

Summary of the thirty-fifth meeting of the ad-hoc working group on programmatic, budgetary, and administrative matters of the Executive Board

Monday, 06 February 2023 – 14:30 – 16:30 East Africa Time

Chair: H.E. Ms. Saqlain Syedah

Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to UN-Habitat

Agenda item 1 - Adoption of the Agenda

The meeting of the ad hoc working group on programmatic, budgetary, and administrative matters of the Executive Board was called to order at 14:35 EAT. The working group adopted the provisional agenda for its thirty-fifth meeting without any change as follows:

1. Adoption of the provisional Agenda.
2. Discussions on the priorities for the draft work programme for 2024.
3. Any other matters.

After the adoption of the agenda, the meeting considered Agenda item 2, namely discussions on the priorities for the draft work programme for 2024.

Agenda item 2 - Discussions on the priorities for the draft work programme for 2024.

Under this item, the Chair gave the following background:

- i. The Chair recalled that during the 2022 second session of the Executive Board, the Board in paragraph 16 of its Decision 2022/5 requested the ad hoc working group to discuss a draft work programme and a draft budget for 2024 in line with the Executive Director's recommended budget for the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation. The Chair also recalled that during its meeting held on 9 December 2022, the Bureau recommended the provisional agenda for the first session in 2023 as required by Decision 2022/7. The Bureau kept the provisional agenda as short as possible to fit within the two days of the meeting from 28 to 29 March 2023, and therefore recommended that the draft work programme and budget of UN-Habitat for the year 2024 be considered by the Executive Board at its third session of the year to be held in November 2023.
- ii. The Chair concluded that the purpose of the meeting was to hold preliminary discussions and provide guidance to the Secretariat, if any, on the areas of focus and potential catalytic actions for the development for the work programme for the year 2024.

Following the above background information, the Secretariat provided a briefing on the priorities for the draft work programme for 2024. The full presentation can be accessed [here](#).

The briefing by the Secretariat highlighted the following:

- i. The Secretariat outlined that the work programme and budget is a planning instrument common to all United Nations (UN) Secretariat entities, which preparation process is organized by the General Assembly supported by the Programme Planning and Budget Division in New York. The planning process runs in parallel both in Nairobi and in New York. The functions performed in Nairobi are mainly programme planning preparations whilst the major decision-making functions are conducted in New York through the support of the Committee of Programme Coordination (CPC), the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), the Fifth Committee and the General Assembly.

- ii. The Secretariat highlighted that the structure of the work programme was divided into two sections. The first section provides an overall orientation of the work programme including UN-Habitat's mandate, the organizational background, the external factors that condition the implementation of the strategy in 2024, lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, the list of all mandates entrusted to UN-Habitat, a list of all cross-cutting deliverable of UN-Habitat's programme and an evaluation of urban challenges which the work programme is focused on and its challenges. The second section provides a detailed look into UN-Habitat's four sub-programmes by stating the objective, strategy, programme performance of 2022, the highlighted results for 2024 and the deliverables.
- iii. The Secretariat provided that the key orientations and considerations for the development of the draft work programme for 2024 are as follows:
 - a. UN-Habitat will continue to promote urbanization as a positive transformative force for people and communities, reducing inequality, discrimination and poverty, and strengthening climate action.
 - b. The COVID-19 pandemic and current global crises have clearly shown that adequate housing for all and prosperous, just and green urban futures cannot be realized without inclusive and effective multilateralism, that acknowledges human rights and gender equality, and complements and reinforces national and local efforts towards sustainable development.
 - c. Access to adequate housing, SDG localization, climate action and urban crisis prevention and response will remain key priorities in 2024.
 - d. While the UN-Habitat programme of work continues to adapt to evolving conditions, financial resources are needed to adequately support Member States, and the Organization will continue to prioritize its work in line with the available resources.
- iv. The Secretariat reiterated that the draft programme of work will continue to be driven by the UN-Habitat strategic plan of the period 2020-2023 which the Executive Board recommended to be extended by the UN-Habitat Assembly to cover the period 2020-2025. Moreover, UN-Habitat will continue to strengthen the transformative nature of its work and contribute to an enhanced role of local and regional governments in implementing global agreements.
- v. The Secretariat indicated that the orientations for the development of the draft work programme for 2024 are based on the following assumptions:
 - a. Adequate unearmarked extrabudgetary resources are available.
 - b. Countries commitment to the New Urban Agenda and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs).
 - c. National and local governments continue to request for policy advice and technical assistance from UN-Habitat to develop and implement their urban policies, plans and strategies.
 - d. Urban indicators, data and information are used to formulate policies, with adequate mechanisms available for impact monitoring and performance assessments.
 - e. Social, political, and macroeconomic conditions will not affect implementation of programmes and projects.
- vi. The Secretariat outlined that UN-Habitat further identified key elements of its strategy for the year 2024 as follows:
 - a. Focus on pathways to transformative change, investigate and elevate examples of cities impacted by innovate and progressive policies.
 - b. Flagship programmes fast-track integration of normative and operational work; and scale impact of the organization.

