



Executive Board of the United Nations

Human Settlements Programme

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Item 7 of the provisional agenda*

Implementation of the normative and operational activities of UN-Habitat, including reporting on its programmatic activities in 2023 and the implementation of subprogrammes, flagship programmes and technical cooperation activities

Overview of the options for Operationalization of the Sustainable Urban Resilience for the Next Generation (SURGe) initiative.

Note by the Secretariat

This is technical note by the Secretariat compliments the Report of the Executive Director on normative and operational activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, including updates on the Inclusive Communities, Thriving Cities flagship programme, the Sustainable Urban Resilience for the Next Generation (SURGe) initiative, urban crises prevention and response initiatives and activities for the period July–December 2023 (HSP/EB.2024/6 and provides additional information and rationale of the different options to operationalize the SURGe initiative. It is intended to support the process of considering any decisions related to the options for operationalization of the SURGe initiative by Executive Board at its first session for the year 2024, in line with Resolution 2/5 of the United Nations Habitat Assembly (UN-Habitat Assembly).

I. The importance of operationalizing the SURGe Initiative

1. In its resolution 2/5 on enhancing the interlinkages between urbanization and climate change resilience, the UN-Habitat Assembly welcomed the Executive Director's efforts to launch the SURGe initiative during the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties (COP27) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and, in that regard, requested the Executive Director to inform the Executive Board and subsequently develop options and recommendations for operationalizing the SURGe initiative as a meaningful institutional arrangement for the Executive Board to consider.

* HSP/EB.2024/1.

2. The SURGe Initiative matured into a mechanism for accelerating multi-stakeholder and multilevel climate action since its launch at COP27 in 2022. Supported by its core partners ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI), Global Covenant of Mayors for Energy & Climate (GCoM), World Resources Institute (WRI), Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction (Global ABC) and others, it is expected that the operationalization of SURGe will define the level of engagement or leadership of UN-Habitat for multilevel climate action at upcoming milestone events such as Innovate4Cities (September 2024), twelfth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF12) (November 2024), and 29th Conference of the Parties (COP29) (November 2024) as well as influence the scoping and outline of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on Cities and Climate Change (2024-2026). Clarity on UN-Habitat's role in and commitment to the SURGe Initiative and its future will help to define the level of effort for technical backstopping and engagement, human resources, and resource mobilization prior to the upcoming milestone events as well as will aid in implementing the roadmap from COP28 to COP30.

II. Achievements and the roadmap to COP30 for SURGe

3. Since its launch, the SURGe Initiative aims to accelerate multilevel climate action. Some of the key achievements are:
 - a) November 2022: Launch of the SURGe Initiative as an integral part of the 1st Ministerial Meeting on Urbanization and Climate Change at COP27.
 - b) June 2023: Recognition of the SURGe Initiative in Resolution 2/5
 - c) November 2023: Hosting the Multilevel Urban Action Pavilion at COP28 opened by former US Vice-President Al Gore. Convening 60 urban line ministers, 200 mayors and sub-national leaders, and over 1000 participants at the 2nd Ministerial Meeting on Urbanization and Climate Change. UN-Habitat co-chairing the first Local Climate Action Summit at COP28.
 - d) March 2024: France supporting the establishment of the sectoral track working group on Buildings and Construction at the Buildings and Climate Global Forum in Paris.
4. The following *Roadmap to COP30* will allow to further increase scale and impact of the SURGe Initiative for accelerated multilevel climate action:
 - a) September 2024, Innovate4Cities: The I4C conference will highlight the Science & Innovation – Policy – Action nexus for urban climate change acceleration. The Global SURGe Partners are engaged in this process.
 - b) November 2024, WUF12 and launch of UN-Habitat's World Cities Report on Cities and Climate Change: A decision on the SURGe Operationalization would allow for sharpened recommendations and discussions with WUF stakeholders on engagement.
 - c) November 2024, COP29: A clarified SURGe engagement of UN-Habitat, would help share the Ministerial Meeting on Urbanization and Climate Change and other housing and urban development-related sessions at COP.
 - d) 2024 – 2026: Facilitating multistakeholder and multilevel consultations for the IPCC Special Report on Cities and Climate Change: The SURGe partners' experiences can be leveraged for documenting innovations and city-level good practices.
 - e) November 2025, COP30: Strengthened urban content in the updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs): In the run-up to COP30, UN-Habitat and SURGe partners could support Member States and urban stakeholders in developing urban content of the NDCs.

