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**Executive Board of the United Nations**

**Human Settlements Programme**

**First session of 2021**

Online, 7 and 8 April 2020

Item 4 of the provisional agenda\*

**Financial, budgetary and administrative matters,  
including the implementation of the resource mobilization  
strategy in accordance with the strategic plan and a  
proposal on geographical and gender balance**

## **Staffing of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme as at 31 December 2020**

### **Report of the Executive Director**

#### **Addendum**

#### **Staff update, equitable geographical distribution and gender parity**

### **I. Introduction**

1. By paragraph 11 of its decision 2020/6, the Executive Board, at its second session of 2020, held from 27 to 29 October 2020, requested the Executive Director to submit to the Executive Board at its first session of 2021 a comprehensive report on equitable geographical representation and gender balance in the Programme, including progress in the achievement of its gender parity target for positions financed through all sources of funding. The present report supplements the information set out in the report of the Executive Director on the staffing of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) as at 31 December 2020 (HSP/EB.2021/2/Add.1).

### **II. Equitable geographical distribution**

2. It is useful to recall what the principle of equitable geographical distribution means to Member States and how it is applied in practice. A review of the concept can be found in paragraphs 2 to 5 of the addendum to the report of the Executive Director on the staffing of UN-Habitat as at 31 December 2019 on recruitment, equitable geographical distribution and gender parity (HSP/EB.2020/3/Add.1), which was presented to the Executive Board at its second session of 2020.

### **III. Gender parity**

3. The term “gender parity” refers to equal representation of women and men, in this case among the staff of UN-Habitat. The initial goal, which was not met, was to reach gender parity among professional-level staff by the year 2000. Over the years, legislative and procedural provisions have been introduced into the recruitment process with the aim of supporting the achievement of gender parity, with varying degrees of success. A full account of the operating definition and actions taken can be found in paragraphs 7 to 9 of the addendum to the report of the Executive Director on the staffing of UN-Habitat as at 31 December 2019 on recruitment, equitable geographical distribution

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\* HSP/EB.2021/1.

and gender parity (HSP/EB.2020/3/Add.1), which was presented to the Executive Board at its second session of 2020.

## IV. Update

4. Since the last update on staffing, provided to the Executive Board at its second session of 2020 in the report on staffing as at 30 September 2020 (HSP/EB.2020/CRP.3), the situation has somewhat improved owing to attrition. There has also been an effort to secure new recruits from under-represented regions and to achieve gender parity.

5. Gender parity is of paramount importance to the Secretary-General, and UN-Habitat is aiming to comply with his latest instructions to ensure parity at all levels. As at 31 December 2020, UN-Habitat overall staffing was 51 per cent women and 49 per cent men. In the general service staff category, 49 per cent were men and 51 per cent were women, an improvement of 1 percentage point in favour of men since 2019. In terms of professional staff, 59 per cent were men and 41 per cent were women. There has been marked improvement towards gender parity at the P2, P3 and P4 levels, with women occupying 55 per cent, 47 per cent and 49 per cent of the posts, respectively. As the overall number of professional staff at UN-Habitat is relatively small, one person leaving their post can change the percentage by as much as 1–3 points.

6. The challenge remains at the higher levels, as the retirement age is 65 years and senior positions remain largely frozen. Where possible, the Executive Director has made every effort to recruit women to ensure greater gender balance. Nonetheless, as at 31 December 2020, at the P5 level, the needle had not moved since 2019, with women comprising only 13 per cent of the overall numbers. At the D1 level, there was a slight improvement, from 14 per cent women in 2019 to 17 per cent in 2020. At the D2 level, taking into account the fact that one incumbent director is on a temporary job opening, there are only two positions, one of which is held by a woman. Similarly, there is one male Assistant Secretary-General and one female Under Secretary-General.

7. With regard to geographical distribution, as at 31 December 2020, based on the analysis and information provided by United Nations Headquarters, UN-Habitat was close to the average, with 57 per cent of Member States represented within the desirable range, 15 per cent overrepresented, 17 per cent under-represented and 11 per cent unrepresented. In terms of actual numbers, taking into account the full staff and the personnel composition in UN-Habitat, Africa has 450 staff members, Asia-Pacific has 561, Latin America and the Caribbean has 349 and Western European and other States has 1,497.

8. Human resource planning is key to ensuring that every recruitment becomes an opportunity to meet Member States' guidance on improving gender and geographical balance. At the P5 level, in 2020, recruitment took place for three posts in the Regional Office for Africa and one in the Regional Office for Arab States. Three of the posts were awarded to women, two of whom were also from the Global South. In that regard, the Executive Director has issued an instruction to all hiring managers to take measures to advocate for and seek out qualified women candidates and candidates from the Global South to support a transparent and equitable recruitment process.

9. Additionally, to support the Secretary-General's commitment to achieving equitable geographical distribution and greater regional group diversity, the Office of Human Resources in the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance issued the [Geographical Diversity Strategy](#) in January 2020, which aims to increase the representation of unrepresented and underrepresented Member States within the Secretariat workforce. The multifaceted strategy proposes a roadmap to streamline efforts to improve geographical representation within all United Nations Secretariat entities through three principal streams: (a) internal direction, messaging, guidance and monitoring, and awareness campaigns targeting both top management and operations, and an strengthened accountability mechanism; (b) outreach activities, both offline and online through existing and new tools and platforms, to promote jobs and improve the "employer brand"; and (c) leveraging the knowledge, experience and resources of Member States, other United Nations organizations and international organization networks. For instance, the Senior Managers' Compact, which is the United Nations' accountability framework, includes a target for "geographical appointments", under which all senior managers are required to make 50 per cent of appointments to geographical posts from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States.

10. The primary goal of the Geographical Diversity Strategy is to ensure a more diverse and inclusive workforce that exhibits the core values that the organization upholds. The Office of Human Resources will work closely with all United Nations entities to secure the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, in line with [Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations and the Statute of the International Court of Justice](#), during any recruitment process.

11. An updated report taking into account key activities of the first quarter of 2021 will be provided as a conference room paper for the first session of the Executive Board of 2021, to be held on 7 and 8 April 2021.

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