

Briefing Note

To

**Committee of Permanent Representatives
Subcommittee on Policy and Programme**

On

***UN-Habitat at 23rd Conference of Parties (COP-23)
To UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
&
Cities & Climate Change***

19 October 2017

Below please find key updates on: (1) planned UN-Habitat engagement at COP-23, (2) newly approved projects, and (3) other recent developments in the area of cities and climate change.

1. UN-Habitat at UNFCCC COP-23

With human settlements a featured topic this year under various UNFCCC work streams, UN-Habitat expects to play a prominent role at the 23rd Conference of Parties, which will run from 6-17 November 2017 in Bonn, Germany. Key messages that we will carry to COP-23 include the following:

- **The Paris Agreement**, the **Sustainable Development Goals** and the **New Urban Agenda** all speak with a consistent voice in terms of acknowledging the role that cities have to play in addressing climate change.
- **Urban and regional planners** have a key role to play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions (e.g., through urban development patterns that encourage the use of public transport) and building climate resilience (e.g., by controlling development on lands at high risk of flooding and landslides).
- **National governments** can empower local governments to take climate action.

Both the Executive Director (ED) and Deputy Executive Director (DED) plan to attend COP-23. A communications strategy will support coordinated messaging. Chronologically the principal days/events in which UN-Habitat plans to participate are as follows¹:

8 November (18:30 – 21:00) – 11th Focal Point Forum of the UNFCCC Nairobi Work Programme (NWP). The NWP addresses Adaptation, and this year's Forum focuses on "human settlements". Our DED is slated to deliver the Keynote Address. In preparation for this event,

¹ Concept notes/agendas are available upon request for most individual events. Contact: Marcus.mayr@unhabitat.org

over the past several months UN-Habitat has supported the NWP team. UN-Habitat activities (including our Cities and Climate Change Initiative, and “Guiding Principles for City Climate Action Planning”) were well represented in an April 2017 UNFCCC/NWP stocktaking publication on “Initiatives in the area of human settlements”. In September 2017, following an internal reflection, we submitted a summary of activities, tools and lessons gleaned from our work on “Human settlements and adaptation”. In final preparations for the 8 November event, on 5 November UN-Habitat and other experts (including 1-2 sponsored by UN-Habitat) will gather in Bonn for a ‘Pre-COP technical dialogue’ to review submittals by various partners.

11 November – Human Settlements Day. This Thematic Day is organized under the Marrakesh Partnership for Global Climate Action, which helps to coordinate the actions of non-State actors under the UNFCCC.

- **10:00 to 11:30 – Opening Roundtable.** We have proposed that our ED represent UN-Habitat in the opening roundtable.
- **11:30 – 13:00 – “Planners for Climate Action”.** Until now, despite the important role they have to play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change in cities, urban and regional planners have been not been visible in UNFCCC processes. To help address this gap, this year UN-Habitat has mobilized networks of planning professionals and planning educators from around the world to attend COP-23 and, we hope, to launch a new cooperative initiative that will be recognized on the UNFCCC’s NAZCA (‘Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action) platform. Networks of planners expected in Bonn (often represented at the highest level) will include: **Global** – International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP), Global Planning Education Association Network (GPEAN), Association for the Development of Planning Education and Research (APERAU, covering Francophone countries,), Commonwealth Association of Planners (CAP); **Regional** – **Europe** (AESOP), **Africa** (AAPS), **Latin America** (ALEUP), **Asia** (*to be confirmed*), **Australia / New Zealand** (ANZAPS); and **National** – from **China** (UPSC, via video), **United States** (APA), and **Turkey** (TUPOB). Other partners and donors are also welcome to join the nascent “Planners for Climate Action” initiative; please let us know if interested (Robert.kehew@unhabitat.org).
- **13:15 – 14:45 – One UN side event on Human Settlements**, coordinated by UN-Habitat, with various UN entities.
- **15:00 – 16:30 – “Building the more sustainable city: Planning and financing infrastructure for low-carbon and climate-resilient cities”** – A political/substantive event organized by UN-Habitat with the World Bank, **Germany**, etc.
- **15:00 – 16:30 – “#CitiesIPCC: Advancing science to accelerate effective climate action in human settlements”.** An advocacy/substantive event in advance of an important Scientific Conference to be held in Edmonton, **Canada** in 2018 (*see below*).
- **16:45 – 18:15** – Substantive updates on several key initiatives/tools: the World Bank’s City Climate Planner Certification Program, C40/ICLEI/WRI’s Global Protocol for Community-scale Greenhouse Gas Emission Inventories, and UN-Habitat’s “Guiding Principles for City Climate Action Planning”.

