

**2021 First session of the Executive Board
of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme
7 to 8 April 2021, Online**

Agenda item 3: Reports of the Chairs of the Ad-Hoc Working Groups of the Executive Board

Statement by

**H.E Ms. Saqlain Syedah
Permanent Representative of Pakistan to UN-Habitat and
Chair of the Ad-Hoc working group on
Programmatic Budgetary and Administrative matters**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity to brief the Executive Board at this session.

Excellencies,

As may be recalled, the Executive Board through its Decision 2019/2 paragraph 7 established the Ad-Hoc working group on Programmatic, Budgetary and Administrative matters to assist and advise the Executive Board.

On this occasion I would like to brief you on the work carried out by the working group since the end of the 2020 second session of the Executive Board held from 27 to 29 October 2020.

The working group has met 6 times since the last session of the Executive Board and in line with its mandate, discussed the following topics:

1. The draft work programme and budget for the year 2022
2. The normative and operational activities of UN-Habitat
3. The financial status of UN-Habitat
4. The update on the restructuring process of UN-Habitat, and
5. The alignment of the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) process with the planning cycles of UN-Habitat in consideration of the scenarios for alignment.

Mr. Chairman
Excellencies

As is the expectation for the working group to assist and make recommendations to the Executive Board, I wish to highlight the recommendations of the working group from its meetings on the above topics.

1. I will first start with the recommendations on the Work programme and Budget for the year 2022

You would recall that the Executive Board at its second session in 2020, through its Decision 2020/6, recommended that the Ad-Hoc working group on programmatic, budgetary and administrative matters, discuss (i) A draft work programme of UN-Habitat for the year 2022, in readiness for submission to the Controller of the United Nations in New York by 15 January 2021 and;(ii) A draft budget for UN-Habitat for 2022, in line with the recommended budget range for the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation non-earmarked budget of UN-Habitat for 2022, of between \$10 million and \$12 million and other extra budgetary resources, for submission to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions by 15 February 2021.

Excellencies,

I wish to report that the Ad-Hoc working group has recommended the following with respect to the Work Programme of UN-Habitat for the year 2022:

At its **tenth meeting held on 18 January 2021**, the working group discussed the orientations for the development of the draft Work Programme of UN-Habitat for the year 2022. At that meeting, the Ad-Hoc working group discussed the priorities of the Organization towards the development of the Work Programme of UN-Habitat for the year 2022, to provide guidance to the Secretariat on the areas of focus and potential catalytic actions for the development for the work programme for the year 2022. The Secretariat also informed that it had received new guidance from the Secretary General and the UN-Controller with respect to the timeline for preparations of the work programme and budget for the year 2022. Specifically, the Programme Planning and Budget Division (PPBD) informed that UN-Habitat's submission date for the draft work

programme was 15 February 2021, and that the submission date for draft budget was 22 February 2021.

At the eleventh meeting of the working group held on 11 February 2021, the Secretariat reiterated its areas of focus for the proposed work programme of UN-Habitat for 2022, and also presented the budget requirements for the year 2022. Member States deliberated with a view to reaching consensus on a recommended budget for the year 2022.

Excellencies,

Following those two meetings, I wish to report that the working group:

- i. gave its preliminary support for the proposed budget for the year 2022 with a cap on USD 10 Million for the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation non-earmarked budget of UN-Habitat, taking into consideration the ongoing financial situation of the Organization, and
- ii. supported the proposed work programme for 2022, which aligns with the 2020- 2023 Strategic Plan and its continued focus on the normative work.

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,

Accordingly, on this matter I wish to specifically highlight that the Ad-Hoc working group reached an agreement to recommend to the Executive Board the \$10 million budget scenario for the draft work programme and budget of UN-Habitat for the year 2022, which is in line with the recommendation of the Board at its 2020 second session for a budget range for the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation non-earmarked budget of UN-Habitat of between USD 10 Million and USD 12 Million.

I wish to note here that the United States of America at the time of the discussions had expressed its concerns on this recommendation, stating that its position is for a lower “realistic” budget figure for the year 2022.

I believe that the Executive Director has prepared a draft Work Programme and Budget for the year 2022 for further discussion by the Executive Board.

2. I will now move to the recommendations on the normative and operational activities of UN-Habitat.

Excellencies

The working group met **for its twelfth meeting on 3 March 2021** to discuss the normative and operational activities of UN-Habitat.

At that meeting, the Secretariat updated the working group on UN-Habitat's new initiatives in both normative and operational activities. Specifically, the Global Future Cities Programme, Building Urban Economic Resilience during and after COVID-19 and the Lebanon Country Programme, which will be discussed at this session of the Board under agenda item 7.

