

2024 third Bureau Meeting of the Executive Board of UN-Habitat

Hybrid format – Monday, 22 April 2024

15:00-16:30 hrs. East Africa Time (EAT)

Statement by the Acting Executive Director

(Draft of 19 March 2024 - 14.51pm)

SLIDE 1: Title slide

Slide 2: Provisional Agenda

Adoption of the Agenda to be led by the Chair.

1. Adoption of the provisional Agenda.
2. Status of preparations for the first session of the Executive Board in 2024.
3. Status of draft decisions to be possibly adopted during the first session of the Executive Board in 2024.
4. Discussion on the roadmap for the development of the draft Stakeholder Engagement Policy towards submission to the second resumed session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly.
5. Any other matters:
 - i. Discussion on the request from a Member State from the regional group of WEOG for a possible hybrid format of the first session of the Executive Board in 2024.

NOTES FOR AED.

1. Africa will Chair the meeting, specifically Kenya as outgoing Chair. This is because the no objection process is yet to complete for Nigeria to take over. The expected date for the new Chair, Nigeria to start is 3 May 2024.

2. The chairs of the ad hoc working groups of the Executive Board are invited to the meeting for joint planning. Colombia and Nigeria as co-chairs of the ad hoc working group on programmatic, budgetary and administrative matters and, Portugal as Chair of the ad hoc working group on the development of a stakeholder engagement policy.

Slide 3: AGENDA ITEM 2 (Title Slide)- Status of preparations for the first session of the Executive Board in 2024.

Madam Chairperson,

Excellencies,

Good morning, good afternoon and good evening to you.

A warm welcome to you all to this third meeting of the Bureau of the Executive Board for the year 2024. I also extend a warm welcome to the chairs of the ad hoc working groups of the Executive Board, Colombia, Nigeria and Portugal to our meeting today as we jointly plan for the upcoming session of the Executive Board.

Let me start by apologizing that I could not join you today in person because I am here in China, where I am undertaking an official mission at the request of the Secretary General as previously mentioned during our meeting on 2 February 2024.

Excellencies,

Before I update you on the Status of preparations for the first session of the Executive Board in 2024. I wish to take this opportunity to thank you most sincerely for your support and participation in the recently concluded joint meeting of the Bureaux of the Governing Bodies and visit field visit in Mexico from 21 to 23 March 2024. The Executive Board was fully represented with all five Members participating in that meeting and the field visit. Let me thank the Republic of Kenya through you Madam Chair for its representation at Ministerial level, and in its capacity as the Chair of the Executive Board.

In our own assessment, the joint Bureaux meeting was successful in terms of kick-starting discussions towards the preparations for the upcoming resumed second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly in 2025 and, in updating the Bureaux on the work of UN-Habitat including priorities within the UN in 2024 and 2025. I am sure you and your representatives also appreciated the process and lessons from the field visit in Ecatepec where we all witnessed quite a successful programme by

the Government of Mexico at the Bicentennial Park in Ecatepec, an exemplary project on sustainable urbanization with inclusivity and sustainability at the core of its implementation.

We truly thank Mexico and the President of the UN-Habitat Assembly, Honorable Roman Falcon Meyer, for their hospitality and leadership.

Slide 4: Update on documentation for the session and briefing by the Executive Director to Member States on the Preparations

Madam Chair,

It is now my pleasure to brief you **on Status of preparations for the first session of the Executive Board in 2024** to be held in just about two weeks from now including a focus on status of documents.

Excellencies, when we met on 15 March 2024, I assured you that we would have the **pre-session documents** ready in line with the rules of procedure, by 8 April 2024. I wish to confirm that all the pre-session documents have been made available on the dedicated website for the session and that the relevant communication was sent out to Member States on 8 April 2024.

I also particularly wish to note that the OIOS report on the the Mid-term Evaluation of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme Strategic Plan 2020-2025 which we had expected some delay on as communicated to Members States during our recent regional consultations, has also been availed to us by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and duly shared with you all. As you know, the Evaluation report is key in our preparation for the next strategic plan of UN-Habitat for the period 2026 to 2029.

I therefore believe that with respect to documentation for the upcoming session we are in a very good position, and we remain available to support Member States in their preparations may be requested.

This leads me to the next point which is the **Executive Director’s briefing to Member States on the preparations** for the session as required by the rules of procedure.

I wish to confirm that I will brief Member States in person on 26 April 2024 from 11 am on the preparations as earlier guided by the Bureau, and I do appreciate the Bureau’s flexibility in this regard as the briefing was initially to be held today.