III. Overview of options to operationalizing the SURGe Initiative

5. Pursuant to the request by Member States in Resolution 2/5 of the UN-Habitat Assembly, the secretariat developed the three options presented in the subsections below. All three options recognize the SURGe initiative as: 1) an ongoing initiative, 2) a multilevel and multistakeholder partnership initiative, and 3) an initiative that is fully aligned with Subprogramme 3 of the UN-Habitat strategic plan.

6. All options also acknowledge creating synergies with other ongoing initiatives such as the UN-Habitat's flagship programme: Resilient Settlements for the Urban Poor (RISE UP) or the "*Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships*" (CHAMP) Pledge endorsed by 72 countries at COP28 and ensuring that SURGe can support the implementation of these through its vast multistakeholder network.
7. The options of implementation and their implications are also summarized in the table at the end of this document.
8. The options differ in terms of the scale and ambition of the SURGe initiative and subsequently, the degree to which member states and urban stakeholders can be supported. The larger the initial commitment to the SURGe initiative is, the stronger the leverage will be in terms of partnerships and additional project funding. For option 1, no additional resources would be required. For option 2, resources of USD1 million per year would be required, to significantly build up the initiative. Option 3 requires significant resources in the range of USD5 million per year.
9. The additional resources needed for Options 2 and 3 will be sought from soft-earmarked funding, while necessary staff time will be allocated through amending annual work plans of the climate change and urban environment team and for Option 3 of thematic focal points (Urban Practices Branch) and the regional climate change and urban environment focal points. No regular budget or Foundation non-earmarked budget will need to be sought assuming that soft-earmarked funding and the amendments of staff member work plans suffice to achieve the funding goals.

i. Option 1 [minimal]: SURGe to be sustained as a 'light' network

10. Basic elements of the SURGe initiative will be implemented without additional resource requirements to sustain the SURGe network of partners.

UN-Habitat's role

- a) Guiding the organization of the Ministerial Meetings on Urbanization and Climate Change at UNFCCC COPs
- b) Building partnerships and synergies in support of multilevel climate action and seeking alignment with the CHAMP Initiative
- c) Providing NDC policy analysis for urban integration
- d) Minimum technical advisory to the five sectoral working groups with limited capacity-building support to member states and no institutional support to the SURGe Alliance
- e) Maintaining status-quo of current web presence, but no further communication and advocacy support
- f) Handing over lead coordination role of SURGe Initiative to SURGe Secretariat and limited engagement securing technical and political lead institutions per sectoral track.

Funding:

- a) No additional resources for post and non-post requirements will be sought (without prejudice to the framing of the 2026-2029 Strategic Plan).

ii. Option 2 [medium]. The SURGe initiative as an entry point for accelerated climate action

11. Option 2 is to develop the SURGe initiative as an entry point for accelerated urban climate action. This option supports stronger collaboration with the members of the SURGe Alliance, coordinated by a dedicated UN-Habitat-led secretariat. Collectively, partners would advance multilevel climate action.

UN-Habitat's role in addition to Option 1:

- a) Leading the SURGe Secretariat

- b) Supporting the organization of the Ministerial Meetings on Urbanization and Climate Change at UNFCCC COPs
- c) Leveraging CHAMP pledges for accelerated multilevel climate action anchored in the updated NDCs in collaboration with the NDC Partnership
- d) Coordinating support to and across partner-led sectoral working group tracks, including through limited support by sector specialists from across the agency.
- e) Seeking synergies with institutional initiatives and flagships (especially RISE UP)
- f) Providing direct (but limited) services to Member States through the technical advisory from SURGe partners and project proposal development that contribute to accelerating multilevel climate action
- g) Supporting the establishment of selected national SURGe strategies, city-level SURGe piloting, and limited capacity-building support through Regional SURGe focal points
- h) Development and roll-out of communication and advocacy strategy including the establishment of a SURGe Portal for heightened visibility showcasing best practices and stimulating donor acquisition.

