

## **Seventh Bureau Meeting of the UN-Habitat Executive Board**

Monday, 2 September 2024

10:00 to 11:00 hrs EAT

Hybrid Meeting–UN-Habitat OED Boardroom

### **MEETING SUMMARY**

1. Dr. Victory Tamunobelega Jaja, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, on behalf of Hon. Ahmed Musa Dangiwa, Minister for Housing and Urban Development of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Chair of the UN-Habitat Executive Board, opened the meeting at 10.00 hrs EAT.

#### **The following Members of the Bureau of the Executive Board were present:**

- i. **Dr. Victory Tamunobelega Jaja**, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to UN-Habitat
- ii. **H.E. Mr. Silvio Albuquerque**, Permanent Representative of the Federative Republic of Brazil to UN-Habitat
- iii. **Mr. Clément Payeur**, Deputy Permanent Representative of the French Republic to UN-Habitat
- iv. **Mr. Shoaib Mansoor**, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to UN-Habitat
- v. **Ms. Joanna Szymanska**, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Poland to UN-Habitat

#### **The following UN-Habitat Secretariat members were present:**

- i. Ms. Anacláudia Rossbach, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director
  - ii. Mr. Michal Mlynar, Assistant Secretary-General and Acting Executive Director
  - iii. Mr. Raf Tuts, Director, Global Solutions Division
  - iv. Mr. Chris Mensah, Secretary to the Governing Bodies
  - v. Mr. Erfan Ali, Chief, Office of the Executive Director
  - vi. Mr. Stephen Slawsky, Director, Management Advisory and Compliance Service
  - vii. Mr. Saidou N'Dow, Legal Officer and Head of the Legal Unit
  - viii. Ms. Shipra Narang Suri, Chief, Urban Practices Branch
  - ix. Ms. Bridget Oballa, External Relations Officer
  - x. Ms. Xi Ling, Coordination Officer
2. The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting and welcomed Ms. Anacláudia Rossbach, Executive Director of UN-Habitat, to her first Bureau meeting and also thanked the Deputy Executive Director for his leadership in steering the Organization over the past eight months as Acting Executive Director.

#### **Agenda item 1: Adoption of the Provisional Agenda**

3. The Provisional Agenda was adopted without any changes and can be accessed [here](#).

#### **Agenda item 2: Opening Remarks by the Executive Director**

4. The Executive Director expressed her gratitude for the warm welcome she had received since taking up her responsibilities and appreciated the role of the Bureau in steering the work of the Executive Board and, by extension, the mandate of the Organization. The Executive Director indicated the three upcoming occasions that would offer the opportunity to share her vision and plans for the Organization. The first would be the Strategic Plan retreat, which outline document would be shared soon, and which had already incorporated aspects of her approach; the second, a briefing to Permanent Representatives on 11 September and the third, regional consultations as may be the wish for Member States.
5. The Executive Director highlighted the three main aspects of her focus for the moment as follows: continuity, meaning she had no plans to effect major reforms in the Organization; actualizing more impact, moving beyond project outputs towards outcomes and change and; making the Organization fit for purpose, in tune with the multiple crises, trends, urgencies and adding contexts to the Organization's work, including climate change and the global housing crisis.
6. She further pointed to the need for UN-Habitat to align and integrate its portfolio of projects to overcome fragmentation so as sustain the focus and establish a clear line of priorities for the next cycle of the Strategic Plan. She underlined the importance of strengthening the Organization's normative work in the countries and regions, taking into account the need for resources, to realize more impact and promote systemic transformational change, noting that the places where UN-Habitat registered the best impact were where it had been able to sustain a strategic and long-term presence over the years. This had enabled the Organization to build knowledge about different contexts, understand what needed to be changed on a systemic level - beyond the project - and establish the right partnerships, secure high-level contacts with national government representatives and establish connections with academia, civil society, along with an understanding of local private sector operations. The Executive Director looked forward to the Bureau's guidance and support in strengthening the Organization and making it fit for purpose.
7. Members of the Bureau extended a warm welcome to the Executive Director. One Member stated that the priorities shared by the Executive Director, particularly on housing and reinforcing UN-Habitat's normative work, resonated with his Regional Group. He added that there would be many opportunities for collaboration on advancing SDG11 and the New Urban Agenda, including the Strategic Plan retreat and twelfth World Urban Forum (WUF12).
8. Another Member highlighted the importance of continuity and emphasized that the work done in the past had provided a foundation to build upon. The Member further underlined the need to make Executive Board meetings fruitful and more connected to the realities on the ground, emphasizing that impact was especially realized in his region when UN-Habitat's life-changing actions reached those most in need, notably through the work of mayors and governors.
9. The Member underlined the importance to recall the core mandate of UN-Habitat and stressed that the global housing crisis had not yet been overcome by individual countries nor regionally. The Member considered it fortunate that UN-Habitat was able to avoid the cleavage between the Global North and the Global South in dealing with a matter affecting countries across the world - albeit differently. The Member also committed the support of his country and region to work together to fulfil the Organization's mandate.

