliver sustainable solutions, the community council – now registered as an enterprise – receives a block grant at this stage through a community contracting instrument. Depending on the nature and complexity of the development solution, the contract is granted to the community council to be executed directly or by a third party under community council supervision. Community contracting is mandated to ensure capacity-building, creation of employment opportunities and utilization of local resources and materials throughout the solution delivery.

11. From the formation of the community council to the setting-up of the community enterprise, the people's process capitalizes on community banking. One dimension of this model involves receiving, managing and disbursing the block grants for community contracts. Another involves the collection of community contributions, which may include revenues collected from land registration fees, the sale of subsidized drinking water, housing or building management fees paid by residents, taxes on service delivery, and cash or in-kind contributions from local communities.

12. Achieving solutions through the people's process creates a strong sense of community cohesion and participation at all stages of development while improving service utilities. Finally, an integrated community monitoring mechanism ensures ownership and sustainability of the solution, which is both prioritized and delivered by the community.

13. Figure 1 illustrates the people's process model.

Figure 1
People's process



C. Normative and operational achievements

14. The Afghanistan Office of UN-Habitat has applied the peoples' process in the implementation of two of its main programmes: the City for All programme and the Afghanistan Urban Safety and Security programme. The normative and operational outcomes linked by the application of the people's process are outlined below.

1. City for All programme

15. Implemented between 2015 and 2021, the City for All programme capitalized on the existing potential for well-planned, well-governed and well-financed urbanization. It was implemented in 12 Afghan cities and had three main outcomes:

(a) **Effective land management:** the programme supported Afghan municipalities in surveying and registering more than 900,000 properties with the participation of local communities. The programme also included technical assistance provided to the Afghanistan Land Authority for the development of a new regulation on the issuance of occupancy certificates in informal settlements. The new regulation enabled women's access to property rights and improved tenure security for millions of urban residents, especially in informal settlements;

(b) **Strategic urban planning:** urban communities were assisted in working together to develop 14 city-level and 22 district-level strategic action plans that prioritized local infrastructure projects to improve the delivery of basic services. The five-year strategic action plans included capital investment plans to guide municipalities on critical infrastructure investments. The plans have improved access to basic services for urban communities;

(c) **Improved municipal finance:** municipal authorities were assisted in increasing revenues from business licensing and *safayi* (municipal service charge) by improving tax invoicing, collection and enforcement methods, including the adoption of policy recommendations for effective revenue collection systems and participatory planning and budgeting within the municipal financial cycle. Municipal authorities were also supported in increasing the number of households paying *safayi* by 86 per cent and in increasing *safayi* revenues by up to 413 per cent.

2. Afghanistan Urban Safety and Security programme

16. Implemented between 2016 and 2021, the Afghanistan Urban Safety and Security programme improved government legitimacy and trust between citizens and the State, especially the police and municipal authorities, to make cities safer and more secure. The programme capitalized on improvements made in safety, security, accountability and transparency by the Afghanistan Urban

Peacebuilding programme, which effectively served as phase I of the programme. The Afghanistan Urban Safety and Security programme then further strengthened demand-driven policy development and participatory governance mechanisms, making urban communities active members of the governance and social systems. The programme achieved three principal outcomes:

(a) At the community level, the programme supported increased engagement of communities, particularly women, young people, internally displaced persons and returnees, in municipal governance and urban safety services, by introducing a bottom-up approach and culture. Security and safety functions were introduced into existing CDCs, helping to legitimize them as formal urban grassroots-level development mechanisms. The requirement to include at least one female representative and one representative of internally displaced persons has made CDCs a practical way for vulnerable groups to engage in decision-making;

(b) At the municipal level, the Afghanistan Urban Peacebuilding and the Afghanistan Urban Safety and Security programmes both fostered demand-driven service delivery and opportunities for citizen engagement in municipal planning and management processes. The programmes supported the engagement of local authorities with citizens to foster understanding of citizens' priorities and the inclusion of those priorities in urban management systems and projects. The Afghanistan Urban Safety and Security programme also strengthened ties between people, mayors and municipalities through the updating of the functions of municipal advisory boards to improve their accountability as representatives of the people;

(c) At the national level, the Afghanistan Urban Safety and Security programme supported the development of an enhanced national framework for accountable municipal governance in the area of safety and security. The programme supported the Ministry of Interior Affairs in improving the coordination of community policing and included training on urban safety and security for staff in the new Ministry of Women's Affairs. It also included the first public space audit in Kabul, for use in conserving and protecting public spaces, advocating for equal access to public spaces and informing public infrastructure maintenance.