- c. Support cities in reshaping urban planning solutions that are more suitable and integrate through innovation.
 - d. Advocacy, communication and outreach activities across the 4 subprogrammes and mobilize public and political support.
 - e. Strengthen capacity-building initiatives, digitalization of tools and virtual e-learning. Monitor and report on global conditions and trends and provide evidence for policymaking.
 - f. Mainstream social inclusion on women and girls, older persons, persons with disabilities, children and young people.
 - g. Strategic partnerships with other UN entities and other international organization & actors.
- vii. Furthermore, the Secretariat reiterated that the above-mentioned key elements and assumptions have been translated into adjusted strategies at the subprogramme level, as follows:
- a. Subprogramme 1: further increase the focus on access to adequate housing to overcome inequalities and facilitate social inclusion.
 - b. Subprogramme 2: strengthen the focus on municipal finance and socio-economic recovery.
 - c. Subprogramme 3: increase the synergies between programming focusing on climate change and urban environment.
 - d. Subprogramme 4: focus on urban recovery as a key instrument for effective action in the in the humanitarian, development and peace and security nexus.
- viii. The Secretariat noted that each subprogramme highlighted results for 2024 which are:
- a. Subprogramme 1: (i) increased access to basic services, sustainable mobility and slum upgrading programmes to strengthen community resilience to pandemics such as COVID-19 in slums and informal settlements; (ii) enhanced and expanded service delivery by local water and sanitation service providers; (iii) increased inclusion in cities and communities through UN-Habitat's Flagship Programme.
 - b. Subprogramme 2: (i) a people-centered approach to urban innovation, digital technologies, smart cities and urbanization processes adopted by cities; (ii) regional spatial development plans in Ethiopia for improved prosperity and balanced socioeconomic development; (iii) voluntary Local Reviews to enhance the shared prosperity of cities and regionals globally through SDG localization.
 - c. Subprogramme 3: (i) participatory urban resilience action in sub-Saharan Africa; (ii) increased climate resilience of urban communities in Jordan and Lebanon; (iii) nature-based solutions to improve livelihoods and resilience of urban poor communities.
 - d. Subprogramme 4: (i) a new approach to strengthen city resilience; (ii) Strengthen urban recovery and resilience and improved access to basic services in the Syrian Arab Republic; (iii) enhanced sustainable solutions to migration.

Following the presentation by the Secretariat, the discussions highlighted the following:

- ix. Several Member States welcomed the preliminary discussion of the 2024 draft programme of work and recognized efforts made by the Secretariat in drafting a programme of work that touches on issues of interrelated global crises on aspects such as the environment, energy, resilience, and urban safety.
- x. One Member State sought clarity on the selection process of specific countries in the highlighted results for 2024 and the background information that supports that reasoning.

- xi. One Member State enquired whether the UN-Habitat Country Office in Morocco is projected to have any activities in 2024.
- xii. Several Member States noted that it was difficult to assess the extent of the 2024 draft programme of work without any budget indication. The Member States requested the Secretariat to provide an indicative figure of financial and staff resources that would be needed in the implementation of the programme of work for the year 2024. At the same time, the Member States pointed to the need of identifying the areas within the implementation of the 2020-2023 strategic plan which are expected to increase or decrease in 2024.
- xiii. One Member State noted that the 2020-2023 strategic plan is largely focused on addressing urban issues in cities such as energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. The Member State sought clarification of UN-Habitat work in rural areas given that the strategic plan also points to addressing challenges of internal migration.
- xiv. One Member State indicated that the twelfth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF 12) to be held in 2024 had not been reflected in the list of high-level meetings that was to take place in 2024. On another note, the Member State pointed to the need to have a timeline for the drafting of a new strategic plan to be adopted in 2025 and the financial implications it may entail.
- xv. One Member State requested information on the number of meetings of the ad hoc working group which will be dedicated to the discussions on the draft work programme and budget for 2024.
- xvi. One Member State enquired whether there were any measures to strengthen UN-Habitat regional offices, in particular the Regional Office for Africa in its role of supporting the country programmes especially under the subprogramme 1 on reducing inequality and poverty in communities across urban and rural spaces.
- xvii. Another Member State noted that as a vast majority of UN-Habitat's programmatic work relies on earmarked funding, there will be limitations on the implementation of the programme of work based on inadequate non-earmarked funding. It is therefore crucial to further explore such limitations in the upcoming discussion on the draft budget for 2024. On the other hand, the Member State enquired whether the timeline of the adoption of the work programme and budget would give enough room to incorporate resolutions which have financial implications to be adopted at the second session of the UN-Habitat Assembly.
- xviii. Another Member State requested the Secretariat to provide a regional perspective of each of the subprogrammes based on the expected activities of the draft programme of work for 2024.
- xix. One Member State noted that the number of planned voluntary local reviews was high and requested the Secretariat to provide more information on that and the resources needed for such activities. Moreover, the Member State sought clarity on the drafting process of the new strategic plan.
- xx. One Member State noted that many countries struggle to submit their national reports on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda due to lack of capacity in monitoring. Therefore, the Secretariat should intensify efforts and increase the number of activities related to capacity building in monitoring the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

