

**Summary of the twelfth meeting of the Ad-Hoc working group on programmatic, budgetary and Administrative matters of the Executive Board
Wednesday 3 March 2021 – 14:30 – 16:30 East Africa Time (EAT)**

Chair: H.E. Ms. Saqlain Syedah, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to UN-Habitat

The Chair called the meeting to order at 2.32PM (EAT)

1. Adoption of the Agenda

The Ad-Hoc working group on programmatic, budgetary and administrative matters of the Executive Board (“The Ad-Hoc working group”) adopted the provisional agenda for its twelfth meeting as follows:

1. Adoption of the provisional Agenda;
2. Discussions on normative and operational activities of UN-Habitat;
3. Discussion on the alignment of the QCPR process with the planning cycles of UN-Habitat
4. Any other matters

After the adoption of the Agenda, the meeting considered Agenda item 2, namely discussions on proposed draft work programme and budget of the United Nations Human Settlements Foundation for the year 2022.

2. Discussions on the implementation of the normative and operational activities of UN- Habitat

- i. Under this item, the Chair recalled paragraph 11 of Decision 2020/6 adopted by the Executive Board during its 2020 second session which included an Agenda item for the 2021 first session on the implementation of the normative and operational activities of UN- Habitat including reporting on the programmatic activities of UN-Habitat in 2020 and the implementation of subprogrammes, flagship programmes and technical cooperation activities.
- ii. The Chair recalled that on 24 February 2021, the Secretariat transmitted to Member States an Advance version of the report of the Executive Director entitled “Normative and operational activities of UN- Habitat: focus on the Prosperity Fund Global Future Cities Programme, the project entitled “Building Urban Economic Resilience during and after COVID-19” and the Lebanon country programme” as set out in document HSP/EB.2021/5.
- iii. The Chair noted that document HSP/EB.2021/5 will be considered by the Executive Board at its first session in April 2021.
- iv. The Chair reiterated that the purpose of the meeting was for the Ad-Hoc working group to formulate recommendations and comments that would enable the Executive Director to update the Executive Board at its upcoming first session in April 2021 on the status of the implementation of the normative and operational activities of UN- Habitat.
- v. The Secretariat provided a briefing on the implementation of the normative and operational activities of UN- Habitat. The full presentation by the Secretariat can be accessed [here](#).

The briefing highlighted the following:

- i. UN-Habitat reiterated its areas of focus for the normative and operational activities of UN- Habitat so far are by country programmes in Egypt, Mexico, Mozambique and Global initiatives with Climate Change Adaptation Fund, Water operators Partners Alliance and Global Land Tool Network.
- ii. The Secretariat further presented the new initiatives highlighted in both normative and operational activities of UN-Habitat, as follows:

- a. **Global Future Cities Programme** of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland's Prosperity Fund
- i. The programme aims at carrying out technical assistance to encourage sustainable development, increase prosperity and alleviate urban poverty.
 - ii. Identification of 30 transformative urban projects that are getting implemented in 19 cities across 10 countries.
 - iii. The programme has direct contribution to UN- Habitat Strategic Plan for the period 2020-2023, namely sub-programmes 1, 2 and 3.
 - iv. UN- Habitat has delivered the following outputs through the programme:
 - 30 Terms of Reference for Projects on Urban planning
 - 19 City Context Reports
 - 19 Technical Viability Assessment
 - 20 Charettes and 19 validation workshops
 - 8 Thematic Cluster Papers
 - 5 Policy papers
 - 2 Normative reports
 - 1 Programme- level training week.
 - SDG Project Assessment Tool
 - Review of technical deliverables for 30 urban projects
 - Knowledge Management Platform
 - Launch of the capacity building component
 - Three urban dialogues.
- b. **Building Urban Economic Resilience during and after COVID-19**, a joint project of UN-Habitat City Resilience Global Programme (CRGP) and UNECE, UNECA, UN ESCWA, UN ECLAC, UN ESCAP and UNCDF;
- i. UN- Habitat CRGP acts as a strong technical partner in the project, leveraging on its capacities as a center of knowledge and advocacy of urban resilience, experience in supporting local governments in building resilience and wide network and connections with cities.
 - ii. The project is focusing on strengthening the capacities of local governments in 16 cities globally.
 - iii. The project comprises of three faces, namely:
 - Phase 1- Conceptual Framework on Urban Economic Resilience, Global Virtual Workshops and Global Compendium of Practices
 - Phase 2- Training series
 - Phase 3- Designing resilient and sustainable economic financial recovery plans for the 16 project cities.
 - iv. The prospects of the UN- Habitat CRGP in building resilience are (i) completing and complementing cities' resilience profiles, (ii) reaching out to more cities and (iii) strengthening collaboration within the UN system including the Regional Economic Commissions.
- c. **Lebanon Country Programme** of UN-Habitat;
- i. The Programme implements normative and operational projects supporting Lebanon progress towards achieving Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development with a focus on SDGs 5,6,7,10,11,13,16 and 17.
 - ii. The UN- Habitat city profiles (Tyre, Tripoli, Beirut and Saida) and the UN Habitat- UNICEF neighborhood profiles (NPSs) offer a springboard for moving towards sustainable urban development.
 - iii. UN-Habitat's response to COVID- 19 in Lebanon is implemented by (i) designing, producing and installing the first public handwashing stations, (ii) distributing hygiene kits and (iii) enhancing the safety and tenure security of vulnerable communities.