Slide 5: ii. Technical inputs into the proposed draft outcomes of the upcoming session

Excellencies

At our last meeting on 15 March 2024, we did share with you our expectations on the upcoming session in terms of the outcomes and in this regard, we committed to provide you with **the technical inputs into the proposed draft outcomes** of the upcoming session for further consideration by the ad hoc working group on programmatic, budgetary and administrative matters. I wish to confirm that the technical inputs were shared with all Member States on 2 April 2024, covering four draft decisions as follows:

- 1. Draft decision 2024/A:** Draft work programme of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and draft budget of the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation for 2025, and financial, budgetary and administrative matters and the strategic plan of UN-Habitat.

2. **Draft decision 2024/B:** Implementation of the normative and operational activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme.
3. **Draft Decision 2024 / C:** Update on the implementation of resolutions adopted by the United Nations Habitat Assembly of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme of the United Nations Habitat Assembly.
4. **Draft decision 2024/D:** Methods of work of the Executive Board and the workplan of the Executive Board for 2024.

Excellencies,

I have been duly informed that ad hoc working group on programmatic budgetary and administrative matters is already making progress in considering the draft decisions. I am sure the co-Chairs of the ad hoc working group will brief the Bureau on the progress under agenda item 3 of our meeting today.

Slide 6: iii. Registration and Programme for the session

My third update related to our preparations for the session is confirm to you that **registration for the session** opened on 25 March 2024 as scheduled and will close on 2 May 2024 at 2 pm East Africa Time.

We request you to encourage your respective regional groups to register for the session and in addition send us the formal communication on the list of their delegations as required by the rules of procedure. We are very grateful for those who have already sent in their lists.

Madam Chair,

Excellencies,

The programme for the session has been shared with all Member States and that the general information for participants is available on the dedicated website.

Allow me to bring just two aspects related to the programme which are not yet explicitly indicated in the programme, for your kind attention and any guidance,

1. Under the agenda item 14 of the provisional agenda for the session which is “other matters”, we expect that MOPAN will brief the Executive Board on its ongoing assessment of UN-Habitat. For the ongoing assessment, an inception mission was held to UN-Habitat headquarters in November 2023, to identify key changes since the previous MOPAN assessment, to consider opportunities to align the 2024 assessment with UN-Habitat needs and priorities, and to establish how to maximise the fit between MOPAN’s assessment framework with UN-Habitat’s operational model and context. The Inception Mission found that the organisation is making strategic efforts to raise the profile of sustainable urbanisation in intergovernmental fora. In addition to the expansion and evolution of UN-Habitat’s mandate following the adoption of the New Urban Agenda, while its capacity to deliver remains severely resource constrained. This tension between an expanding mandate and increasing expectations on critical global issues on one hand and a small UN-Secretariat programme with limited resources on the other hand presents an important context for the ongoing assessment.

2. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is planning a side event on “Quality of Life Initiative” on the sidelines of the Executive Board, most likely on Day 2 which will be 7 May 2024, in the evening. This event which will be held in a format

of a reception will not coincide with any plenary meetings of the executive Board. We have been requested by Saudi Arabia to indicate that event in an updated programme as the earliest possible.

Madam Chair, if I may, Quality of Life Initiative being implemented by UN-Habitat, with the support of the Quality of Life Programme Center of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is an innovative new global programme that focuses on enhancing urban quality of life through innovative approaches to data collection and policy-making. The initiative advocates for people-centered policy action, integrating the diverse needs and values of communities into a globally relevant, locally applicable Quality of Life index. It is developed in view of the need to accelerate the implementation and localization of the Agenda 2030 and the New Urban Agenda.

My final point on agenda item 2 is on Bureau meetings during the session. This is a polite reminder that, as you are all aware, we will have the Bureau meetings during the session to review and plan for each day, as has been the practice.

In this regard the next Bureau meeting is to be held on 3 May 2024, which is the Friday before we start the meeting on Monday, 6 May 2024. The in-session Bureau meetings will be held on Tuesday, 7 May and Wednesday 8 May in the morning hours.

I thank you Madam Chair. Back to you.

Slide 7: (TITLE SLIDE)AGENDA ITEM 3: Status of draft decisions to be possibly adopted during the first session of the Executive Board in 2024.

*(Note to AED: The Chair will call on **Colombia**, supported by Nigeria on this item. AED, Raf, Chris and colleagues will support with any related questions following the update by the Chair)*

Slide 8: TITLE SLIDE) AGENDA ITEM 4: Discussion on the roadmap for the development of the draft Stakeholder Engagement Policy towards submission to the second resumed session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly.

Slide 9: Points to consider in discussing the roadmap for development of the draft Stakeholder Engagement Policy

Excellencies

With regard to roadmap for the development of the draft Stakeholder Engagement Policy towards submission to the second resumed session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly, we are aware that the Chair of the working group on the development of a stakeholder engagement policy and the Executive Board has full control of this roadmap.

