

Summary of discussions of the briefing by the Executive Director on the outcomes of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and on the status of preparations for the eleventh session of the World Urban Forum (WUF 11)

Friday, 20 May 2022 – 09:30 to 11:30 EAT – hybrid format

Briefing by the Executive Director on the outcomes of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda

Under this item, the Executive Director provided a briefing on the outcomes of the high-level meeting on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (HLM) which took place on 28 April 2022 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

The briefing by the Executive Director highlighted the following:

- i. The Executive Director recalled the establishment of the Advisory Committee by the President of the General Assembly to prepare for the high-level meeting (HLM) and to promote the New Urban Agenda throughout the 76th session of the General Assembly. The Executive Director recalled that the Committee met twice prior to the HLM and a third time on 18 May 2022. At that meeting, the President of the General Assembly informed that the President's Summary of the high-level meeting which would include an annex consolidating the commitments of Member States and various non-state actors will be available in June, 2022.
- ii. The Executive Director expressed her sincere gratitude to Member States for their steadfast support throughout the preparatory process. The Executive Director also noted that the efforts to work with colleagues in capitals and at Permanent Missions in New York contributed significantly to the success of the HLM. She further acknowledged that it was strategic that to hold the 2022 first session of the Executive Board just 30 days prior to the high-level meeting, as the regional consultations prior to the session and the session of the Executive Board enabled Permanent Representatives in Nairobi to mobilize Member States to participate to the HLM, in high numbers and at senior levels.
- iii. The Executive Director further recalled the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Special Meeting on Sustainable Urbanization and the New Urban Agenda conveyed on 21 April 2022 as another key factor that attracted the attention of Member States prior to the HLM. The special meeting generated a well-publicized debate on urbanization, inequality and United Nations reforms. In turn, this elevated the profile of the New Urban Agenda and encouraged participation to the HLM with over 90 Member States present in-person and over 70 governments delivering statements. These included statements from 45 Ministers and Vice Ministers, and statements from the European Union, ASEAN, the Group of 77 + China, and Africa. The President of the General Assembly indicated that the HLM was among the most well-attended mandated meetings of the General Assembly in recent years.
- iv. The Executive Director updated that in line with the request of the President of the General Assembly, most of the statements delivered by Member States were action oriented and offered commitments for their future on key aspects of sustainable urbanization such as COVID-19 recovery, housing, climate action, post-conflict financing and localization.
- v. The Executive Director further informed that a 'Group of Friends for UN-Habitat, Sustainable Urbanization, and the New Urban Agenda' was established as a key outcome of the HLM with over 30 Member States expressing an interest in joining the Group. Slovakia and Botswana as the co-facilitators of the Group, both member states emphasized the importance of the Group as a platform to serve as a political intermediary between the General Assembly and the United Nations

Secretariat in New York. The Group will build upon the momentum of the HLM to elevate the Organization and the New Urban Agenda among the Permanent Missions to the United Nations in New York.