Funding:

- a) Beyond the recurrent post and non-post resources anchored in the PBI, USD1 million per year over six years will be sought from partner contributions, soft-earmarked, and project funding.
- b) This will allow operationalizing the SURGe Initiative beyond OP2 of Resolution 2/5, which currently states to “develop options and recommendations for operationalizing the SURGe initiative as a meaningful institutional arrangement for the Executive Board to consider”.
- c) The additional resources will fund part-time Headquarter (HQ) staff and non-staff personnel as well as one regional SURGe focal point each in the Regional Offices for Africa, Arab States, Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean.
- d) It is expected that the annual resource mobilization for the SURGe Secretariat functions described above will leverage further USD50 million through the SURGe Alliance over six years.

iii. Option 3 [strong]: SURGe as a global coordination platform

- 12. Under Option 3 the SURGe initiative would provide internal coherence for UN-Habitat’s climate work, accelerate the provision of support to Member States and cities and act as a coordination platform for the SURGe Alliance.

UN-Habitat’s role in addition to Option 2:

- a) Dedicated work-planning of HQ and regional staff and non-staff personnel to support multilateral processes, substance, and logistics to operationalize the Ministerial Meeting on Urbanization and Climate Change at UNFCCC COPs
- b) Development of an annual SURGe report informing negotiators of the state of multilevel climate action at the Bonn Climate Change Conferences and prior to UNFCCC COPs.
- c) Development of global guidelines per sectoral track with technical support from Urban Basic Service Section and relevant sections
- d) Coordination and implementation of annual SURGe governing meetings including the Global SURGe Alliance meetings.
- e) Urban NDC implementation support through policy and proposal development, normative projects, and dedicated capacity building provided by regional SURGe focal points.
- f) SURGe initiative as a mechanism to accelerate the implementation of all elements of the second session of UN-Habitat Assembly Resolution HSP/HA.2/Res.5.

Funding:

- a) Beyond the recurrent post and non-post resources anchored in the PBI, USD5 million per year over six years will be sought through soft-earmarked, and dedicated programme funding for post and non-post cost.
- b) This will allow operationalizing the SURGe Initiative as a multistakeholder platform and convening space for peer-to-peer learning and multilevel knowledge exchange to accelerate urban climate action.

- c) The additional resources will fund full-time HQ support staff as well as one full-time regional SURGe focal point in the Regional Office in Africa, Arab States, Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean. In addition, the annual workplan of selected technical staff of relevant headquarters sections will prioritize the backstopping of the sectoral track working groups.
- d) It will further fund proposal design, policy advisory, capacity-building-related activities and communication costs.
- e) It is expected that this option would leverage USD 500 million over 6 years of additional project funding in support of member states.