Following the presentation by the Secretariat, the discussions highlighted the following:

- i. Acknowledgement of UN- Habitat for being professional in the implementation of its normative and operational activities of UN-Habitat and for positioning strategically, hence playing its crucial role in positive delivery.
- ii. The tools used in Global Future Cities Programme supported by United Kingdom and Northern Ireland's Prosperity Fund seem to be very appropriate for a sustainable urban development. In this respect, the United Kingdom ensured that there would be an effective delivery of the programme after some adjustments which have been made in its implementation.
- iii. Acknowledgement of the combination of normative and operational activities being carried out by UN-Habitat, as these 2 types of activities complement each other. Lessons learnt are often pulled from operational activities for the development of normative activities.

3. Discussion on the alignment of the QCPR process with the planning cycles of UN-Habitat

- i. Under this item, the Chair recalled Decision 1/3 adopted by the UN Habitat Assembly at its first session in May 2019 on "Arrangements for the transition towards the new governance structure of UN-Habitat", in which the UN-Habitat Assembly (i) recognized the importance of aligning the planning cycles of UN- Habitat with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) process. (ii) decided that it would further consider how to best achieve such an alignment.
- ii. In its Resolution 1/1 on the UN-Habitat strategic plan for the period 2020–2023 adopted at its first session held in May 2019, the UN-Habitat Assembly approved the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan and further requested the Executive Director to report annually to Member States through the Executive Board, and to the UN-Habitat Assembly in the years in which it is in session, on the progress achieved in the implementation of the strategic plan and the activities set out in the work programme of UN-Habitat.. The functions of the UN-Habitat Assembly as prescribed in Rule 2 (f) of the Rules of procedure of the UN-Habitat Assembly which convenes every four years, includes to examine and approve the UN-Habitat strategic plan, to be prepared by the Executive Board.
- iii. Taking into consideration the crucial importance for UN-Habitat to receive from its governing bodies a timely and clear guidance on the implementation of the 2020-2023 strategic plan, Resolution 1/1 therefore entrusted the Executive Board to look into the progress achieved in the implementation of the strategic plan.
- iv. The Chair noted that, accordingly, aware of the fact that (i) the General Assembly at its 75th session in 2020 adopted the QCPR process 2021-2024 and that (ii) the governing bodies of UN entities in 2021 are to develop and adopt their respective strategic plans for the period 2022-2025 such that these are in line with and help to ensure effective implementation of the QCPR., the Executive Board took the responsibility to consider the various time- based options for alignment of the planning cycles of UN-Habitat with the QCPR process.
- v. The Chair further recalled that in November 2019 at its resumed session, in paragraph 15 of its Decision 2019/1, the Executive Board requested the Executive Director to brief the Executive Board on alternatives on the alignment of planning cycles of UN-Habitat with the QCPR process. The Executive Director presented to the Executive Board during its second session for 2020 three scenarios for aligning the UN- Habitat strategic planning cycles with the QCPR. These scenarios are reflected in document HSP/EB.2020/16/Add.1 which the Secretariat had recirculated for reference on 24 February 2021.
- vi. The Chair recalled that under Paragraph 15 of its Decision 2020/3, adopted at its 2020 second session, the Board prioritized scenarios 2 and 3 as follows:
 - a. **Scenario Two:** Retain the current Strategic Plan 2020-2023 for the full term, develop an Interim two-year Strategic plan for the period 2024-2025, and develop a Strategic Plan for the period 2026-2029

- b. **Scenario Three:** Extend the current Strategic Plan 2020-2023 by another two years to the period 2020-2025, and develop a Strategic Plan for the period 2026-2029
- vii. The Chair further recalled that in Decision 2020/3, the Executive Board also recommended that its Ad- Hoc working group on programmatic, budgetary and administrative matters consider and discusses the prioritization of the scenarios 2 and 3, with a view of taking the final decision at the first session of the Executive Board for the year 2021.
- viii. The Chair therefore noted that the Executive Board at its 2021 first session was expected to recommend a specific scenario to align the UN-Habitat strategic planning process with the QCPR and to the strategic plans of other UN entities, based on the recommendations emanating from the Ad- Hoc working group meeting held on 3 March 2021.
- ix. The Chair reiterated that the purpose of the meeting was for the Ad-Hoc working group to make recommendations that would enable the Executive Board, in April 2021, to make the final decision and to recommend to the UN- Habitat Assembly either on Scenarios 2 or 3.
- x. The Secretariat provided a briefing on the alignment of the QCPR process with the planning cycles of UN- Habitat. The full presentation by the Secretariat can be accessed [here](#).