- vi. Moreover, the Executive Director recalled with gratitude the support accorded by Hon. Ms. Marta Delgado, President of the United Nations Habitat Assembly, during the closing segment of the HLM. The Executive Director also noted that during a bilateral meeting with the President of the General Assembly, Hon. Ms. Marta Delgado underscored the importance of funding of UN-Habitat and the role of the UN-Habitat Assembly in carrying forward the outcomes of the HLM.
- vii. The Executive Director highlighted that among the many achievements of the HLM, was the successful alignment of the strategic reports, intergovernmental meetings and key events of the preparatory process. The Executive Director recalled that both the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UN-Habitat and the Executive Board of UN-Habitat urged the Secretariat to pursue the HLM not as a standalone meeting but as part of series of meeting that can elevate the mandate of UN-Habitat. In addition, the United Nations Secretariat was successful in heeding the call of the President of the General Assembly to complete the Secretary-General's Quadrennial Report six months ahead of schedule so that the document could serve as a pre-session document to the HLM. This enabled Member States to prepare statements to the HLM with the benefit of the findings and recommendations of the reports.
- viii. The Executive Director further acknowledged the contribution of the Regional Economic Commissions which successfully engaged Member States during the Regional Forums for Sustainable Development held in March 2022 as called for by the General Assembly. The Regional Economic Commissions presented a report on the regional inputs to the HLM.
- ix. The Executive Director took note that both the President of ECOSOC and the President of the General Assembly, in their respective capacities, established precedent by coordinating their intergovernmental bodies to promote the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. She noted that the President of ECOSOC during the ECOSOC Special Meeting held on 21 April 2022, reviewed the Quadrennial Report of the Secretary-General through the lens of inequality and UN reform, areas of strategic importance to ECOSOC. The President of ECOSOC – at the opening of the HLM– further provided Member States with a summary of deliberations of the special meeting.
- x. The Executive Director noted that the Global Task Force on Local and Regional Governments with the support of the Government of Ecuador and UN-Habitat, convened 30 Mayors at a session held on 27 April 2022 of the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments. The Executive Director noted that she opened the session together with the Presidents of the General Assembly and ECOSOC. At the HLM, four of the 30 mayors addressed Member States, to deliver the key outcomes of the World Assembly, in a segment entitled “leading locally,” thereby setting another precedent at the General Assembly.
- xi. The Executive Director also recognized the efforts of the professionals, the grassroots, and the United Nations constituencies of the New Urban Agenda, which worked with the diverse members of their constituencies to deliver strong interventions at the HLM during the segment entitled “mobilizing millions.” She further acknowledged the combined contributions of the Deputy Secretary General, Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Regional Commissions, which demonstrated the commitments by the United Nations family to strengthen efforts to support Member States accelerate their implementation of the New Urban Agenda.
- xii. The Executive Director updated that over twenty side events were organized during the week of the HLM. These included seven UN-Habitat corporate events co-sponsored by Member States on floating cities, financing climate adaptation, urban resilience in SIDS, housing and ending

homelessness, the World Assembly, the Road to Katowice, and the Local 2030 Coalition for the Decade of Action.

- xiii. The Executive Director highlighted that the success of the high-level meeting has created opportunities that must be seized. She noted that the key messages coming out of the HLM include:
- a. The need for the international community to zero-in on housing as the vehicle for reducing inequality and unsustainable urbanization as central to commit action.
 - b. The need to promote multi-level governance and strengthen engagement with the local governments and other local actors, and
 - c. The need to promote durable solutions and inclusive planning to address urban displacement and ensure urban recovery.
- xiv. Furthermore, the Executive Director highlighted five areas of work for Member States to consider following the HLM and called upon the support of Member States to assist the Organization in its pursuit of these five critical priority areas:
- a. The completion of the President's Summary report of HLM, including an annex that consolidates actions and commitments. UN-Habitat will continue to support the President of the General Assembly moving forward.
 - b. Scaling up of the Urban Agenda Platform. Members of the Advisory Committee on Sustainable Urbanization are keen for UN-Habitat to promote the Urban Agenda Platform not only as a repository of reports of national governments, cities, professionals, business leaders, grassroots, professionals, and UN entities but also as a platform for policy advocacy, networking, and analysis.
 - c. The promotion of the New Urban Agenda in intergovernmental meetings and global forums such as the World Urban Forum, the High-Level Political Forum, the Nature Summit, the G20 Summit, the G7 Summit, the 27th session of the Conference of Parties (COP 27) to be held in November 2022 and the second session of the UN-Habitat Assembly to be held in June 2023.
 - d. The utilization of the eleven session of the World Urban Forum (WUF 11) to be held in June 2022 as a platform with constituent assemblies, special sessions and networking events to carry forward the commitments of the HLM, with the support of the President of the General Assembly, the President of ECOSOC, the Secretary-General, and representatives of local governments, grassroots, and UN entities.
 - e. The implementation of UN-Habitat priority areas, as these correspond to the aspects of sustainable urbanization highlighted by Member States during the HLM: on sustainable urbanization which correspond with the areas raised by Member States at the HLM: housing, climate, localization, and post-conflict.
- xv. The Executive Director called upon Member States to maintain the level of support that was provided during the run-up to the HLM in order to sustain the momentum.
- xvi. The Executive Director concluded by reiterating three key aspects drawing from the HLM:
- a. The commitment by the United Nations Deputy Secretary- General and the UN Country Teams to integrate the New Urban Agenda in the common cooperation framework of each country.