### **Agenda item 3: Review of the conduct of the 2024 first session of the Executive Board**

10. The Chair recalled that the 2024 first session of the Executive Board took place from 6 to 8 May 2024 and recognized the robust participation and successful outcomes. He invited the Executive Director and Deputy Executive Director to make presentations on the item.
11. Appreciating the support received from the Bureau Members, the Deputy Executive Director stated that during the interim period, the focus had been on keeping the ship sailing and addressing some of the underlying administrative, financial, personnel and other issues faced by the Organization. He highlighted that the 2024 first session of the Executive Board had been a success and provided a strong basis for continued work for the rest of the year and beyond.
12. The Deputy Executive Director also highlighted the outcomes from the 2024 first session of the Executive Board, including the need to continue developing and refining the draft Strategic Plan for the period 2026-2029, to operationalize the Sustainable Urban Resilience for the Next Generation (SURGe) initiative, to support the Chair of the ad hoc working group on the development of the stakeholder engagement policy to finalize and present a draft for consideration by the Executive Board at its second session of 2024, and to support efforts to reconstruct human settlements affected by conflict and disaster and submit regular reports on the status of the development of these efforts.
13. He stated further that, in line with the UN-Habitat Assembly resolution 2/7, the Executive Board decided that the first session of the open-ended intergovernmental expert working group on adequate housing for all would be held from 9 to 11 December 2024, adding that preparations for this legislative meeting had started. He also expressed appreciation to the Honourable Minister, Ahmed Musa Dangiwa of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for his stewardship of the Executive Board.
14. Adding to the presentation, the Executive Director highlighted the importance of the upcoming conferences such as WUF12 as platforms for engagement with Member States, different stakeholders, as well as multilateral development banks, and for the UN-Habitat staff to appreciate the trends and opportunities. She added that the Strategic Plan would serve as a backbone to guide the Organization in maximizing its work and impact.
15. One Member commended the Chair of the Executive Board for successfully leading the 2024 first session and appreciated the work of the Chair of the ad hoc Working Group on Programmatic, Budgetary and Administrative Matters (PBA).
16. The Member recalled that re-costing of the budget was identified as a significant consideration for the final approval of the budget for the Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation for 2025, and expressed support for the proposed budget and the implementation of the first package of the scalability model, and recognizing the importance of maintaining financial stability for the Organization. The Member requested a brief update on the current budgetary and financial reality of the Organization.
17. Regarding the Mid-term Evaluation of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 presented by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), the Member emphasized the need to address these challenges to ensure the effectiveness of the current plan and provide a solid foundation for development of the Strategic Plan 2026-2029.
18. On normative and operational activities, the Member highlighted the importance of the role of UN-Habitat in areas affected by conflicts and disasters to his regional group. The Member noted that the emergence of political issues during discussions was hard to avoid, such as the matters

on Ukraine and the Gaza Strip. Recognizing that UN-Habitat should address both technical and sometimes political matters, the Member underlined the need to avoid politicization of multilateral discussions and to focus on the technical advancements of UN-Habitat's agenda. He assured the Bureau of the support of his Regional Group in solving such sensitive matters at the 2024 second session of the Executive Board in December.

19. The Member assured the Bureau of his Country's active participation at the open-ended intergovernmental expert working group on adequate housing for all and also underlined the importance of the work in developing a policy regarding the participation of civil society and other stakeholders in the meetings of UN-Habitat.
20. In response, the Secretariat stated that at the upcoming meeting of the ad hoc working group on PBA on 23 September, more details on the re-costing process and the implication for the proposed budget level for the coming year, would be presented, as well as providing an update on the financial status. Regarding the decision on the budget for the Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation for 2025, the Secretariat noted that the fourth quarter of every year experienced seasonality in revenue which would cause uncertainty of the final financial position by the end of the current year. He further advised that the Executive Board may wish to consider conditional language in the decision on the scalability model, to avoid debate on a binary choice.
21. Regarding its day-to-day work, the Secretariat confirmed that requirements for interpretation and translation for UN-Habitat's mandated meetings were covered by the current budget plan, while extra resource requirement for preparation of documentation and interpretation might be needed for the resumed session of the UN Habitat Assembly, some of which may be covered by the Habitat Trust Fund.