17. In 2019, UN-Habitat commissioned the collection of empirical evidence on the results of the implementation of the people's process in Asia and the Pacific. The study included seven in-depth interviews with key members of the UN-Habitat City for All and Afghanistan Urban Safety and Security programme teams and three focus group discussions with programme beneficiaries. The combined main study findings for Myanmar and Afghanistan provided the following evidence:

(a) Relevance of the people's process. Ninety-five per cent of respondents recognized that the implementation of people's process programmes empowered people, and 95 per cent believed that people were part of the decision-making process. Only 5 per cent felt that while people were included in the discussion process, decisions were still made by the authorities alone. Qualitative insights supported the view that human settlement programmes that applied the people's process were highly relevant;

(b) Efficiency of the people's process. Sixty-five per cent of respondents reported that CDCs were more efficient in achieving results than conventional civil society or non-governmental organizations. In addition, 60 per cent believed that efficiency was positively associated with the involvement of civil society or non-governmental organizations. Forty per cent of respondents believed that government support for CDCs led to greater efficiency in people's process programmes and 30 per cent believed that programmes without CDCs were likely to be less efficient. Qualitative insights were found to be positively correlated, supporting the view that concepts of efficient community mobilization were entrenched in the design of people's process programmes. People's process programmes being implemented in Afghanistan have resulted in the institutionalization of CDCs and Gozar Assemblies in the local government system;

(c) Effectiveness of the people's process. Seventy-five per cent of respondents rated the effectiveness of community contracting programmes as very good in terms of livelihood generation, while the same report found that 40 per cent felt that, despite achieving a good level of effectiveness, revenue generation lagged behind targets. Qualitative findings on the use of community contracting as the centrepiece of the people's process for making human settlement programmes more effective were an interesting mix. In Afghanistan, although employment opportunities were also extended to women, such jobs only lasted as long as the availability of funding under the City for All programme. The Afghanistan Urban Safety and Security programme offered few employment opportunities, with block grants managed through community contracting, mostly dedicated to sectors with relatively little potential for direct economic development;

(d) Socioeconomic impact of the people's process. Ninety-five per cent of respondents considered that the programmes had improved living conditions and created livelihood opportunities, although 30 per cent maintained that problems with living conditions in settlements had only been partially solved. Five per cent said while that the programmes had achieved temporary settlement targets, they were unable to achieve long-term recovery. Qualitative insights on socioeconomic impact revealed, for example, that the programmes had led to improved living conditions owing to cleaner and better neighbourhoods, roads, streets, streetlights, pavements, stairs, parks, clinics, drainage and sewerage systems and the planting of trees;

(e) Sustainability of the peoples' process. Eighty-five per cent of respondents rated people's process programmes as having achieved ownership, participation, uptake and post-delivery care and inspired other communities. Twenty-five per cent reported some sustainability for programmes that continued to receive donor and stakeholder support. For the Afghanistan Urban Safety and Security and City for All programmes, institutionalization of CDCs as part of the local government system was considered the greatest success in terms of sustainability. That said, service delivery, uptake and post-delivery care for programme facilities had deteriorated noticeably. Some participants attributed that trend to the lack of resources available to the Afghan Government; however, the livelihood generation aspects of the programmes, including social-enterprise development, were limited, hindering long-term sustainability;

(f) Value for money and return on human investment of the peoples' process. Respondents, programme managers, and CDC and Gozar Assembly members agreed that the people's process delivered significantly improved value for money and return on human investment. These perceptions were said to be based on respondents' respective experiential learning and on evidence seen through social audits, evaluation reports and internal comparative analyses. Because communities participated in needs prioritization and project implementation and saw the results – such as improved land tenure and cleaner surroundings – first-hand, citizens were happy to contribute to taxes and fees and to provide in-kind contributions;

(g) Community resilience of the peoples' process. Eighty per cent of respondents took the view that community structures were loosely institutionalized and that people were partially prepared for future disasters and 15 per cent stated that community structures were well institutionalized and that people were well prepared for disasters. In Afghanistan, while both programmes focused on community resilience, and CDCs and Gozar Assemblies were institutionalized in the local governance structures, disaster risk reduction protocols were only partially instilled, owing to a volatile conflict situation and fragile community cohesion.

