

UN HABITAT

FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

66th REGULAR MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVES TO UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS
PROGRAMME

27 SEPTEMBER 2017

Agenda Item 3:

**Executive Director's Briefing to the Committee of Permanent Representatives
(HSP/CPR/66/3/Rev.2) updated 26 September 2017**

1. Introduction

There have been a number of important developments since the last meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) on 29 June 2017. Activities since the last CPR were predominantly related to the High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly to discuss the effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the positioning of UN-Habitat in this regard. I will also provide an update on recent missions undertaken by my Deputy and myself:

- High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly
- Updates on programmatic issues
- Recent missions undertaken by myself and the Deputy Executive Director.

2. Outcomes from the High-Level Meeting on the New Urban Agenda and UN-Habitat

On 5-6 September 2017, the President of the General Assembly for the 71st Session convened a meeting of the General Assembly to discuss the effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the positioning of UN-Habitat in this regard (A/CONF.226.4). The purpose of the Meeting was to provide Member States and other stakeholders an opportunity to reflect on implementation of the New Urban Agenda and to discuss the Report of the Independent Panel to Assess and Enhance Effectiveness of UN-Habitat after the Adoption of the New Urban Agenda submitted by the Secretary-General.

The Panel Report was published on 1 August, and contained a number of recommendations that, among others, proposed: the creation of a new coordinating mechanism for urban issues in the UN System to sit within DESA (UN Urban); limiting the scope of UN-Habitat's work programme and 2014-2019 Strategic Plan, which was approved by the 26th Session of the Governing Council in May 2017; limiting UN-Habitat's field/operational portfolio; strengthening the capacity of UN-Habitat's office in NY; realigning regional offices with the locations of Regional Economic Commissions; and creating a new governance structure to sit alongside the CPR, including the creation of new Committees of local governments and stakeholders, which would monitor the activities of UN-Habitat and Member States in their implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

The Deputy Secretary-General, Amina Mohammed, in her opening remarks, made it clear that urbanization must be put at the centre of our development efforts and the UN System needs to be reformed to respond more nimbly to needs of cities. She shared that the Secretary-General will be developing a "concrete strategy to ensure that UN-Habitat is fit for purpose and that the reform of the development system, the peacekeeping system and the management of the United Nations incorporates a new approach to urban areas". She called for greater coherence and collaboration across the UN System, noting that UN-Habitat's reform should "go hand-in-hand with ensuring that there is greater coherence and collaboration across all the UN System urban work". She was firm in stating the need for a coordinating mechanism that brings cross-sectoral capacities together and bolsters operational urban work and that "UN-Habitat is the right vehicle to coordinate such a mechanism".

The overwhelming majority of Member States followed the DSG's position. Member States clearly understood that the implementation of the New Urban Agenda is an accelerator for

sustainable development and achieving the SDGs. The two are very closely connected and they are looking for UN-Habitat to provide further guidance, policy advice and technical assistance. Member States also fully re-affirmed that we have both an operational and normative mandate, which are mutually re-enforcing. Solutions for urbanization require contextualization and diverse local experience will enrich our normative guidance. Member States further acknowledged that UN-Habitat requires predictable resources to strengthen our normative work and more flexibility in operational procedures to enhance our technical assistance and other support at country and sub-national levels.

There are, as expected, areas where further work and consultations will be needed. There were calls from a number of Member States to better understand the costs and benefits of certain reform proposals, including the positioning of our regional offices, and any new governance mechanisms. There seemed to be a shared understanding that the discussion on financing a strengthened UN-Habitat cannot be seen separate from enhanced accountability and oversight.

Overall, Member States and other stakeholders expressed widespread support for the stabilization and strengthening of UN-Habitat, including through more stable and predictable funding. Member States are committed to work together and prepare for the Second Committee negotiations, beginning in October. As one Member State noted, we have already come a long way in ensuring that we become fit-for-purpose and the impact of our work is well appreciated.

