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Implementation of the normative and operational activities of UN-Habitat, including reporting on the programmatic activities of UN-Habitat in 2024 and the implementation of UN-Habitat subprogrammes, flagship programmes and technical cooperation activities

Highlights of normative and operational activities of UN-Habitat for the period July–December 2024**

Information complementing the report of the Executive Director on normative and operational activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, including updates on the Ethiopia and Central America programmes, capacity development, urban crises prevention and response initiatives, and activities for the period July–December 2024 (HSP/EB.2025/6)

I. Activities towards implementation of the strategic plan 2020–2025

1. Under **Subprogramme 1**, ‘Reduced spatial inequality and poverty’, and in line with UNHA resolution 2/7 on adequate housing, UN-Habitat convened the first session of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Expert Working Group on Adequate Housing for All from 9–11 December 2024 at its Nairobi headquarters. Discussions focused on advancing adequate housing for all, including through the UN-Habitat programme of work. In parallel, UN-Habitat continued supporting governments in establishing human rights-based and housing-led frameworks to end homelessness. This included engagements with mayors via the International Mayors Council, and with civil society. These efforts have informed the drafting of the next Secretary-General’s progress report on *Inclusive policies and programmes to address homelessness*, as requested by GA Resolutions 76/133, 78/172, and have laid the groundwork for advancing negotiations on a follow-up resolution during the 80th General Assembly (2025).
2. Additionally, for slums and informal settlements transformation, a ministerial meeting on “SADC¹ Regional Strategy for Transformation of Informal Settlements and Slums” was held at the 12th World Urban Forum, mobilizing political support for the regional implementation of UNHA resolution 2/2 on informal settlements. UN-Habitat continues its close collaboration with SADC

* HSP/EB.2025/1.

** The present document has not been formally edited.

¹ Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Member States and the SADC secretariat through a Technical Advisory Group, providing technical support for regional transformation efforts.

3. On land, the Global Land Tool Network Phase 4 Programme has strived to improve land tenure security and sustainable land management in at least ten countries – the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Lebanon, Namibia, Nepal, the Philippines, Somalia, Tunisia, Uganda and Zambia – while continuing to provide technical assistance globally. Efforts have focused on engaging national governments, global and regional land actors to promote the continuum of land rights and advance pro-poor, gender-responsive, fit-for-purpose land policies, tools, and approaches.

4. UN-Habitat enhanced access to sustainable mobility, with over 200,000 people in six cities and three countries (Kenya, Nigeria, Afghanistan) benefitting from new or improved walking and cycling infrastructure and easy access to public transport. Building on these achievements, UN-Habitat, UNEP, and WHO co-developed a *Pan-African Action Plan for Active Mobility* to drive policies and investments in walking and cycling across the continent over the next decade, ensuring safer and more sustainable mobility for all.

5. With regards to water and sanitation, key achievements included providing 161,000 beneficiaries in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and 790 households (4,898 people) in the Republic of Guinea with expanded inclusive services by local sanitation providers.

6. Through the Flagship Programme Inclusive Communities, Thriving Cities, a full-fledged training package on inclusive urban regeneration was developed. Its content was disseminated through four trainings in Viet Nam and Bahrain, as well as through the UN-Habitat and ILO International Training Center (ILO-ITC) online training on ‘Decent Work and Spatial Planning’. An Atlas of Urban Regeneration platform was launched, in collaboration with the Sustainable Urban Regeneration Lab of Bocconi University. Additionally, 11 events were conducted during the 12th World Urban Forum, raising awareness on inclusive and sustainable urban regeneration with over 50 partners.

7. On public space, together with the Block-by-Block Foundation, UN-Habitat engaged 400 participants through 12 public space co-design projects, in Jordan, Senegal, Brazil, Ghana, Niger, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Nepal, India and Vietnam. In addition, UN-Habitat conducted activities using Her City Toolbox in Uganda, Mozambique, Nepal and Ukraine, and other activities on youth health and wellbeing with the Young Gamechangers Initiative in Columbia, India and Senegal. The SDG11.7.1 indicator was upgraded to Tier I, and a new network approach to public space supports urban actors in progress measurement.