Background

13. The COP27 Presidency launched the Sustainable Urban Resilience of the next Generation (SURGe) initiative to connect the city-level/local, national and global levels to coordinate and accelerate climate action and improve collaboration between sectoral initiatives. SURGe responds to the challenge that current national pledges, including those contained in NDCs, are not sufficient to reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions to achieve the targets of the Paris Agreement. SURGe also directly supports ongoing work under Subprogramme 3, with a focus on multilevel climate action.
14. In a written request through the United Nations Resident Coordinator to the UN-Habitat Country Office of Egypt, the COP27 Presidency asked UN-Habitat to implement the SURGe initiative, with facilitation support from ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability. The UNCT under the guidance of the RC as well as ASG Selwin Hart, coordinated the development of all COP27 initiatives with the respective UN entities. SURGe was officially launched at the Ministerial Meeting on Urbanization and Climate Change at COP27. It has been supported by 180+ global partners; this network of SURGe partners is special as it reflects the multistakeholder reality of climate action at the city level and includes national governments, city networks, academia, NGOs as well as the private sector.
15. Coordinated and led by selected SURGe partners, The SURGe sectoral track working group members have started identifying the needs for local-level capacity-building, tools, and guidance for each sectoral track on buildings and construction, urban energy, urban mobility, urban waste, and urban water.
16. The SURGe partners developed four work packages, which aim to address urban climate challenges in an integrated manner from the community to the global level (for further elaboration, see section on synergies).
 - a) **From local to global:** connect local action to global climate processes and strengthen multilevel climate action ambitions to help deliver the targets of the Paris Agreements and the SDGs. In addition, recognition for local issues at UNFCCC COPs is provided by encouraging an annual Ministerial Meeting on Urbanization and Climate Change at COPs and strong alignment with WUFs. This is achieved through building on synergies with the Marrakech Partnership, the Local Governments and Municipal Authorities Constituency (LGMA) to the UNFCCC and other initiatives.
 - b) **From local to national:** Support national multilevel climate action efforts, strengthen the urban content in NDCs and support the implementation through city and climate change officers/teams. This is achieved through building on synergies with CHAMP (the *Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships* Pledge endorsed by 72 countries at COP28), NDC Partnership and other initiatives.
 - c) **Local implementation:** Accelerate local climate action and strengthen city-level roll-out of a holistic and integral sustainable urban resilience approach across the five sectoral tracks and cross-cutting issues at the city level. This is to be done through in-country project implementation.
 - d) **Communication, and partnership building:** Strong governance structures and communication, including website, social media and communication campaigns to expand the global partnership and disseminate clear messages on multilevel climate action.
17. The four work packages have been presented to the members of the Executive Board in November 2023.

V. SURGe and United Nations Habitat Assembly resolution 2/5

18. In resolution 2/5 on enhancing the interlinkages between urbanization and climate change resilience, the UN-Habitat Assembly welcomed the Executive Director's efforts to launch the SURGe initiative during the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and, in that regard, requested the Executive Director to inform the Executive Board and subsequently develop options and recommendations for operationalizing the SURGe initiative as a meaningful institutional arrangement for the Executive Board to consider.
19. In the same resolution, the UN-Habitat Assembly requested the Executive Director to further enhance the linkage between urbanization and climate change in the work of UN-Habitat in order to contribute to the objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, and to continue efforts to mobilize resources and to disseminate information on innovations, good practices and policies relating to climate action and support Member States in that regard. It also encouraged the Executive Director to continue the practice of organizing meetings, including ministerial meetings as appropriate, following the organization of the Ministerial Meeting on Urbanization and Climate Change held in the margins of the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
20. The Programme Budget Implications for the entire resolutions were initially kept at an absolute minimum as the guidance from member states on the operationalization of SURGe was outstanding. However, the budget includes strong reference to the SURGe Initiative as part of the overarching operational paragraph of strengthening the "linkages between urbanization and climate change in the work of UN-Habitat". Thus, the PBI is the baseline and is aligned with Option 1.