#### **Agenda Item 4: Preparations for the 2024 Second Session of the Executive Board**

22. The Chair recalled that during the 2024 first session of the Executive Board, it was decided that the 2024 second session would be held for a duration of three days from 4 to 6 December 2024 and decided on the provisional agenda for that session. He invited the Bureau to confirm the dates and agenda of the 2024 second session of the Executive Board, taking into consideration that the UN meetings calendar was full for the remainder of the year.
23. The Executive Director reported that the Secretariat had made necessary arrangements with UNON for servicing the session towards the dates of 4 to 6 December 2024. The Executive Director presented the provisional agenda and highlighted the proposed new agenda item as well as details of sub-topics under an agenda item. Furthermore, she presented the proposed schedule of Bureau meetings in preparation for the 2024 second session of the Executive Board. The presentation on this Agenda Item can be accessed [here](#).
24. One Member sought clarification on when the OIOS would be reporting to the Executive Board on matters previously raised by Member States and whether reporting was on a regular basis or requested by Member States with a specific mandate.
25. The Secretariat clarified that OIOS and the Ethics Office report annually to the General Assembly, and that the Executive Board had opted to consider the two matters on an annual basis. The Secretariat further explained that no direct report was prepared from the two offices to Member States, instead, the Secretariat synthesized the two reports to the Executive Board.

26. One Member referred to the report by Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) on assessment of UN-Habitat's organizational effectiveness and proposed an item to be added on presentation of the key results of the report. Another Member requested that the outcomes of the Africa Urban Forum, scheduled from 4 to 6 September, be added to the agenda.
27. The Secretariat recommended that the Executive Director should invite MOPAN for a presentation under the Agenda item on "Any Other Business" at the 2024 second session of the Executive Board, highlighting that a briefing session by MOPAN to Member States on the findings of the Survey to assess UN-Habitat's organizational effectiveness would be held on 9 September 2024. The Secretariat also took note of the request to include the outcomes of the Africa Urban Forum on the agenda of the 2024 second session of the Executive Board.
28. One Member asked whether the draft Strategic Plan 2026-2029 would be shared by the planned Strategic Plan retreat.
29. In response, the Secretariat advised that a draft outline of the Strategic Plan would be shared with Member States and confirmed that more details would be shared at the retreat, scheduled for 16 September, and that comments from Member States would be collected for incorporation into the draft to be considered by the Executive Board at its second session.
30. The Bureau recommended the dates of 4 to 6 December 2024, and a duration of 3 days, for the 2024 second session of the Executive Board. The Bureau also recommended the provisional agenda with one additional item on "Follow up on implementation of the report of the UN Joint Inspection Unit on the review of management and administration in the United Nations Human Settlements Programme", as presented by the Secretariat.
31. The Bureau also recommended that the outcomes of the African Urban Forum and the report by MOPAN be added to the 2024 second session of the Executive Board.
32. The Bureau took note of the proposed dates for the upcoming Bureau meetings as shared by the Secretariat and requested the Secretariat to continue its preparations for the 2024 second session of the Executive Board accordingly, keeping the Bureau updated.

**Agenda Item 5: Any Other Matters**

33. A Member requested the Secretariat to keep in view the buildup of Mpox cases, noting that restrictions had been initiated by some international airlines and countries, and highlighted the need for virtual arrangements of meetings should the situation requires.
34. The Secretariat confirmed that UNON Joint Medical Services was always consulted on any notable outbreak before meetings such as the Executive Board and, based on their recommendation, requisite preparations would be put in place and would be communicated.
35. The Chair raised the matter of the composition of the Bureau in 2025. Noting that the Executive Board, at its first session every year, shall elect from its Members a Bureau on regional groups rotational basis. He pointed out that new Members of the Executive Board would be elected at the resumed second session of the UN-Habitat Assembly in May 2025, resulting in a new Bureau of the Executive Board. He stated that one option could be that the current Bureau of the Executive Board retains until May 2025, and suggested further consultation on this matter.

36. One Member representing the Western European and Others Regional Group (WEOG) as the next to Chair the Executive Board stated that if the Bureau of the Executive Board was to be elected after the resumed second session of UN-Habitat Assembly, WEOG would only chair the second session of the Executive Board in 2025, amounting to 6 months instead of a full year. He proposed the need to explore full annual chairmanship within the same regional groups with possible division of the role amongst the group. The Member added that the group would consult further on this matter.
37. The Secretariat recommended that the Bureau discuss the matter within the respective regional groups for further discussion on options and platforms such as the ad hoc working group meetings.

**There were no other matters under discussion and the Seventh Bureau Meeting of the UN-Habitat Executive Board was adjourned at 11.20 hrs East African Time (EAT).**