8. Within **Subprogramme 2**, ‘Enhanced shared prosperity of cities and regions’, UN-Habitat has made significant progress in enhancing spatial connectivity and productivity across urban and rural areas. UN-Habitat provided technical support to over 20 countries, advancing urban policy, legislation, governance, and metropolitan management. Key achievements include Jordan’s endorsement of its national urban policy (NUP), Niger State-Nigeria’s NUP pilot projects benefiting 250,000 people in providing improved access to clean water, and Paraguay’s adoption of the National Urbanism, Housing and Habitat Policy (PNUVH), via Presidential Decree, to support the country’s development agenda, including the housing programme. The Korea-funded National Urban Policy Programme (K-NUPP) progressed in Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Egypt, and Mozambique. Malawi, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Kyrgyzstan received support on urban law, while DRC, Viet Nam, and Saudi Arabia focused on legal reforms for green growth. The Grand Bamako metropolitan area in Mali was launched after three years of technical assistance. MetroHUB tools were applied in multiple cities, and urban-rural linkages in Kenya and Uganda strengthened policymaker capacities. Over the July-December 2024 period, UN-Habitat also released over 10 knowledge products on policy, legislation and governance, including the *Global State of National Urban Policy 2024*, highlighting NUPs’ role in sustainable urbanization and emissions reduction.

9. Regarding efforts to strengthen local economic development and municipal finance systems, the subprogramme has now supported Own Source Revenue (OSR) reforms in over 30 local governments through technical assistance, an e-learning course, and the upgraded Rapid OSR Analysis tool which supports cities in developing evidence-based OSR reform strategies. Recognizing the political complexity of OSR reforms, the subprogramme ensures comprehensive, sustainable interventions across all government levels. As such, UN-Habitat’s support also included initiatives on participatory budgeting and reforms of fiscal decentralization systems. In addition, nine training sessions on urban and municipal finance were held, supporting policymakers and urban managers in Kenya, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Costa Rica, Cabo Verde, and South Korea.

10. Under the SDG Localization work stream and the SDG Cities flagship programme, UN-Habitat expanded its portfolio through 13 projects, across 43 cities. Locally, the team enhanced cities' data systems, planning processes, institutional capacities, and financial ecosystems through the SDG Cities Global Initiative, supported by its leadership in *Voluntary Local Reviews*. Nationally, UN-Habitat collaborated with governments to develop *SDG Localization Frameworks*, including the Partnership Platform on Localizing the SDGs, in partnership with Italy's Ministry of Environment and Security. Globally, the agency spearheaded localization in UN processes, fostering knowledge exchange, partnerships, and peer learning via the SDG Cities Global Community. Additionally, the Local2030 Coalition Secretariat office in Bilbao became fully operational, focusing on advocacy, action, and monitoring to advance SDG localization.

11. From July to December 2024, UN-Habitat also advanced people-centred smart city initiatives and continued developing international guidelines for a common global framework. Fourteen cities, including Irpin, Makariv, Drohobych (Ukraine); Windhoek and Rundu (Namibia); and Belize City (Belize), Tegucigalpa (Honduras), Managua (Nicaragua), Panama City (Panama), Santo Domingo (The Dominican Republic), San Salvador (El Salvador), and San Jose (Costa Rica), are adopting strategies on digitalization, innovative tools, and data-driven solutions, aligned with the guidelines. The participatory process of the guidelines was shaped by global and regional consultations with diverse stakeholders. The *World Smart Cities Outlook 2024* provided empirical evidence and best practices for smart city development, further enriching the guidelines, while the *Global Assessment of Responsible AI in Cities* highlighted AI capacity constraints in cities. UNITAC's Open Call for Projects 2024 selected three initiatives: GIZ Bangladesh for climate-smart urban solutions, informal settlements mapping in Cape Town (South Africa) via the BEAM tool, and the Hargeisa Water Agency for urban water access.