VI. Opportunities for creating synergies - interlinkages with other initiatives

21. There have been several processes dedicated to involving local and regional governments in climate action in multilateral and global processes; yet effective synergies are missing because each process was initiated for a different purpose, with a different entry point with no financial mechanism to support local climate action at a global scale. At the same time, there is a momentum for opportunity:
 - a) COP28 kicked off a new 2-year timeframe for the formulation of updated **National Determined Contributions**, taking into account the findings of the Global Stocktake. Under Option 2 and 3, there is the potential to integrate urban issues into the updated NDCs and national climate policies (option 2) and develop urban NDC implementation mechanisms (option 3).
 - b) The COP28 **Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships** (CHAMP) was endorsed by 72 national governments, pledging to enhance cooperation, where applicable and appropriate, with subnational governments in the planning, financing, implementation, and monitoring of climate strategies.
 - a. This political commitment needs to be complemented with additional guidance for effective delivery, which can be provided through the proper coordination of the SURGe Alliance
 - b. An analysis of the 72 CHAMP-endorsing countries showed that two-thirds of countries, which have committed to stronger collaboration with local governments through CHAMP, currently display low or moderate urban content in their NDCs. This offers an opportunity to strengthen the urban content of NDCs in the next NDC revision cycle in 2025, which will culminate at COP30 in Belém, in Brazil.
 - c) Thousands of cities and regions have joined city networks, committed to climate action and have committed to the Race to Zero and/or the Race to Resilience. The city networks are members of the SURGe Alliance, a strong secretariat and roll-out mechanism at country and city level can leverage the capacities of partners, SURGe can provide the normative framework and tools, as well as the global reporting mechanisms.
 - d) Linkages to the **Marrakech Partnership** for Global Climate Action which supports the implementation of the Paris Agreement by enabling collaboration between governments and the cities, regions, businesses and investors that must act on climate change.

VII. CHAMP as a space for national government pledges and commitments and SURGe as a vehicle that supports the translation at the local level.

22. Both Initiatives strive to keep 1.5C degrees within reach and to increase urban and local adaptation and resilience. CHAMP does so by rallying national governments to pledge to enhance cooperation with subnational governments. SURGe can provide a complementary vehicle that builds on multistakeholder partnerships for translating this national commitment into local climate action. SURGe creates a convening space for local, national and global levels to coordinate the implementation of collective climate action and improves collaboration between sectoral initiatives.
23. Progress on CHAMP and SURGe could be annually reviewed at the Ministerial Meeting on Urbanization and Climate Change or at future UN-Habitat Assemblies and World Urban Forums.

VIII. Proposed governance.

- a) Global SURGe network, open to endorsement from a multistakeholder community
- b) Five working groups, chaired by at least one national government, with the support of at least one thematic lead organization
- c) Advisory Committee, reflecting the multistakeholder nature of the initiative as well as inviting related initiatives to participate
- d) Coordination of SURGe by UN-Habitat, with the support of ICLEI

Annex 2 Options Overview

| Multilevel Governance WP1 (Local to Global) | Option 1 | Option2 | Option 3 |
|---|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Ministerial Meeting (holding of event) | | | |
| Ministerial Meeting (SURGe Report) | | | |
| CHAMP alignment | | | |
| NDC Policy Analysis | Analysis | Integration | Implementation |
| Global Guidelines per sectoral tracks | | | |
| | | | |
| Multilevel Governance WP1 (Local to Global) | | | |
| Sector Working Groups support to partner-led (self-sufficient) Tracks | minimal | | |
| Coordination Support to partner-led sectoral tracks | | | |
| Facilitation of global mechanism across partner-led sectoral tracks | | | |
| Part-time coordinators in UBSS and HSUS for partner-led sectoral tracks | | | |
| Absorb RISE UP other initiatives | | synergies | Full integration |
| | | | |
| National-level initiatives WP2 | | | |
| Global Support to national SURGe Focal Points (these are national gov funded or XB) | | up to 10 | Support to all national FPs |
| Regional Office SURGe Coordinators to support nat. coord | | limited | Full time |
| Resource Mobilization Ifor national SURGe Strategies | | 5/year | 20/year |
| NDC revision support (no. of countries, XB) | | 1+/year | 20+ by 2025 |
| NDC implementation support (normative, capacity development) | | | 20+ |
| | | | |
| City level implementation and roll-out WP3 | | | |
| Resource Mobilization (XB) for city/multi-city projects | | 1 pilot in yr 1 plus expansion | 1 pilot /region/ year 1 plus expansion |
| Capacity Development Support at country level | | 1 | 4 |
| Technical Expertise | | | |
| | | | |
| Coordination, Communications and Partnerships WP4 | | | |
| Global Secretariat | Light | limited | yes |
| Global SURGe Alliance (support and meetings) | | | |
| SURGe Portal | limited - existing web | additional resources | |
| Communications Strategy and advocacy support | | | |
| Expansion of Partnership | | | |