This is a defining moment for UN-Habitat as the first agency to be assessed during the repositioning of the UN Development System. This is a unique occasion for Member States to reach consensus on how to address this very important step forward towards a revitalized UN-Habitat that is able to more effectively support member States and other stakeholders in implementing the New Urban Agenda and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Many of our UN colleagues, including UNDP, DESA, UNOPS, UN-Women, WFP, and others also expressed their strong support for UN-Habitat during the High-Level Meeting. UN-Habitat and UNOPS used the occasion of the High-Level Meeting to sign a new Memorandum of Understanding to boost our coordinated support to countries and cities in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. This partnership will enable our agencies to work more effectively in leveraging our existing areas of expertise and mandates, as well as mobilize new resources for sustainable urban development.

3. Key portfolio developments

Since June 2017, grants amounting to a total value of approximately US\$ 70,000,000 were opened in the system. In addition, the Programme Advisory Board reviewed some prominent new projects. Selected examples are listed below.

Asia-Pacific region:

- Afghanistan – the General Directorate of Municipal Affairs Afghanistan has funded a project of US\$ 3,566,620 on oversight of the Citizens Charter Afghanistan Project.

- Pakistan – a strategic 1-year project of US\$ 224,989 has been approved, under a broad technical assistance programme undertaken by Asian Development Bank funding upon agreement from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and endorsed by the Provincial Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The aim of the project is to promote the use of information technology to improve efficiency in municipal planning and service delivery.

Arab States region:

- Iraq – the United States has funded a Programme of US\$ 1,000,000 on the National Programme on Rehabilitation & Regularisation of Informal Settlements/IDPs in Iraq, Phase III.
- Palestine – a pioneering two-year initiative with a value of US\$ 8,000,000 was launched in Hebron City with the objective of securing adequate housing to marginalised female headed households. Another three-year initiative was approved for Hebron City with a value of US\$ 2,300,000 aiming at the development of safe and inclusive public spaces.

Africa region:

- Somalia – the UNDP Multi-Partner Trust Fund has funded three projects during this period, namely a US\$ 2,500,000 Joint Programme on Youth Employment in Somalia, as well as a US\$ 1,496,000 project entitled Together for Peace, and thirdly a US\$ 1,279,428 project on Land Governance, Social Cohesion, Socio-economic Reintegration and Gender.

Latin American and the Caribbean region:

- Haiti – USAID has funded a project of US\$ 3,323,445 for an Urban Development Initiative in Northern Expansion in Port-au-Prince.
- Mexico – the Instituto Del Fondo Nacional De Vivienda Para Los Trabajadores has funded a project of US\$ 2,824,000 on leading the 2030 Agenda in Mexico: Housing at the centre of SDGs.
- Brazil – the Governo Do Estado De Alagoas has funded a project of US\$ 1,159,368 on Sustainable and inclusive urban prosperity in the State of Alagoas.

Global:

- Urban Land Legislation and Governance – the UNDP Multi-Partner Trust Fund has funded a US\$ 3,000,000 million project for the Global Land Tool Network. This project will be implemented in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- Urban Planning and Design – several new projects have been opened during this reporting period. The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure & Transport, the Republic of Korea have funded a US\$ 3,000,000 pilot project on National Urban Policy. The

European Union has funded a US\$ 9,100,000 project on Promoting Urban Low Emission Development Strategies (Urban Leds II).

- Urban Basic Services – the Federal Republic of Germany through IKI has confirmed funding of a project on Urban Pathways, supporting low carbon plans for urban basic services in the context of the New Urban Agenda with a value of US\$ 3,988,369.
- Housing and Slum Upgrading – the European Union has funded a third phase of a project on Participatory Slum Upgrading (PSUP 3) for an amount of US\$ 9,700,000.