The briefing highlighted the following:

- i. The Secretariat referred to the just concluded Fifth UN Environment Assembly (UNEA 5) in February 2021 where the Member States adopted the medium- term strategy (2022- 2025) of UNEP, which takes place after the adoption of the QCPR in December 2020 by the General Assembly for the period 2021-2025. The Secretariat noted that the Organization was willing to follow the example from UNEP, UNDP and other UN institutions that have already aligned with QCPR.
- ii. The Secretariat expanded on the two scenarios that were prioritized by the Executive Board as follows:
 - **Scenario two:** Retaining the UN- Habitat Strategic Plan 2020- 2023, as is, and adopting an interim two- year SP for the period 2024- 2025. Afterwards, adopting a full, four- year UN- Habitat SP 2026- 2029. This would enable UN- Habitat to align with the QCPR mechanism not until the QCPR 2025- 2028.
 - The Scenario would proceed as follows:
 - a) Q4 2020 – General Assembly adopts resolution on QCPR 2021-2024
 - b) Q1 2021 – Secretary-General puts forth plan to implement General Assembly resolution on QCPR 2021-2024
 - c) Q2 2021 – UN-Habitat Assembly tasks the CPR to consider the QCPR 2021-2023 as part of its mid-term review of the Strategic Plan 2020-2023, advising on appropriate course corrections HSP/EB.2020/16/Add.1 3
 - d) Q3 2022 – UN-Habitat initiates preparation of an interim Strategic Plan 2024-2025, taking note of the QCPR 2021- 2023 and the course corrections recommended by CPR in its mid-term review of the Strategic Plan 2020-2023
 - e) **Q2 2023 – UN-Habitat Assembly, convenes for the second Session, adopts interim Strategic Plan 2024-2025**
 - f) Q3 2024 – UN-Habitat initiates preparation of the Strategic Plan 2026-2029
 - g) Q4 2024 – General Assembly adopts resolution on QCPR 2025-2028
 - h) Q1 2025 – The UN Secretary General puts forth plan to implement General Assembly resolution on QCPR 2025-2028
 - i) **Q2 2025 – UN-Habitat Assembly convenes for the third Session, adopts a Strategic Plan for the period 2026-2029**
 - **Scenario three:** Extension of the current UN- Habitat Strategic Plan for the period 2020- 2023, to a period of six years, which would be 2020- 2025. The UN- Habitat Assembly would meet in 2023 and effect the extension. Afterward, the UN-Habitat Assembly would meet in 2025 for its third session, to adopt the next four- year UN- Habitat Strategic Plan for the period 2026- 2029, hence aligning with the QCPR 2025- 2028 mechanism.
 - The Scenario would proceed as follows:
 - a) Q4 2020 - General Assembly adopts resolution on QCPR 2021-2024

- b) Q1 2021 – Secretary-General puts forth plan to implement the General Assembly resolution on QCPR 2021-2024
 - c) Q2 2021 – UN-Habitat Assembly tasks the CPR to consider the QCPR 2021-2023 as part of its mid-term review of the Strategic Plan 2020-2023, advising on appropriate course corrections and bearing in mind the possibility to extend the Strategic Plan 2020-2023 to the period 2020-2025,
 - d) Q3 2022 – UN-Habitat initiates the updating of the Strategic Plan 2020-2023 for a possible extension to 2020-2025 incorporating elements of the QCPR 2021-2024.
 - e) **Q2 2023 – UN-Habitat Assembly, convenes for the second Session, adopts the extension of current Strategic Plan 2020-2023 to the period 2020-2026**
 - f) Q3 2024 – UN-Habitat initiates preparation of the Strategic Plan 2026-2029
 - g) Q4 2024 – General Assembly adopts resolution on QCPR 2025-2028
 - h) Q1 2025 – The UN Secretary General puts forth plan to implement General Assembly resolution on QCPR 2025-2028
 - i) **Q2 2025 – UN-Habitat Assembly convenes for the third Session, adopts a Strategic Plan for the period 2026-2029**
- iii. The Secretariat reiterated that, under both scenarios it would be expected that in line with the rules of procedure of the UN- Habitat Assembly, the Assembly would meet 3 times in 2023, 2025 and 2029 to take the decision on the alignment of planning cycles of UN- Habitat with the QCPR.