12. Regarding **Subprogramme 3**, 'Strengthened climate action and improved urban environment', UN-Habitat participated in the 61st Session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in July/August 2024. UN-Habitat had previously contributed to the development of the outline of the *IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Cities*, outline which was finalized during this meeting. In September, UN-Habitat and the Global Covenant of Mayors organized the 2024 Innovate4Cities conference convening nearly 2,000 stakeholders across academia and research, government, business, and civil society to present cutting-edge research and practices. Following the conference, UN-Habitat co-published an updated *Global Research and Action Agenda on Cities and Climate Change Science* (GRAA), identifying current research gaps to guide practice-oriented research and innovation.

13. At the 12th World Urban Forum, UN-Habitat launched its *World Cities Report on Cities and Climate Action*, analyzing current and expected climate impacts and differing vulnerabilities faced by urban populations across different regions and cities. The report shows that cities are leading the way through innovative, community-led approaches - demonstrating the potential of collaborative, inclusive approaches to climate action.

14. During the 12th World Urban Forum and COP29, UN-Habitat, city networks and knowledge partners convened and agreed on supporting the forthcoming *IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Cities* by leveraging the World Cities Report and the Innovate4Cities process and filling identified knowledge gaps through expert meetings and the co-creation of additional research papers.

15. At the 12th World Urban Forum and COP29, UN-Habitat organized, co-organized or participated in over 50 climate change- and urban-environment-related events including *inter alia*, on buildings, housing and climate resilient informal settlements, urban planning, water and sanitation, SDG localization, finance, urban health, and loss and damage. Trainings on enhancing the urban content of the NDCs were also held.

16. The third Ministerial Meeting on Urbanization and Climate Change, hosted by the COP29 presidency and co-organized by UN-Habitat, featured a high-level opening and four ministerial roundtables, for in-depth discussions on: i. Green Construction and Buildings; ii. Urban Transport and Infrastructure, iii. Nature, Health, and Resilience in Cities, iv. Urban Climate Finance.

17. The operationalization of the Sustainable Urban Resilience for the Next Generation (SURGe) initiative received a significant boost, owing to funding committed by the government of the Slovak Republic. Resource mobilization continues, particularly for the COP30 Ministerial Meeting on Urbanization and Climate Change, NDC3.0 enhancement and for SURGe regional hubs.

18. The RISE UP flagship programme is currently active in 28 countries with an emphasis on LDCs and SIDS. An integrated methodology that assesses compounding vulnerabilities associated with climate change, urban poverty and informal settlements and biodiversity loss has been developed

and is being piloted in 11 countries (Malawi, Madagascar, South Africa, Ethiopia, Laos, Sri Lanka, Jordan, Bolivia, Colombia, Tunisia, and Solomon Islands).

19. Lastly, UN-Habitat has accelerated the mainstreaming of biodiversity and ecosystem services into urban and territorial planning. A brochure on the agency's urban biodiversity work was disseminated, events were organized at the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Cali (October 2024) and at WUF12. The development of the "Hotspot Stoplight" toolkit for biodiverse and resilient cities is well underway, in partnership with the University of Pennsylvania.

20. Under **Subprogramme 4**, 'Effective urban crisis prevention and response', UN-Habitat continues to provide both normative and operational support in crisis responses, with a focus on territorial and urban planning as drivers of durable solutions. On the normative side and over the July-December 2024 period, UN-Habitat has finalized the *Global Framework Toward Inclusive Solutions to Urban Internal Displacement*, which guides international actors in supporting national and local governments to design sustainable, scalable, and transformational solutions for urban displacement. This framework aligns responses across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, ensuring that development-informed solutions are initiated during humanitarian responses.

21. Further, UN-Habitat developed policy directions on housing and land for displacement contexts, a contribution to the UN Secretary General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement. The report *Policy Directions: Housing, Land and Property Solutions to Resolve and Prevent Displacement* analyzes displacement challenges and provides a set of housing and land solutions to mitigate, resolve and prevent it. It draws from 24 case studies across 14 countries, widely referencing the work of UN-Habitat and its partners. As customary contexts require further tailored approaches, UN-Habitat also developed the report *Durable Housing, Land and Property Solutions for Customary Displacement Contexts* that provides evidence-based recommendations on how to prevent or provide durable solutions to displacement, specifically in customary contexts, through housing and land interventions. A policy brief summarizes the findings of the report.