4. Recent missions by the Executive Director and the Deputy Executive Director

Missions by the Executive Director:

On 22-23 June, I attended the Assembly of Ministers and High Authorities of Housing and Urban Development of Latin America and the Caribbean (MINURVI) in Buenos Aires. The meeting gathered 25 ministers from Latin America and the Caribbean region as well as representatives from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). The visit allowed for in depth discussion on the challenges and opportunities in implementation of the New Urban Agenda (NUA) in the region. With the support of UN-Habitat, national governments have already started the implementation phase of the NUA, through aligning their own national policies to the principles enshrined in the NUA. During my visit, the city of Mendoza hosted a National Urban Forum, gathering representatives from the national government, governors, mayors, stakeholders and civil society organizations to discuss inputs for the National Urban Policy of Argentina. This showcased another aspect of the implementation phase of NUA, during which UN-Habitat was able to advise the national, regional and local governments present, on how to define and to implement a national urban policy.

On 6-July, I visited Beirut at the request of the Government of Lebanon where the Minister of Planning, H.E. Michel Pierre Pharaon, hosted me. Lebanon is experiencing rapid and unplanned urbanization coupled with hosting a large number of refugees from the region. In response to this, UN-Habitat in cooperation with UN agencies and partners is supporting the Government to address this in a sustainable manner. The purpose of my visit was to launch the National Urban Policy programme, bringing Ministers to work collectively together on the country's policy. It also served to see how UN-Habitat's guidance has been crystalized through the launch of the National Urban Policy programme as stated in the New Urban Agenda. The visit further allowed UN-Habitat to discuss with Ministers, experts and private sector representatives on how to galvanize the urbanization process in Lebanon to generate added sustainable growth. It was an honour to meet with H.E. Prime Minister Saad Hariri, who expressed his commitment to sustainable urban development in Lebanon and gratitude to UN-Habitat for its contributions.

On 14 July, during a visit to Portugal, I met with the Deputy Minister of Territorial Planning, Ms. Cecilia Ramos, as well as with representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (NUA) and bilateral projects.

I was invited to deliver a keynote speech addressed to the Annual Congress of the Association of European Schools of Planning, where I discussed further ways for enhancing the role of urban planners in the urbanization process as well as in the implementation of the NUA.

On 19 July, I celebrated, together with our key partners, the 20th anniversary of the establishment of our Regional Office for Asia-Pacific in Fukuoka, Japan. With the presence of many local and national partners, the day was a symbol of strong support for UN-Habitat's operations in the Asia-Pacific on sustainable urbanization and the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my gratitude to the Government of Japan, our Fukuoka partners for their generosity.

On 21-22 July, I travelled to Chengdu, China, to attend the first International High-Level Forum on Sustainable Urban Development co-hosted by the China Centre for Urban Development (under the National Reform and Development Commission) and UN-Habitat. Under the theme of Liveable and Sustainable Development, high-level policy makers, urban managers, scholars and experts, company leaders and media elites in China and elsewhere, gathered to discuss how to tackle problems in urban development and serve as a high-level platform for exchange. The visit allowed for discussion and analysis of the challenges of Chinese urbanisation and the opportunities offered by New Urban Agenda and UN-Habitat. In Chengdu, I undertook a field visit to the UN-Habitat Urban Renewal Project in Shaocheng District and visited the neighbouring city of Deyang. The visit served to demonstrate how UN-Habitat technical assistance has contributed to shaping urban renewal. I also visited the city of Wuhan at the invitation of its Mayor and the Wuhan Land Use and Urban Spatial Planning Research Centre (WLSP). During my visit, UN-Habitat and WLSP launched a joint project on "Improving Urban Public Space in China" and enhanced our partnership with Wuhan on the City Prosperity Initiative (CPI). I also paid a visit to the Wuhan Donghu Greenway which is our first project in China on urban public space. Finally, I delivered a keynote speech on implementing the New Urban Agenda with urban planners, members of the municipality, policy makers and experts

On 1 September, I travelled to Paris where Sciences Po University invited me to deliver the Urban School inaugural lecture to 210 new students of the Urban School, focusing on urbanization as a tool for development. During my visit, Sciences Po University facilitated a field visit to the Plaine Commune in Paris, future location of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, during which I had the opportunity to discuss urban renewal projects with officials from the commune.