- **18:30 – 20:00 – Roundtable.** Key takeaways and political messages from the Day, with high-level representation.

12 November – Local and Regional Leaders’ Summit. High-level representation by UN-Habitat at this day-long event, organized by the City of Bonn and ICLEI.

13 November – High Level Action Day on Sustainable Development Goal 11 (‘sustainable cities’). At present we are confirming possible roles for both the ED and the DED during this High Level Action Day.

13 November – Global Covenant of Mayors’ Day (at EU Pavilion). UN-Habitat has a seat on the Founders’ Council of this important initiative, which ‘went live’ in January 2017.

2. Newly/nearly approved projects

In the area of cities and climate change, newly – and nearly – approved projects are as follows (by donor):

- **European Commission.** “Accelerating climate action through the promotion of urban low emission development strategies” (Urban-LEDS 2). The EC and UN-Habitat signed this EUR 8 million contract in July 2017, with ICLEI as major implementing partner. Under Urban-LEDS 1 (2012-2016), seven of eight participating model cities in the emerging economies of **Brazil, India, Indonesia** and **South Africa** approved low emission development strategies. In Phase 2, in addition to a consolidation of work in those countries, UN-Habitat and ICLEI will extend the model to four new countries, the emerging economy of **Colombia** plus three Least Developed Countries: **Bangladesh, Lao PDR** and **Rwanda**. The Phase 2 project will place greater emphasis on multi-level governance, as well as synergies between mitigation and adaptation activities.
- **Adaptation Fund.** Since our 2015 accreditation, the Adaptation Fund has emerged as an important source of funding for UN-Habitat. At their recent (12-13 Oct 2017) meeting, the Adaptation Fund Board approved two new fully developed proposals from UN-Habitat: in **Fiji** (“Increasing the resilience of informal urban settlements”, US\$ 4.2 M) and the **Solomon Islands** (“Enhancing urban resilience to climate change impacts in Honiara”, US\$ 4.4 M). During the same session this Board also approved two concept note proposals and one pre-concept proposal from UN-Habitat. Meanwhile our earlier (2016) approved project, “Enhancing the climate resilience of vulnerable rural and emerging urban humans settlements in **Lao PDR**”, has now begun implementation.
- **International Climate Initiative (Government of Germany).** UN-Habitat, UN Environment and the Wuppertal Institute will implement “Urban pathways: Supporting low carbon plans for urban basic services in the context of the New Urban Agenda”, with activities in **Brazil, India, Kenya** and **Viet Nam**. Kick-off in Berlin 16-17 October 2017.
- **Climate and Clean Air Coalition.** We are playing a small (funded) planning role in an Urban Health Initiative project in Accra, Ghana.

- ***European Climate Foundation.*** A small grant to defray our engagement in the Founders' Council of the Global Covenant of Mayors is currently being circulated for signature.

Virtually all of these projects offer synergies between normative and operational (city-level) work.

3. Other brief updates

- ***System of Environmental and Social Safeguards.*** In December 2016 (shortly after our November 2016 briefing of the CPR), the UN-Habitat ED approved this System, which is now being gradually implemented. This System goes well beyond our existing system of markers (for human rights, gender, youth, and climate change) to offer considerable additional social and environmental safeguards. In addition to its intrinsic benefits, approval and implementation of such a System has emerged as a key pre-condition to our accreditation by the Green Climate Fund (initial application: March 2016).
- ***Scientific Conference on Cities and Climate Change (March 2018, Edmonton, Canada).*** Together with the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), UN Environment and several other partners, UN-Habitat is helping to organize this conference, which will help set the normative direction for and research agenda in this area. As part of our contribution we are sponsoring four “commissioned papers” that will help provide a substantive underpinning to the proceedings.

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