Following the presentation by the Secretariat, the discussions highlighted the following suggestions from Member States:

- i. Need to save costs when implementing the alignment with the QCPR and the planning cycles of UN-Habitat’s Strategic Plan. In this respect, the Secretariat was requested to provide the cost implications of sessions of the UN-Habitat Assembly in 2023 and 2025 and to clarify if the third session to be held 2025 would be fully fledged or would be held with a shorter Agenda, only for the purpose of adopting the QCPR cycle. Due to the difficult financial situation of UN- Habitat, the participants put strong emphasis on the cost implications;
- ii. Need to abide by the rules of procedure of the UN-Habitat Assembly;
- iii. Possibility to empower the Executive Board (per Rule 25 of UN- Habitat Assembly’s Rules of Procedure) to approve UN- Habitat Strategic Plan on an exceptional basis;
- iv. Possibility to empower the Executive Board to approve UN-Habitat Strategic Plan on a permanent basis. This would involve an amendment by the UN- Habitat Assembly of its Rules of Procedure;
- v. With respect to point (iv) above, it was highlighted that the UN- Strategic Plan is a universal document. Considering that the UN- Habitat Assembly has a universal membership whereas the Executive Board has a limited membership with 36 members, there is need to be circumspect about granting a mandate to the Executive Board to adopt the UN-Habitat Strategic Plans.
- vi. Possibility to hold a scaled back UN-Habitat Assembly in either 2023 or 2025, based on the experience from UNEP on its alignment and the scale down of UNEA5 due to COVID-19;
- vii. Possibility to hold a virtual scaled down UN-Habitat Assembly in 2023 only to adopt the alignment scenario that would have been recommended by the Executive Board. The session in 2025 would then consider the outstanding issues;
- viii. Possibility to combine the 2023 and 2025 sessions of the UN-Habitat Assembly to serve as a solution to the costing implications. This would not constitute a large vacuum, taking into account that the high- level mid- term review of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UN-Habitat takes place every two years and would consider the implementation of Un-Habitat Strategic Plan.
- ix. Regarding point viii. Above, some Member States shared some concerns that, 6 years without holding a session of the UN-Assembly would be too long.

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

- i. The UN-Habitat Assembly would be the appropriate body to consider whether it wishes to delegate to the Executive Board the role of adopting the Strategic Plan as this is currently the role of the UN-Habitat Assembly under its rules of procedure. The Secretariat added that the UN-Habitat Assembly is

the subsidiary body of the General Assembly, established to advance global urban policy as well as adopt the UN-Habitat Strategic Plans, noting that the sessions in 2023 or possibly in 2025 would not only be on adopting the strategic plan but would serve also as a global platform of global urban policy debate.

- ii. The Secretariat therefore reiterated that the suggestions some Member States of possibly delegating to the Executive Board by the UN-Habitat Assembly the mandate to deal with the Strategic Plan are solely the prerogative of Member States and that the Secretariat does not have the mandate to make such a proposal but is always available to provide technical inputs.
- iii. The Secretariat will provide to the Ad-Hoc Working Group additional information on the cost implications of holding an UN-Habitat Assembly, noting that a big cost is on interpretation and translation of documentation in multiple languages which might not generate as much cost reduction as anticipated.
- iv. The Secretariat noted that if Member States decide to hold the session of the UN-Habitat Assembly in 2025, the next session after that would take place four years later in 2029, such that the cost of holding the UN-Habitat Assembly (2025) will be defrayed by the cost savings of not holding the 2027 session.
- v. The Chair concluded the discussion by noting that the alignment of UN-Habitat planning cycles with the QCPR is required for UN-Habitat and that a subsequent meeting for the Ad-Hoc working should have further discussions on the topic because there was no consensus on the matter yet.

4. Any other matters

- i. The Chair presented to Member States the schedule for the next meeting as follows:

- **Wednesday 17 March 2021:**

- 10:00 am– 12:00 noon;**

- a) Financial status of UN-Habitat
 - b) Update on the restructuring process

- 14:30 pm– 16:30 pm;**

- a) Informal consultations on the draft decisions towards the 2021 first session of the Executive Board
- ii. The Chair also requested the Secretariat to share the summary of the discussions of the meeting including written comments received from Member States during the meeting.
- iii. Egypt, on behalf of the African Group, inquired from the Secretariat if there would be a briefing on the hybrid modalities for the first session of the Executive Board for the year 2021.
- iv. The Secretariat clarified that two weeks before the session of the Executive Board, the Executive Director would brief Member States on the modalities for the 2021 first session. It further recalled that the recommendation on the modalities for the session was made by the Bureau of the Executive Board and Member States, taking into consideration the guidelines from the Government of Kenya and UNON.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 4:37 PM (EAT)