D. Way forward

18. Afghanistan is experiencing a worsening humanitarian crisis, affecting 18.5 million of the 40 million Afghans, 25.4 per cent of whom reside in urban areas. At the heart of the current crisis, 3.5 million displaced Afghans need immediate settlement solutions. To respond effectively to the multidimensional humanitarian and emergency development challenges in Afghanistan, UN-Habitat is stepping up its people's process interventions through the use of a resilience roadmap. The roadmap supports critical humanitarian action, augments social cohesion and human security and accelerates socioeconomic recovery. Interventions to support achievements in these three strategic areas are being deployed through a well-positioned network of locally elected CDCs across 13 key provinces. The CDCs have a proven track record of delivering large-scale community-led urban and rural development programmes in Afghanistan, under the National Solidarity Programme and the Citizens' Charter National Priority Programme, together worth \$2.5 billion. Strict Environmental and Social Safeguards System monitoring and evaluation standards and social audits are also provided for in all community contracts.

19. Through the interplay of normative and operational activities, UN-Habitat is increasing the delivery of basic services, infrastructure improvements, social cohesion, safety and security and livelihoods for displaced Afghan communities. Collaboration is already underway with the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other United Nations entities to step up concerted efforts for joint humanitarian and recovery action. UN-Habitat is also undertaking joint action within the United Nations' Transitional Engagement Framework and the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan.

III. Global urban monitoring framework

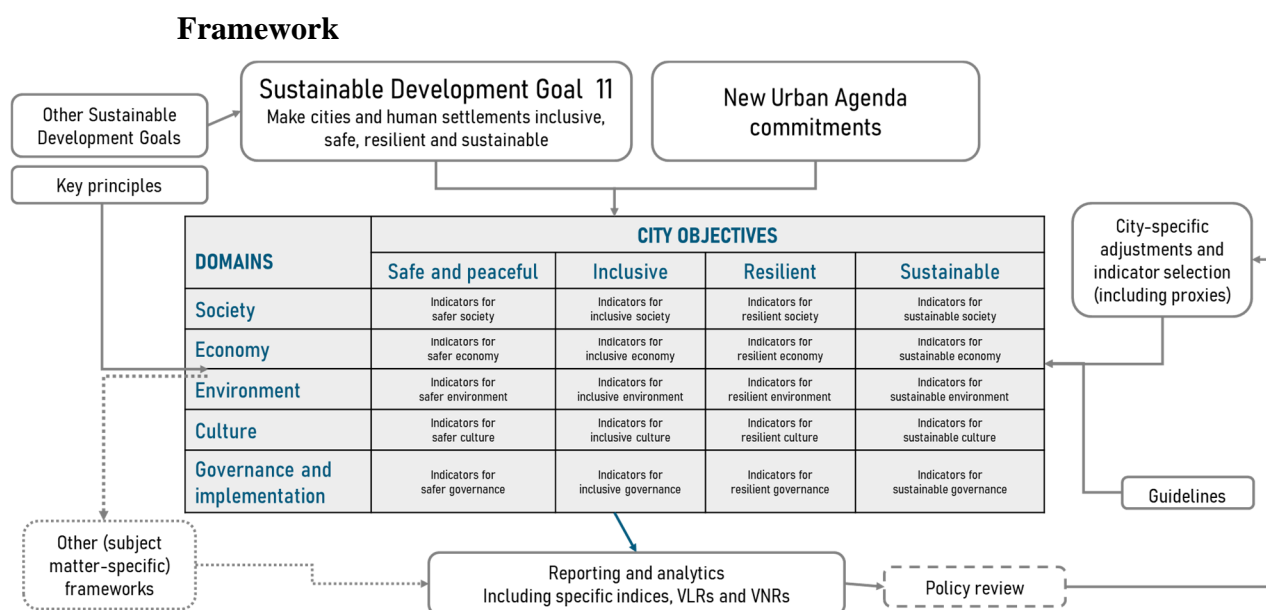
20. At its fiftieth session, held in New York from 5 to 8 March 2019, the Statistical Commission welcomed a note by the Secretary-General on the report of UN-Habitat on human settlements statistics (E/CN.3/2019/18), which summarized the progress on global monitoring of the urban dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda, including various capacity development activities and methodologies initiated to facilitate the efficient collection of human settlements statistics. Since 2019, more work has been done on the development of human settlements statistics and associated technical cooperation and capacity-building activities. Various actions have been taken to implement the main recommendations set out in the report of the fiftieth session, including the establishment of an incremental and inclusive reporting system that reinforces the United Nations system-wide coordination mechanism for monitoring and reporting, roll-out of the harmonized definition of cities and rural areas, establishment of an expert group to work on slum and non-slum categorizations and the development of a harmonized global urban monitoring framework.