- b. Integrating the ‘how’ of implementing the New Urban Agenda into national urban policies in order to tackle the challenges of climate change, conflict and crisis and COVID-19. In addition, it was noted that there will be a special session on sustainable urbanization and climate at COP 27.
- c. The need to capacitate and offer trainings to Member States on the New Urban Agenda platform so as to foster knowledge of urban issues. At this point, the Executive Director emphasized the need for adequate financial mechanisms required at both the national and multilateral level to facilitate the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

Under this item, the Secretariat provided a briefing on media engagement during the HLM. The full presentation by the Secretariat can be accessed [here](#).

The briefing highlighted the following:

- i. The Secretariat indicated that as part of UN-Habitat’s efforts to raise awareness on the New Urban Agenda and the HLM, a social media toolkit was prepared in collaboration with the Communication’s team at ECOSOC and the Office of the President of the General Assembly.
- ii. The Secretariat highlighted that over a short timeframe before and after the HLM, the social media engagement increased by 400% with about 12,000 hits across UN-Habitat’s social media platforms. Over 6000 new people were recorded engaging on the various UN-Habitat social media platforms, by posting and sharing the New Urban Agenda materials as well as commenting and liking the shared content. The trending hashtags included #UNGA which was mentioned 27,7K times, #HLM which was mentioned 5,73K times and #NewUrbanAgenda which was mentioned 1,86K times. Overall, UN-Habitat saw an impressive engagement of 94,000 people, 200% higher than the last reporting period.
- iii. The Secretariat further informed that apart from social media, the HLM received coverage from traditional media sources such as magazines, blogs and online news from various countries such as South Korea, Kenya, USA and France among others. Altogether UN-Habitat received about 119 clips, *i.e.* newspapers, magazines, TV and radio coverage that mentioned the HLM from both online and traditional media sources.

Following the briefing by the Executive Director, the discussions highlighted the following:

- i. One Member State attested to the support and enthusiasm of the Member States participating to the HLM. The Member State indicated that they are awaiting for the President of the General Assembly’s Summary as a crucial document for carrying forward the New Urban Agenda in accordance with what the President affirms as key emerging issues of sustainable development. It will also allow Member States to indicate their areas of focus and where they can offer the most in terms of either normative or fiscal contribution. The Member State supported the views of the Secretariat on mapping the way forward and the need to focus on housing, climate change, localization and post-conflict recovery.
- ii. Another Member State noted that the Secretariat needed not only to consolidate the key messages and actions emanating from the HLM but to also highlight the areas that require follow-up particularly for the Nairobi-based Permanent Missions and their specific role in mobilizing support. The Secretariat informed that it will prepare a data-base that shall include an assessment and analysis of the main concerns expressed by each Member State during the HLM, in connection with UN-Habitat’s Strategic Plan. The Secretariat expects to have this compiled and issued by June 2022.

Briefing by the Secretariat on the preparations for the eleventh session of the World Urban Forum (WUF 11)

The full presentation can be accessed [here](#). The briefing by the Secretariat on the preparations for WUF 11 highlighted the following:

- i. The Secretariat express its gratitude to the Government of Poland and to the Mayor of Katowice for their commitment to host WUF 11. The theme of the Forum, *Transforming Our Cities for a Better Urban Future*, seeks to strengthen relationships and create linkages to accelerate the implementation of global urban commitments, grounded in the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 11. The theme is timelier than ever as the world comes together to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
- ii. The Secretariat recalled that during the first session of the Executive Board of UN-Habitat for the year 2022 which took place from 29 to 31 March 2022, the Government of Poland confirmed that WUF 11 will take place from 26 to 30 June 2022 as scheduled. The Secretariat further recalled that the Government of Poland also invited the members of the Bureau of the Executive Board to join an advance mission to support the preparations for WUF 11 amidst concerns raised by Member States and stakeholders with regards to safety, security, logistical and programmatic matters arising from the on-going conflict in Ukraine. The advance mission started in Katowice on 20 April and completed its work on 22 April 2022.
- iii. The Secretariat highlighted that the key findings from the advance mission were positive with three main recommendations namely:
 - a. Confidence that the WUF 11 will be able to convene at Katowice on 26 to 30 June 2022 as scheduled
 - b. Recommendation to develop clear communications regarding WUF 11 with a joint press release (which is already done)
 - c. Recommendation that UN-Habitat continues to monitor the security situation in coordination with the Government of Poland and update Member States and partners appropriately.
- iv. Moreover, the Secretariat noted that the advance mission visited several refugee reception centres including the Katowice railway station and bus station, and a private facility that hosts refugees. The advance mission commended the joint efforts from the Government of Poland and from the City of Katowice for the way they have included and provided for the refugees. The advance mission also confirmed that no refugees were staying in the WUF 11 conference facility.
- v. The Secretariat informed that WUF 11 will follow the roadmap established by the New Urban Agenda and the HLM by gathering a diverse spectrum of partners and policy actors. For instance, following the HLM, the “Road to Katowice” side-event held on 29 April 2022 at the UN Headquarters in New York presented opportunities for constituents of the New Urban Agenda to draw upon the outcome of the HLM to discuss the means of implementation of the New Urban Agenda during and beyond WUF 11. It also raised awareness of WUF 11 by highlighting the engagement opportunities and roles of Member States, local governments, civil society, grassroots organisations, academia, and the private sector, among other relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, the Secretariat reiterated the importance of WUF 11 theme “Transforming our Cities for a Better Urban Future”. It is expected that WUF 11 will mutually reinforce various global development agendas through its overall theme in an effort to provide greater insights and clarity on the future

of cities based on existing trends, challenges and opportunities to propose how cities can prepare to address future pandemics and crises.

- vi. The Secretariat noted that an extra ordinary dialogue on urban crises and urban recovery will explore how national and local governments can better prepare and respond to urban crises and use recovery frameworks to accelerate progress to a more green, healthy and just cities. In line with this, the Secretariat updated the WUF 11 Programme which can be accessed [here](#) to accommodate discussions on the ‘crisis’ dimension which in turn will strengthen UN-Habitat’s Domain of Change 4 on ‘*effective urban crisis prevention and response*’.
- vii. The Secretariat further indicated that the outcome of WUF 11 will be declared actions and recommendations that representatives of governments, civil society and private sector and other stakeholders could take back to their home cities for further discussion and implementation. These actions will result from the partnerships and collaborations that are at the core of the Forum’s interest as a marketplace for knowledge and solution. As a partner-led Forum, WUF 11 has received nearly 1000 applications for side-events. The Urban Expo still remains the most popular attraction at every World Urban Forum.
- viii. The theme of WUF 11 “Transforming our Cities for a Better Urban Future” is expanded in the WUF 11 Background Paper which can be accessed [here](#) and which sets the tone for debate and discussion.
- ix. The Secretariat informed that the first meeting of the World Urban Forum (WUF) Alumni Network was convened on 10-12 May 2022 in Cairo, Egypt. The meeting was co-hosted by Abu Dhabi as the immediate former WUF10 host. Other representatives from host countries of past WUF sessions such as Canada, Brazil, Malaysia, Poland and the future host, Egypt, was also present. That first meeting of the WUF Alumni Network established the network of former WUF host cities as a key platform to contribute and accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda.
- x. The Secretariat updated on the registration statistics for WUF 11 as at 20 May 2022 with nearly 6,380 participants from over 152 countries (3579 men and 2777 women). Although WUF 11 will be convened in a hybrid format for most of the sessions and events, the Secretariat noted that approximately 80% of registered parties have expressed an interest to participate in-person.