However, let me state the following:

The Executive Board needs to have the document ready for review and possible adoption by the UN-Habitat Assembly at its resumed second session in May 2025.

The document will need to be presented to the Assembly in line with the rules of procedure of the Assembly as a pre-session document available in six Official languages and six weeks in advance of the session, by 17 April 2025.

The Division of Conference Services will require us to submit all pre-session documents for the Assembly by 6 March 2025.

Slide 10: Options for the roadmap

Option1. On the basis of the above, we would encourage the possible endorsement of the document by the Executive Board at its 2024 second session in December 2024.

In the event that the document would not be ready by the second session in 2024, the options would be available as follows:

Option 2. For the Executive Board to empower the ad hoc working group on the development of a stakeholder engagement policy to finalise the document and forward to the Chair of the Executive Board for submission to the President of the Assembly.

Option 3. That the timing of the first session of the Executive Board in 2025 be diarised early enough to consider and recommend the priority documents requiring UN-Habitat Assembly approval, in addition to other items. On this we may need to be aware that session may be either too close to the Assembly or may come too soon after the 2024 second session of the Executive Board.

Madam Chair, as I said earlier, this process is really in the hands of Member States at the end of the day. Ours is to simply guide you on the provisions of the rules and possible options. In addition, we understand and appreciate the complexity of this long-standing matter and we commit to continue with our full support to the chair and the ad hoc working group accordingly.

Thank you and back to you Madam Chair

Slide 11: (TITLE SLIDE) AGENDA ITEM 5 Any other matters.

- i. Discussion on the request from a Member State from the regional group of WEOG for a possible hybrid format of the first session of the Executive Board in 2024.

Slide 12: Policy Guidance on Hybrid meetings by the UN.

(to be led by the Chair)

(AED please raise any other matters here starting with the issue of a hybrid format of the meeting)

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Excellencies.

This matter on possible hybrid format of the first session of the Executive Board in 2024 is being brought to the attention of the Bureau once again because we received an email directly from a Member of WEOG after the Bureau meeting held on 15 March 2024 in which the Bureau did not reverse its decision of 2 February 2024 on holding the upcoming session fully in person. We take the matter seriously and we would like the Bureau to be fully appraised and for us to get guidance as well.

Madam Chair,
Excellencies,

I wish to note that our preparations for any session of the Executive Board including the upcoming session, has always been guided by the Bureau through its recommendations in line with established practice.

We have communicated to Member States through the Convocation Note dated 15 February 2024 and the formal Notification by the Executive Director for the session on 22 March 2024 that the session will be held fully in person based on guidance of the Bureau on 2 February 2024, which followed the practice of the session held in November 2024.

However, following the further inquiry by the Member of WEOG on whether the session can be held in a hybrid format, in their very valid view, to ensure “meaningful participation of member states and stakeholders in Executive Board meetings”, we have done two things.

First, in line with the practice at the 2023 second session of the Executive Board held in November 2023, we have already created Microsoft Teams link that would allow delegations from headquarters who would not be in a position to travel to Nairobi to follow the proceedings in English only and possibly communicate with their delegations in Nairobi accordingly for any interventions.

Secondly, we have liaised with the UNON Division of Conference Services on the possibility of putting in place a hybrid meeting with remote simultaneous interpretation at this stage of the preparations.

Their response to us is clear, policy based and reads in part as follows:

“On an exceptional measure, UNON DCS did offer remote interpretation services as a business continuity measure in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, with the increased resumption of in-person meetings, UNON, like the other headquarter duty stations, **is no longer offering remote simultaneous interpretation**. The provision of hybrid and virtual meetings with RSI **requires a mandate from the General Assembly** to define, inter alia, the legal and technical parameters of these meetings and on how the rules of procedure would be applied in a formal meeting being held in a hybrid or virtual format. Given that **the GA has not established such a mandate**, continuation of these modalities would contravene their current mandates.”

It further reads that:

“DCS will not offer remote simultaneous interpretation until a mandate is established by the GA, including for UNEP’s governing bodies.”

From the afore-mentioned madam Chair, Excellencies, on this matter it is clear at least to us that our hands are tied as part of the UN Secretariat and we would need to conform with the policy guidance received from the Division of Conference Services which was originally sent from the UN Assistance Secretary General for General Assembly and Conference Management addressed to the Director General of UNON. The guidance is now applicable across the UN.

As I said earlier, we have already prepared the necessary links to allow delegations not travelling to Nairobi to follow the proceedings in English but without possibility of remote simultaneous interpretation.

Just to summarize on this matter, this is a policy issue, and we would need to stay in conformity with the policy.

I thank you Madam Chair.

Back to you.