22. With regards to operational support at country level, under the Internal Displacement Solutions Funds (IDSF), UN-Habitat assisted Colombia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Mozambique and Somalia, focusing on planning for displacement, enhancing human settlements resilience, and building capacities of local actors.

23. In collaboration with UNHCR, UN-Habitat has also supported regional responses to the Sudan crisis, which has displaced over 11.5 million people and created challenges throughout the region. Missions were conducted to develop an integrated settlement approach that bridges the humanitarian-development nexus, ensuring sustainable outcomes for displaced and host communities. Key missions and their outcomes included:

24. In Chad, spatial profiling in Farchana assessed settlement layouts and identified service gaps. Recommendations included infrastructure upgrades, improved access to renewable energy, and strengthened strategic connections to Abéché and Adré, positioning Farchana as a potential economic hub.

25. In South Sudan, workshops in Malakal and Aweil focused on land allocation, water and sanitation improvements, and durable settlement planning. These workshops emphasized the need for further integration of displaced and host communities.

26. In the Central African Republic (CAR), missions in Baoro and Birao identified gaps in housing, infrastructure, and essential services for refugees. Recommendations included supporting sustainable neighborhood designs, durable shelters, and improved integration of education and healthcare services.

27. In Ethiopia, in the Ura settlement, the mission identified resource pressures on camps and surrounding areas. Proposed solutions included shared service models to alleviate resource competition and support sustainable service delivery.

28. In response to UNHA resolution 2/9 on resilience, UN-Habitat also continues to work towards the development of a comprehensive operational resilience framework for early warning, foresight, risk reduction, crisis response and post-crisis recovery and reconstruction. The framework was discussed during WUF12 with representatives of UNDRR, UNDP, IFRC, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNH, World Vision, and Resilient Cities Network. Partners have provided valuable input and commitment to engaging in the next steps of the framework's development. For details, see HSP/EB.2025/7.

29. Through the City Resilience Global Programme, UN-Habitat has started activities to improve planning and financing for resilience in five cities, Amman (Jordan); Coimbatore (India); Harare

(Zimbabwe); Santa Fe (Argentina); Podgorica (Montenegro). Together with the Regional Government of Catalonia, the programme recently completed a pilot project on strengthening territorial resilience, in Terres de l'Ebre, Spain. The programme has also begun to develop an automated tool to provide initial resilience profiles for cities worldwide, through an interactive platform.

II. Activities on gender, human rights and social inclusion

30. Regarding gender equality and women's empowerment, during the July-December 2024 reporting period, UN-Habitat continued its efforts towards more effective gender mainstreaming. This included internal support with normative and operational activities, such as providing capacity development and developing policies towards women's empowerment. To this end, UN-Habitat developed an internal policy and guidance document on the UN system Gender Equality Marker, to be rolled out at UN-Habitat from Q1 2025. This will enable more effective tracking of gender equality impact across UN-Habitat's operational projects and financial expenditure. UN-Habitat also continued to support gender mainstreaming through reviews of projects presented to its Programme Review Committee (PRC) for approval.

31. Additionally, the 12th World Urban Forum provided an important opportunity for creating new and strengthening existing partnerships, including with local and national authorities, UN Women and the UN system, financial institutions, grassroots organizers, experts and urban professionals. The forum, as well as other events were also used for public communication engagement and awareness-raising on gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of sustainable urban development.

32. Similarly, human rights engagement focused on implementing a human rights-based approach across UN-Habitat's programmatic and operational work. This included capacity development (such as through the development of the *Human Rights and Social Inclusion Handbook*, expected to be launched in Q1 of 2025), project support, project development and connecting UN-Habitat's work with the UN human rights mechanisms, for example through the Universal Periodic Review. A strengthened partnership with OHCHR, especially in the context of localizing human rights and the right to adequate housing, enabled successful joint events at the World Urban Forum as well as collaboration across research publications. This is expected to continue in 2025 with a focus on human rights cities.

33. The UN-Habitat children and youth programme engaged youth globally in advancing youth-led urbanization and the localization of the SDGs. Leading up to the Summit of the Future, UN-Habitat and its Youth Advisory Board facilitated policy deliberations with urban youth and producing policy briefs that shaped the Summit's outcomes, culminating in a GA Exhibition and Summit on Youth and Localization of the SDGs.