21. As part of the harmonized approach to reporting on progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other local, national, regional and global agendas, UN-Habitat has led the process of developing a global urban monitoring framework. The new framework is the result of collaboration between various United Nations entities, United Nations regional commissions, city representatives and more than 25 partners from institutions working with urban indicators within the private sector, civil society and academia. Expert group meetings and bilateral discussions further guided the development of the framework, including the harmonized framework principles and indicator selection criteria. The framework has been submitted for final endorsement by the United Nations Statistical Commission at its fifty-third session, to be held in New York from 1 to 4 March 2022.

22. The global urban monitoring framework covers five key urban development domains (society, economy, environment, culture, and governance and implementation), as well as four local city objectives (safe/peaceful, inclusive, resilient and sustainable), allowing for a consolidated approach to reporting on sustainable urban development at all levels. It intentionally draws from well-established trackers to reduce duplication with local and national data production efforts. The framework is a process and set of measures that any city or local government will be able to use to quantify, rate or rank its progress in transforming its urban fabric into a more sustainable form. The indicators selected provide a rate of change or a snapshot status, so that a city can monitor progress and alignment with the Sustainable Development Goal targets, the New Urban Agenda commitments or other, more local objectives.

Figure 2

Structure of the global urban monitoring framework



Abbreviations: VLRs – voluntary local reviews; VNRs – voluntary national reviews.

23. The global urban monitoring framework incorporates tools and mechanisms for monitoring the indicators of Goal 11 and other urban-related Sustainable Development Goal indicators. The tools and mechanisms are aligned with national and international guidance on strategies for monitoring gender, age and human rights at all levels. Specifically, tools such as the national sample of cities methodology are well integrated into the framework, allowing urban performance to be measured and assessed in a highly representative manner. UN-Habitat has also been working with the City Prosperity Index, which has now been upgraded to the global urban monitoring framework, to monitor city performance globally with a core set of indicators that track inclusiveness – such as gender balance in internal and governance structures and decision-making processes – and to incorporate a gender perspective into all actions in national governments and ministries, and in local government.

24. The global urban monitoring framework is designed to facilitate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals at the local level. With its core set of urban indicators, the framework is designed to be efficient, to avoid being a burden on cities; effective, to assist cities in tracking their progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, fulfilling their commitments under the New Urban Agenda and informing local action; and harmonized, to ensure that data is comparable.

25. The framework has been piloted in a number of cities that expressed interest and the results of the pilot schemes will be used by national teams working on New Urban Agenda reporting, local governments involved in voluntary local reviews, cities in the UN-Habitat Sustainable Development Goals Cities flagship programme and countries interested in undertaking urban analysis for the purposes of common country assessments. The results can also be complemented with additional sets of indicators, allowing deeper thematic analysis, and with geospatial and local perception indicators to understand the differences experienced at the subdistrict and district levels of cities. Adopting this standardized and unified platform for the monitoring and reporting of urban indicators will help countries to save time and resources devoted to urban monitoring. Furthermore, the framework is being digitized through a partnership with the Global CEO Alliance into a data-entry and indexing system that allows cities to measure development performance.