The working group acknowledged UN-Habitat's professionalism and its strategic positioning in the implementation and delivery of its normative and operational activities.

3. I now move to the recommendation on the alignment of the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) process with the planning cycles of UN-Habitat

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies

At the twelfth and fourteenth meetings held on 3 March and 24 March 2021, the working group, in line with paragraph 5 of Decision 2020/3 adopted by the Executive Board at its 2020 second session considered and discussed the prioritization of scenarios 2 and 3 with regard to the alignment of the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) process with the planning cycles of UN-Habitat and further how to best achieve such an alignment.

The Secretariat expanded on scenarios 2 and 3, which were prioritized by the Executive Board. The Secretariat also proposed 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 allow for the alignment of planning cycles of UN-Habitat with the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR). At the request of the Ad-Hoc working group, the Secretariat shared the costs of holding a UN-Habitat Assembly taking into account the three scenarios of a two day meeting, a three day meeting and a five day meeting including if held virtually or in-person, factoring in only mandated activities. The Secretariat also shared the full costs of the first session of the UN-Habitat Assembly which was held in-person for 5 days in 2019, but that cost included both mandated and non-mandated activities.

From the two meetings held on 3 March and on 24 March and was not able to reach a consensus on the matter. The working group, however reaffirmed the importance alignment of the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy review with the planning cycles and provided a number of options and opinions, but which are far from consensus, as follows:

1. Possibility to hold a scaled back UN-Habitat Assembly in 2025, based on the experience from UNEP on its alignment and the recently held UNEA 5 which was scaled down as a result of COVID-19,
2. Possibility of holding a virtual scaled down UN-Habitat Assembly in 2023 only to adopt the alignment scenario that would have been recommended by the Executive Board to which the session in 2025 would then consider any outstanding issues from the 2023 Assembly,
3. Possibility of combining the 2023 and 2025 sessions of the UN-Habitat Assembly to serve as a solution to the costing implications, taking into account that the meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UN-Habitat take place every two years and would consider the implementation of 2020-2023 Strategic Plan of UN-Habitat. With respect to this particular recommendation, some Member States shared their concerns that, staying 6 years without holding a session of the UN-Assembly would be too long a vacuum for a governing body,
4. Possibility of empowering the Executive Board to approve UN- Habitat Strategic Plan on an exceptional basis;
5. Possibility of empowering the Executive Board to approve UN-Habitat Strategic Plan on a permanent basis. It was noted that this recommendation would require an amendment by the UN- Habitat Assembly of its Rules of Procedure. Some Member States expressed their concerns with the fact that the UN- Habitat Assembly has a universal membership whereas the Executive Board has a limited

membership of 36 members and there is need to be circumspect about granting a mandate to the Executive Board to adopt the UN-Habitat Strategic Plans, a mandate that is currently with the UN-Habitat Assembly.

6. The need to consult with the President of the UN-Habitat Assembly on the matter of the alignment to get her views before proceeding with any particular option, and finally,
7. The possibility that the Executive Board at its 2021 first session, that is this session, keep the matter open and allow for further consultations within the working group and then consideration by the Executive Board at a later session.

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies

As you can see from the recommendations, the working group provided recommendation on this matter beyond the two scenarios which the Executive Board recommended at its 2020 second session.

The working group is encouraging further consultations on the various options prior to making a recommendation to the Executive Board on the alignment of the QCPR with the UN-Habitat planning cycles and taking into consideration any cost implications for such an alignment.

In order to assist the Executive Board in further deliberations on this matter, the working group requested the Secretariat to prepare a short in-session analysis, paper for the Board which should consolidate and analyze all information related to the alignment of the QCPR with planning cycles of UN-Habitat, as presented at the 2020 second of the Executive Board and as availed to the working group at its meetings on 3 and 24 March 2021.

Mr. Chairman

I believe that the paper is now available before this session of the Executive Board as “HSP/EB.2021/CPR.2 – Analytical Brief to the Executive Board on the Alignment of the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review and the UN-Habitat Strategic Planning Processes”.

Mr. Chairman

In order to move forward on this matter, I would like to recommend the following options for consideration by the Executive Board:

1. The Executive Board at this session may consider this matter under agenda item 9 and conclude with a recommendation of one scenario for alignment,
2. Instruct the ad-hoc working group on programmatic budgetary and administrative matters to continue consultation on this matter and report back to the Executive Board at its next session,
3. Seek guidance from the President of the UN-Habitat Assembly,
4. Refer this matter to the UN-Habitat Assembly directly through the President of the UN-Habitat Assembly.