On 5-6 September, I attended the High Level Meeting on the New Urban Agenda and UN-Habitat hosted by the President of the General Assembly in New York, of which main outcomes are highlighted under point one above.

On 13 September, I visited the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC), a knowledge service of scientists that carries out research in order to provide independent scientific advice and support to EU policy, including the analysis of global urban trends. The visit allowed for in-depth discussion on the methodology used by the research centre on monitoring scientifically urban trends through satellite images and other techniques.

Furthermore, as a result of this visit, UN-Habitat and JRC will engage to explore further cooperation on this matter through the adoption of a memorandum of understanding.

During the week of 18 September, I participated in a number of activities in the framework of the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly. This includes the World Economic Forum Sustainable Development Impact Summit where I highlighted how national and city governments can work more effectively to respond to the challenges of urbanization; the Global Mayors Summit on Migration and refugee policy and practice where the implementation of the New Urban Agenda was highlighted and its implications for migration; a side event entitled Cities for All, where I reaffirmed the importance of youth in achieving sustainable urbanization, and a Conference on the Global Pact for the Environment at Columbia University, where I contributed to the discussions on the Global Pact and the role of cities in its implementation.

Missions by the Deputy Executive Director:

The Deputy Executive Director (DED) represented UN-Habitat at the Ministerial Roundtable on “Empowering Africa’s Youth Through ICT” in Kigali, Rwanda, during the Youth Connekt conference from 19th to 21st July, 2017. This mission helped to promote the Youth and ICT work of the agency among senior decision makers from various sectors. The DED highlighted UN-Habitat’s work with young women and men globally, especially with those living in slums and informal settlements, conflict and post-conflict situations. She also emphasized the need for local governments to adopt a holistic, multi-stakeholder approach to enhance youth employability through ICT and to partner with national governments, including through National Urban Policies, to ensure that no one is left behind.

On this occasion the DED held a number of bilateral meetings with partner organizations and Member States. She emphasized UN-Habitat’s proven and tested models of youth interventions to foster a better urban future for young women and men.

The DED represented UN-Habitat at the High Level Meeting on the New Urban Agenda and UN-Habitat hosted by the President of the General Assembly at UNHQ in New York from 5th to 6th September 2017. She was part of the Interactive Panel on “Implementing the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs – The role of the United Nations-System”, along with representatives from the World Bank, UNDP, UNHCR, UNOPS and DESA. In her remarks the DED highlighted the practical implications of UN-Habitat’s reform efforts in the context of the wider repositioning of the UN Development System, emphasizing UN-Habitat’s key coordinating role as well as the need for close collaboration within the UN-system. She further emphasized the importance of connecting the normative and operational work of the organization and gave some examples of the impact of UN-Habitat’s projects on the ground.

The DED held a number of bilateral meetings with partner organizations and Member States, which served to discuss on-going and further collaboration, as well as the Assessment Panel report and the outcomes of the High Level Meeting on UN-Habitat.

The DED further visited Perry World House at the University of Pennsylvania, a global policy research centre. This mission served to exchange with academia and civil society,

promoting the substantive tools and work of the organization among international decision-makers from academia and policy, as well as future leaders. She was invited to give a public keynote speech on “Urban Urgency: How today’s actions will determine tomorrow’s collective prosperity”. She highlighted the challenges of migration and the need for inclusive approaches, as well as strategic elements of the New Urban Agenda that can promote transformative change towards sustainable urbanization and foster progress towards the 2030 Agenda. She also attended a number of meetings with senior staff, fellows and a faculty event on the issue of “Strengthening the linkages between International and Sub-National Governance on Sustainable Urban Development”.