26. The global urban monitoring framework harmonizes urban monitoring through its indicator system, resulting in an agreed, universal means of tracking the performance of the New Urban Agenda and the urban dimension of the 2030 Agenda. When adopted in March 2022, it will preclude the need for cities and countries to use different urban frameworks with different indicator systems and the resulting near incomparability of conditions and trends across the world and the consequent multiplicity of conceptualizations of sustainable urban development. The framework will also help to reduce the burden on cities in terms of data production and use, as it proposes a common set of indicators in line with the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

27. The framework will also serve as a monitoring tool for the UN-Habitat Sustainable Development Goals Cities flagship programme and will guide voluntary local reviews and voluntary national reviews while supporting urban data compilation for common country assessments by United Nations country teams. In the long run, the framework is expected to serve as a basis for the development of an urban/city development index that helps cities to measure their level of sustainability in various thematic areas or dimensions and their overall sustainability, ultimately providing a way to compare the urban development levels in countries and regions and call attention to areas and issues where the need for additional effort is greatest.

IV. Work by UN-Habitat on climate change

A. Background

28. To accelerate the implementation of subprogramme 3 of the UN-Habitat strategic plan for the period 2020–2023, on strengthened climate action and improved urban environment, and to design an entity-wide approach to the Innovate4Cities 2021 conference, Urban October and the forthcoming twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, UN-Habitat established a Climate Action for Cities task team that focused on the following five themes, aligned with the goals of the twenty-sixth session and in support of the Secretary General's messaging on climate change:

- (a) Support cities in entering pathways to net zero carbon emissions by 2050 to avoid catastrophic climate change;
- (b) Support cities in leading climate change adaptation to protect people, livelihoods and assets, as global temperatures will continue to rise;

- (c) Support national governments in facilitating urban climate actions to achieve national climate goals;
- (d) Help facilitate the delivery of climate finance to cities. Without significantly more climate finance – in support of adaptation in particular – the transformation needed cannot be achieved. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic recovery efforts provide an opportunity to invest in a net zero and resilient future;
- (e) Support cities in ensuring that transition plans for a net zero and resilient future are just, that no one is left behind and that social upheaval is not stalling climate action.

B. Climate action in 2021

1. Acceleration of urban climate action

29. Work by UN-Habitat in 2021 on climate action for cities included internal mobilization to expand and intensify both normative and operational work. There are now some 50 technical cooperation projects under subprogramme 3 and their project teams meet regularly with the normative leads in headquarters in an agency-wide community of practice on climate change.

30. To advocate for climate action, 27 Urban Thinkers Campuses on climate action were held during the year. During Urban October 2021, 520 online, hybrid and physical events were reported to UN-Habitat from around the world. The month began with World Habitat Day on the theme “accelerating urban action for a carbon-free future”. The global observance in Yaoundé featured a high-level ceremony and four thematic round-table events in a hybrid format that attracted over 1,200 participants. Urban October closed with the celebration of World Cities Day on 31 October on the theme “adapting cities for climate resilience”. The global observance, attended by some 1,500 people, was held in Luxor, Egypt, where the Egyptian Prime Minister led the high-level segment. World Cities Day events were also held in Glasgow, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, at the opening of the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and at Expo 2020 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

2. Innovate4Cities 2021 conference

31. The Innovate4Cities 2021 conference, on the theme “science and innovation partnerships driving inclusive, resilient and climate neutral cities”, was co-hosted by UN-Habitat and the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy and co-sponsored by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

32. Building on the first Cities and Climate Change Science Conference, held in Edmonton, Canada, from 5 to 7 March 2018, and the resultant Global Research and Action Agenda on Cities and Climate Change Science, Innovate4Cities 2021 focused on the nexus between science, practice and innovation as critical elements for realizing ambitious climate action in cities across the globe. The Science and Innovation Steering Committee and the Partners’ Network Organizing Committee brought together a wide range of United Nations entities, city networks, think tanks, community networks and academic experts and practitioners with knowledge of climate change and cities to develop a framework for the revised Global Research and Action Agenda that guided the conference structure.