In light of the views expressed by Member States, the Secretariat responded as follows:

- xxi. The Secretariat informed Member States that the established format of the programme of work requests UN entities to highlight specific results as examples. Detailed information on the number of projects, technical products, guidelines, and training can be found under the section

on deliverables. Additionally, the draft programme of work for 2024 will also include specific reference to regional collaboration and engagement with the UN system.

- xxii. The Secretariat highlighted that UN-Habitat was active in Morocco with multiple projects that will be operational in 2024. Some of the projects focus on local development programme while others look at a city policy review and a territorial observatory project as well.
- xxiii. The Secretariat provided that the increase and decrease expected in the draft work programme and budget for 2024 are visible in the deliverables and reflect the priorities identified by the Executive Director. Therefore, to respond to the state of the world, UN-Habitat may have to redistribute funds across the different subprogrammes but the overall envelop of the organization is expected to remain the same in terms of outputs.
- xxiv. The Secretariat indicated that UN-Habitat recognizes the role of cities in addressing some of the global challenges in the world and the cross-cutting issues from urban areas such as climate change, migration, and displacement. However, the 2020-2023 strategic plan does not neglect rural areas. Rather, the programme of work is aligned at the country level with the national priorities of each government and allow UN-Habitat to support governments where needed most whether that is in urban areas or rural areas.
- xxv. The Secretariat indicated that there will be two meetings of the ad hoc working group dedicated to the discuss of the draft work programme and budget for 2024. The tentative dates for these meetings are 20 February 2023 to discuss the draft work programme and 27 February 2023 to discuss the draft budget. However, this does not preclude Member States from requesting additional meetings for further discussions if needed.
- xxvi. The Secretariat took note of the need to include WUF 12 on the list of high-level meetings that will take place in 2024. With regards to the possible extension of the cycle of the strategic plan as requested by the General Assembly, the timeline for the drafting of the new strategic plan will be impacted by the decision by the UN-Habitat Assembly to be held in June, 2023. That decision will determine whether there will be financial and resource implications on the draft work programme and budget for 2024.
- xxvii. The Secretariat also emphasized the benefit of the discussions on the draft work programme and budget for 2024 as a mechanism for collaboration with Member States on the priorities of work for UN-Habitat prior to its submission to the General Assembly and consideration by the Executive Board in November 2023.
- xxviii. The Secretariat acknowledged that the spending capacity of the non-earmarked fund determines which activities the Secretariat can implement. Similarly, the Secretariat informed that if any resolution adopted at the second session of the UN-Habitat Assembly bears any financial implications on the implementation of the work programme, then the Secretariat is compelled to submit a supplementary budget to reflect said implications.
- xxix. The Secretariat highlighted that after the second session of the Executive Board held on 21 to 23 November 2023, the Executive Director had a retreat with regional offices to explore was for strengthening regional offices. The outcome of the retreat was 21 recommendations that touched on operational issues and internal capacities. In addition, the Executive Director requested the Chief of Staff to prepare and present an internal strategy for regional program division, as a new division within UN-Habitat.
- xxx. The Secretariat outlined that although the draft work program does not have a regional focus, all activities fit within the framework of the 2020-2023 strategic plan. UN-Habitat increasingly makes the effort to engage in regional conversations with the UN system and take part in emerging discussions of new issues of relevance. In that way, regional approaches to the implementation of the strategic plan are dynamic.
- xxxi. The Secretariat indicated that if the proposal for extension of the strategic plan to end in 2025 is approved at the UN-Habitat Assembly, then the drafting of the new strategic plan will take place in 2025 and in turn have no effect on the draft work programme and budget for 2024. In

addition, the drafting process is expected to work within the existing resources of UN-Habitat unless guided otherwise by the governing bodies.

- xxxii. With regards to the voluntary local reviews, the Secretariat provided that the work on localization of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) for UN-Habitat was advancing and the voluntary local reviews make an integral part of that work. UN-Habitat received demands for voluntary local reviews through cities and the work was funded through earmarked funding from the UN Development account, the Agenda 2030 sub fund, from activities under the SDG flagship initiative and from soft earmarked funding from multiple countries. This enables UN-Habitat to advance its normative and operational activities in partnership with regional commissions and other partners.
- xxxiii. The Secretariat took note of the need to further review the activities on capacity building for the monitoring of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

Agenda item 3 - Any other matters

There were no other matters considered by the ad hoc working group.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 15:45 East Africa Time.
