



Executive Board of the United Nations

Human Settlements Programme

First session of 2022

Nairobi, 29–31 March 2022

Item 13 of the provisional agenda*

**Annual report on action by the Executive Director to
update and improve the internal management, policies
and procedures of UN-Habitat**

**Actions to update and improve the internal management,
policies and procedures of the United Nations Human
Settlements Programme**

Report by the secretariat

I. Introduction

1. The Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) took up her post in January 2018 and the Secretary-General of the United Nations has recently renewed her appointment for a further two years until February 2024. Now is thus an opportune moment to revisit the key reforms implemented since February 2018. The improvements brought about fall primarily into the following four key areas, proposed and endorsed by the UN-Habitat Executive Board:

- (a) New governance architecture;
- (b) New strategic plan development;
- (c) Internal change process;
- (d) Organizational restructuring.

2. With regard to items (a) and (b), the secretariat has responded fully to the requests of the United Nations Habitat Assembly of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat Assembly), which include the successful convening of the three bodies of the governance structure, namely the UN-Habitat Assembly, the Committee of Permanent Representatives and the Executive Board, within existing budgetary limits. The secretariat has also implemented the UN-Habitat strategic plan for the period 2020–2023, and the Executive Board and the Committee of Permanent Representatives have had the opportunity to conduct a high-level midterm review of the implementation, again within budgetary limitations and taking into account the impact of the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

3. UN-Habitat remains actively engaged in the implementation of the fourth pillar of the reform, namely an organizational restructuring designed to maximize fulfilment of its mandate to support Member States and partners in implementing and monitoring the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

* HSP/EB.2022/1.

Development and the New Urban Agenda at the local, subnational and national levels so that no one and no place is left behind.

II. Updates

4. Based upon the recommendations of the external audit report, various measures have been implemented to improve the work processes of UN-Habitat, including the successful roll-out of the corporate responsibility and accountability framework for the organization, referred to as RACI (responsible, accountable, consulted, informed). To date, the framework has guided the response of the Programme to COVID-19 and facilitated the fulfilment of its obligations as a United Nations programme in meeting all the deadlines set for it by the Secretary-General, both for its regular obligations and for special requests associated with its mandate.

5. In 2021, the Executive Director convened a retreat for senior managers, based on her priority focus areas, including housing, climate adaptation and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at the local level. She also set targets for each division, based on her compact with the Secretary-General, and shared a corporate calendar with staff.

6. The Executive Director also convened four town hall meetings to keep staff informed about the latest developments at UN-Habitat and to provide an opportunity for feedback. Four Executive Committee meetings for consultation with senior management and key policy decisions were convened, as were six monthly Programme Management Committee meetings, most in the final quarter of the year. Fifty-two weekly broadcasts by the Chief of Staff provided real-time corporate and programmatic information to all staff and personnel. This measure was supported by the fortnightly internal newsletter, the HabPost, of which 44 issues have been published since April 2020.

7. To ensure alignment between normative and operational activities, the Project Review Committee met 39 times in 2021 to review 109 projects. This process ensures that all projects of the Programme are attributed to the various subprogrammes, co-created through a “whole of house” approach and meet the requirements of the UN-Habitat Environmental and Social Safeguards System. From a budget management perspective, all projects must also meet the requirements for evaluation, gender and social inclusion, and corporate communications. In 2022, the work of the Project Review Committee will include monitoring functions to ensure that the UN-Habitat results-based management policy is implemented consistently in all regions.

8. The strategic plan for the period 2020–2023 includes a commitment to transform UN-Habitat into a centre of excellence and improve its standing as a thought leader in sustainable urbanization. The Executive Director has established a Publications Committee, which met three times in 2021 to streamline publications directly attributed to the Programme. That included reviving the World Cities Report by publishing *World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization*, as well as *Cities and Pandemics: Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future*, *The New Urban Agenda Illustrated* and *Our City Plans: An Incremental and Participatory Toolbox for Urban Planning*. In 2022, UN-Habitat expects to produce five flagship publications and more than 30 technical papers, briefs and toolkits, including *World Cities Report 2021*, which will be launched at the eleventh session of the World Urban Forum. The Publications Committee is also reviewing the UN-Habitat Annual Report 2021 to ensure that Member States are kept abreast of the Programme’s achievements in a transparent manner.

9. The Executive Director has chaired the Resource Mobilization Committee since September 2021. The Committee has met twice. The donor reporting rate has improved, from 62 per cent in 2020 to 78 per cent in 2021. Donors are updated through the Urban Impact newsletter, published four times a year. At the time of writing, a special report on European Union grants during the period 2018–2021, prepared by the UN-Habitat Brussels office, was being reviewed.

10. To ensure better relations between staff and management, the Chief of Staff meets with the Staff Union on the first Monday of every month. The Executive Director has also revived the Staff Management Consultative Committee, which met twice in 2021. United Nations system-wide mandatory ethics training was also conducted, with a 99 per cent attendance rate in 2021.

11. Based on the 2019 staff survey, an action plan was developed with staff members. The plan is being implemented with monitoring by the Chief of Staff. Leadership training and other capacity-building programmes are offered to eligible staff members, monitored by the Human Resources Unit. An onboarding package has also been developed for roll-out in the first quarter of 2022.

12. To ensure business continuity, UN-Habitat participates actively in the Security Management Team of the United Nations Office at Nairobi, as well as the COVID-19 Crisis Management Team and its Steering Committee. An internal back-to-office task team has also been set up to monitor compliance, implement recommendations on the use of space and ensure a safe working environment. At the end of 2021, the UN-Habitat back-to-office rate was 37 per cent. At the time of writing, the United Nations Office at Nairobi had instructed all entities to reduce their presence on the United Nations compound to an overall maximum of 20 per cent, owing to the latest wave of infections related to the spread of the Omicron variant, with humanitarian agencies allowed up to 30 per cent of staff on the compound and other agencies, offices and programmes instructed to keep their in-office staffing levels below 15 per cent.

13. In 2022, the Executive Director is chairing a task team on the preparations for the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the review of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the second session of the UN-Habitat Assembly in 2023. She will also be providing Member States with a briefing on the conduct of the high-level meeting and will seek Member States' guidance on the roadmap towards the second session of the UN-Habitat Assembly in 2023.

14. Further to guidance from the Executive Board, the Executive Director is creating a Budget Committee to establish corporate goals and targets for the Programme. The terms of reference for the Budget Committee are currently being finalized. It is proposed that the Budget Committee will meet four times a year to ensure timely and effective budget management, and that its meetings will be aligned with its reporting schedule to the Executive Board.

15. In 2022, the Executive Director will also establish a project support cost and cost recovery policy, as recommended by the Executive Board. At the time of writing, the first draft of the policy paper was being submitted to the Office of the United Nations Controller for review and feedback.