Following the briefing by the Executive Director, the discussions highlighted the following:

- i. Some Member States requested the Secretariat to share preliminary data on the level of participation from Member States, including ministerial and local governments participation. They noted that this would assist delegations in fostering strong partnerships with the appropriate channels for further collaborations.
- ii. One Member State enquired on the sequence of the WUF Special sessions, requesting more information on the particular format and expectations for the sessions. The Member State also requested for the detailed agenda of the Ministerial Roundtable.
- iii. Another Member State request additional information on the modality for online participation and for live broadcast of the UN Web TV.
- iv. One Member State expressed its gratitude to UN-Habitat and to the Government of Poland for appropriately informing of the consequences of the Ukraine crisis.

- v. Some Member States raised concerns on the challenges of securing the visa to participate in-person to WUF 11.
- vi. One Member State enquired on the selection criteria used to invite Mayors to WUF 11 and whether UN-Habitat sponsors small or intermediary cities to attend WUF 11.
- vii. Some Member States requested that the WUF 11 Background Paper be shared and also enquired whether the revised paper will provide more detailed information such as scenario notes in order to provide adequate guidance to capitals.

In light of the views expressed by Member States, the Secretariat responded as follows:

- i. The Secretariat shared that 557 delegates representing 153 countries are registered to attend WUF 11 as at 20 May 2022 the Secretariat further noted that an updated list of confirmed participants will be shared in June 2022 with the Permanent Missions.
- ii. The Secretariat indicated that for the first time, the World Urban Forum will adopt a hybrid format for most of its sessions. The special sessions include panel discussions with speakers and experts in the field. The Secretariat noted that the Ministerial Roundtable will provide an opportunity for Ministers to reiterate national commitments and plans related to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and of the Sustainable Development Goals. On this note, the Secretariat encouraged active participation of Member States to the [Ministerial Roundtable](#) which will take place on **Tuesday, 28 June 2022**. The Secretariat further updated that it has received about 20 expressions of interest from Ministers to speak at the Roundtable, most of them in person, and a few through pre-recorded statements. The Secretariat noted that there is still speaking slot for more Member States who may be interested to join the Roundtable.
- iii. The Secretariat clarified that participants unable to attend in-person are required to register on the WUF 11 website to receive the connection link to the sessions. Additionally, UN Web TV will also broadcast WUF 11 without any registration requirement. However, since many events will be happening simultaneously, the UN Web TV may not be able to capture all sessions. Delegations are therefore encouraged to register online as early as possible on <https://www.unevents.org/home/register>
- iv. The Secretariat emphasized that it is working closely with the Government of Poland as the Co-organizers of the Forum to critically highlight Domain of Change 4 on urban recovery during WUF 11.
- v. The Secretariat indicated that the facilitation and issuance of visa to attend meetings organized by the United Nations is a matter covered in in the UN Headquarters Agreement and supported by both the Geneva and Vienna Conventions. However, in some occasions the issuance of visa becomes a bilateral issue between two countries at which point the Organization is no longer involved. The Secretariat noted that countries agreeing to host a UN meeting, often avail facilities for unimpeded issuance of visas for the participants.
- vi. The Secretariat noted that the Government of Poland had recently come to an agreement with the Government of France to assist with the visa application for applicants who do not have a Polish Embassy in their countries. In such an instance, the nearest French Embassy will be able to facilitate their travel requests.
- vii. The Secretariat informed that the selection criteria for inviting Mayors to WUF 11 is based on three factors: equitable geographical distribution, the thematic issue of discussion and the existing database of local authorities that have previously engaged with UN-Habitat at one capacity or another.

- viii. The WUF 11 Background Paper, has been revised to accommodate the Domain of Change 4 on *‘effective urban crisis prevention and response’*. The background paper details the overall theme of the WUF 11, the specific topics of the dialogues with the key issues and objectives and the guiding questions. It can be accessed [here](#).