33. The conference had 6,901 registered participants from 159 countries, 886 speakers, 191 sessions (available online) and over 20,000 site visits. Thirty-nine per cent of the registrants were 31–45 years of age while 37 per cent were youth representatives (18–30 years of age). Fifty-four per cent of registrants were female and 44 per cent were male.

34. The conference outcomes will guide city-level climate action and research and innovation and help close the implementation gap.

3. Twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

35. The engagement of UN-Habitat at the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change had two main goals:

- (a) Dissemination of knowledge and good practices reflecting the Programme’s spectrum of work on climate change mitigation, resource efficiency, protection of ecological assets and adaptation;
- (b) Engagement with local governments and municipal authorities and other urban and local government stakeholders.

36. With regard to the first goal, UN-Habitat engaged in the areas of planning, mobility, housing, water and sanitation, disaster risk reduction, climate finance, urban innovation and the climate resilience of the urban poor, sharing updates from the Innovate4Cities 2021 conference and presenting findings on the analysis of the urban content of the latest nationally determined contributions. Action related to the second goal included the provision of technical and policy advisory services to Member States in support of the overall inclusion of urban issues and strengthening of discussions on the Cities, Regions and the Built Environment themed day.

37. Despite the limited size of the UN-Habitat delegation, the hybrid nature of the conference made it possible for its representatives to lead or co-lead 9 events and speak at 21 others. The Executive Director was involved as a panellist or provided opening remarks in 10 of those 30 events, culminating in multilevel governance pavilion meetings involving nearly 200 mayors and city officials at the Glasgow council chambers, co-sponsored by UN-Habitat, and the Secretary-General's meeting with mayors and city networks.

C. Roadmap towards the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

38. To achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement, cities, which are associated with approximately three-quarters of global carbon emissions and host some of the most vulnerable people and assets, must play a stronger role. There are several opportunities in 2022 and beyond for UN-Habitat to advance local climate action:

- (a) To advance the research, innovation and action agenda, UN-Habitat will:
 - (i) Disseminate the updated Global Research and Action Agenda on Cities and Climate Change Science, in partnership with the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy and its partners;
 - (ii) Support global knowledge exchange, research and innovation on local climate action and strengthen the institutionalization of the Innovate4Cities conference and associated partnerships;
 - (iii) Strengthen the UN-Habitat normative framework and tools to guide Member States in addressing climate change;
 - (iv) Scale up programme development in support of climate action, with an emphasis on regional and global gaps as identified in the updated Global Research and Action Agenda, such as informality, blue and green infrastructure, and urban planning and design. It will do so in the priority countries and subregions most affected by climate change and in collaboration with other United Nations entities;
- (b) To support global urban climate change policy and action, UN-Habitat will:
 - (i) Work with IPCC and a broad range of urban stakeholders towards the completion of the IPCC special report on cities and climate change, scheduled for the seventh assessment cycle of the IPCC;
 - (ii) Disseminate updated information on urban climate action to Member States and urban stakeholders in support of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the review of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda;
 - (iii) Ensure strong urban climate action content and participant engagement in the eleventh session of the World Urban Forum, to be held in Katowice, Poland, from 26 to 30 June 2022;
 - (iv) Support Member States and urban stakeholders in their preparations for the twenty-seventh session by:
 - a. Strengthening the urban and local content of the nationally determined contributions, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme;
 - b. Supporting an urban and multilevel climate action pavilion at the conference;
 - c. Supporting designated high-level events during Cities, Regions and the Built Environment Day;

- d. Further exploring, with the presidency, the holding of an urban ministerial meeting before or during the twenty-seventh session.

V. Conclusion

39. The normative and operational activities set out in the present report highlight the versatility and applicability of UN-Habitat's urban expertise in terms of successes achieved in specific, highly demanding crisis contexts – as is the case in Afghanistan – and in the face of global development challenges, such as action against climate change in cities. That work contributes to the implementation of subprogrammes 3 and 4 of the UN-Habitat strategic plan for the period 2020–2023.

40. The normative work on urban indicators – the global urban monitoring framework – highlights the critical expertise that UN-Habitat provides for the global development agendas and for its partners in tracking progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Agenda at the local level. Local-level action has been placed centre stage in plans for intensified efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development and in the report of the Secretary General entitled *Our Common Agenda*.