34. Key milestones included the 2024 World Habitat Day in Querétaro, Mexico ("Engaging Youth to Create a Better Urban Future") and 2024 World Cities Day ("Youth Climate Changemakers: Catalyzing Local Action for Urban Sustainability"). Youth 2030 Cities engaged youth at the local level, developing 10 new DeclarActions on Youth and Sustainable Urbanization, leading to a Global DeclarAction adopted at the Urban Youth Assembly. The Young Gamechanger Initiative empowered youth to co-design and implement solutions for urban challenges using digital technology, equipping participants with the tools to shape urban planning and decision-making. Relevant programmatic and normative outputs are informing UN-Habitat's strategies for delivering on the Pact for the Future, its Strategic Plan, and the 2030 Agenda.

III. Technical support and collaboration on data and knowledge

35. UN-Habitat has continued to play a pivotal role in advancing global reporting on the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda, focusing on enhancing Member States' capacities and urban data systems. Efforts centred on supporting local governments and national statistical offices in scaling up tracking progress, resulting in expanded data coverage and greater disaggregation to uphold the 'leaving no one behind' principle. The Global Urban Monitoring Framework (UMF) has enhanced urban data metrics by improving collection, standardization, and system integration with global frameworks, including SDG indicators and the Degree of Urbanization methodology for defining cities, urban and rural areas.

36. Under this July-December 2024 reporting period, UN-Habitat worked on developing additional innovative data production solutions, leveraging new partnerships with CitiIQ, the European Space Agency, and IDEAMAPS network. New digital tools were piloted in Kenya, Tanzania, Colombia, Peru, Costa Rica and Jordan, for real-time monitoring of urban-related challenges,

including spatial urban growth and access to basic services. Beyond these newly piloted tools, and integrating AI, big data, and geospatial tools, UN-Habitat has improved coverage but also understanding of housing, waste, management, transport, tenure security, urban migration, informal settlements, and open spaces, reaching over 100 countries and 2,000 cities.

37. To enhance data production on housing, UN-Habitat also set up specific partnerships and networks, including with the Center for Affordable Housing in Africa (CAHF), various national statistical offices (e.g. Canada, the United Kingdom, Mexico, Kenya) and several regional banks (e.g., AFDB, Asia Development Bank and others).

38. Knowledge exchange and capacity-building initiatives have underpinned these advancements. At the 12th World Urban Forum, UN-Habitat organized various workshops, housing sprints, and sessions to promote practices and facilitate the replication of successful urban data interventions. Tools were and resources were shared, such as the Earth Observation Toolkit, and collaborative discussions were facilitated, bringing together governments, private sector stakeholders, NGOs and communities, around the topics of housing data production and a vision for a global urban data initiative.

39. Overall, these initiatives have directly contributed to increased data coverage for the New Urban Agenda and SDG urban-related targets, enhanced the capacities of local and national governments, and fostered global collaboration for inclusive, resilient, and sustainable urban development. The work of UN-Habitat on data has continued to be supported by several partnerships, including from the European Union for capacity building activities on the application of the Degree of Urbanization methodology and SDG monitoring. Further resource mobilization and funding efforts remain instrumental in scaling up urban and housing data initiatives.

40. With regards to knowledge-related highlights, *The World Cities Report 2024: Cities and Climate Action* was launched during the twelfth session of the World Urban Forum in Cairo. With 6,493 webpage views and 3,435 report products downloads as of December 2024 already, the report offers rich knowledge and practical guidance for policy makers and urban practitioners on achieving transformative climate action. By featuring new data, it deepens the understanding of how urban areas across diverse contexts can effectively contribute to the goals of the Paris Agreement and enhance resilience across various dimensions. Its analysis is framed around four key issues: the urgency of action due to the devastating impacts of climate change, the unique role of cities in tackling the crisis, the importance of inclusive and effective climate action, and the necessity of people-centred approaches. The report advocates for a just climate transition, urging policies that foster equitable resilience-building and prevent deepening inequalities in urban populations as part of the global climate response.