4. Fourth, I now move to the recommendation on Financial Status of UN-Habitat and on the restructuring process

Excellencies

At its the **thirteenth meeting held on 17 March 2021**, the working group provided guidance on the financial situation of UN-Habitat and the ongoing restructuring process of the Organization which are both before this session under agenda item 4.

With regard to the financial situation of UN-Habitat, the Secretariat shared the UN-Habitat financial status from all sources of funding and its financial performance as at 28 February 2021.

Base on that information, the Ad-Hoc working group recommended the following:

1. The Secretariat should prepare a detailed presentation of challenges faced by the UN-Habitat with respect to its financial situation including implication to staff posts, implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and UN-Habitat Flagship Programmes.
2. The Secretariat should prepare detailed presentation on the progress made by UN-Habitat in the implementation of the resource mobilization strategy

including innovative financing mechanisms adopted during this COVID-19 period.

I believe that based on these two recommendations of the working group, the Secretariat has prepared elaborate presentations on the challenges and implications of the Organization's financial situation and its progress on resource mobilization and that during this session, the Executive Board will be briefed on these matters under item 4.

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies

With regard to the ongoing restructuring process, and in light of the Organization's financial situation and its austerity plan, it was clear that there are varied views on this matter with some member states supporting strengthening of the UN-Habitat Headquarters and other Member States supporting enhanced UN-Habitat presence in the regions and countries. There was a concern regarding the presence of UN-Habitat in Europe only through the liaison offices and project-based offices.

The Ad-Hoc working group recommended further discussion on this issue by the Executive Board at this 2021 first session. The Executive Board may further discuss and consider strategies to strengthen UN-Habitat Headquarters and its subsequent regional architecture taking into consideration the need to support the overall UN-reforms and to strengthen implementation of the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan as well the achievement of the New Urban Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 11.

Mr. Chairman
Excellencies.

5. Finally, I would now like to brief you on the Informal consultations on the draft decisions towards the 2021 first session of the Executive Board.

In response to the recommendation by the Bureau of the Executive Board at its meeting on 11 February 2021 and 1 March 2021, the working group also lead the informal consultations on the draft decisions towards the 2021 first session of the Executive Board.

I now have the distinct honor to present to this first session of the Executive Board the draft decisions for further consideration as contained in the document HSP/EB.2020/CRP.1/Rev.1. “Draft Decisions of the Executive Board at its 2021 first session”.

In that document, there are five draft decisions to be considered by the Executive Board as follows:

1. Draft Decision 2021/1: Status of the draft work programme and budget of UN-Habitat for the year 2022; implementation by UN-Habitat of the reform of the development system and management of the United Nations and alignment of the planning cycles of UN-Habitat with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review process.
2. Draft Decision 2021/2: Financial, budgetary and administrative matters of UN Habitat including the improvement of the internal management, policies and procedures of UN-Habitat and actions by UN-Habitat to strengthen protection against sexual and any other type of exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment in the workplace
3. Draft Decision 2021/3: Implementation of normative and operational activities of UN-Habitat including resolutions and decisions of the UN-Habitat Assembly and including reporting on the programmatic activities of UN-Habitat in 2020 and the implementation of subprogrammes, flagship programmes and technical cooperation activities, and update on the UN-Habitat response to the coronavirus pandemic
4. Draft Decision 2021/4: Methods of work of the Executive Board and workplan of the Executive Board for the year 2021
5. Draft Decision 2021/5: Election of officers of the Bureau of the Executive Board for the term 2021-2022

I have formally handed the version of the above draft decisions as at 6 April 2021 as contained in document HSP/EB.2021/CRP.1/Rev.1 to the Chair of the Executive for further consideration by the Board at this session.

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies

Before I conclude, allow me to take this distinct opportunity to sincerely thank the former Chair of the Ad-Hoc Working Group on programmatic, budgetary and administrative matters, Her Excellency Ms. Julia Pataki, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of

Romania to UN-Habitat, for her stewardship of this working group since its establishment in November 2019. It has been a great privilege for me to work alongside her as co- Chair of this working group. Ambassador Pataki's contribution to the work of the Executive Board through the Ad-Hoc working group on programmatic, budgetary and administrative matters has been remarkable and highly appreciated by Member States. Thank you, your Excellency Ms. Pataki, for your commitment and dedication to the Executive Board and to multilateralism at the Nairobi UN headquarters.

Let me also thank Member States for their active participation in the Ad-Hoc working group on programmatic, budgetary and administrative matters.

Thank you, Excellencies.

Thank you very much Chair.