

Second Bureau Meeting of the Executive Board of UN-Habitat
6 March 2025
14:00 pm – 16:00 pm EAT

Statement of the Chair of the ad hoc working group on PBA

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Good afternoon Mr. Chair, distinguished members of the Bureau of the Executive Board, Madam ED, dear DED and colleagues,

It is my pleasure to update you on the work of the ad hoc working group on programmatic budgetary and administrative matters, especially regarding the consultations on the draft outcomes to be considered by the Executive Board at its next session.

Following the recommendation from the previous Bureau meeting on 31 January to allocate sufficient time for consultations ahead of the Executive Board session to finalize draft decisions, the ad hoc working group on PBA has conducted 2 meetings dedicated to the consultations on the draft outcomes for the first session of the Executive Board for 2025 – one was held on 24 February and one was held yesterday on 5 March. Furthermore, we have organized altogether four meetings devoted to consultations on the draft strategic plan for the period 2026-2029, one meeting focusing on the draft programme of work for 2026, and three meetings focusing on draft international guidelines on people centred smart cities.

The consultations on the outcomes of the Executive Board have been based on technical inputs shared by the secretariat on 19 February to all Member States, and include four decisions, covering financial, budgetary and administrative matters; work programme and budget for 2025, and a draft strategic plan for the period 2026-2029.

Overall, we have made good progress on all these matters.

With respect to the draft strategic plan and the draft guidelines, Member States have given ample guidance to the secretariat on how to finalize the contents of the drafts before submitting them for editing and translation by today – 6 March – which was the deadline set by the UN Office in Nairobi to ensure that the documents are made available in all 6 UN languages 6 weeks ahead of the resumed session of the Habitat Assembly, in line with the rules of procedure.

With regard to the draft Executive Board decisions, we have almost finalized a full first reading, and we will initiate our second reading at our meeting next Wednesday.

In my view, the prospects for the Executive Board to find agreement by consensus on all of these matters are positive – perhaps with the exception of the draft guidelines on smart cities, where Member States have had less time for review and for consultations with their capitals.

In our deliberations, I noted several issues where Member States seem to take different views within the consultations:

1. Specific language relating to several sensitive issues such as human rights, gender, diversity, equity, inclusion and vulnerable groups – both in the draft strategic plan and in the draft guidelines.
2. Whether the Executive Board should consider and/or make recommendations regarding the draft international guidelines on people-centered smart cities, given that the Assembly did not provide any specific mandate to the Board on this topic, and there is no dedicated agenda item on the agenda of the upcoming Executive Board meeting.
3. The scope of the draft guidelines, especially if and how they should refer to human rights and climate change.
4. Whether or not the draft stakeholder engagement policy will be mature enough for the Executive Board to make a clear recommendation to the Assembly.
5. Whether or not to give the co-chairs of the Open-Ended Working Group on adequate housing the mandate to decide on the agenda and date of the next meeting.
6. Finally, Member States have not reached an agreement on whether and how to include a specific reference in the draft outcomes regarding the timing of the future rotation of the offices of Chair and Rapporteur in the Bureau of the Executive Board. Some Member States believe that this clarification is unnecessary, as they consider that Rule 9 of the Rules of Procedure already provides sufficient guidance on the matter. Others, however, argue that it should be explicitly included to prevent misunderstandings that have arisen in the past and because they find Rule 9 not sufficiently clear on this specific issue. As a result, there is no consensus on explicitly addressing this matter in the draft outcomes.

In many cases, I believe that solutions can be found on the basis of agreed language from the New Urban Agenda, or from other sources – although some Member States have indicated that they are not always accepting such language, depending on the context.

Looking ahead, we have planned for two additional meetings to address the draft decisions as well as the draft guidelines on smart cities, scheduled for 12 and 19 March. Furthermore, the ad hoc working group on the draft stakeholder policy, which is chaired by my distinguished colleague from Portugal, will also meet twice in the coming weeks, to prepare a possible recommendation for the Assembly.

I have good hopes that after these upcoming meetings of the two working groups, we will have a solid basis to find broad agreement on the proposed outcomes from the next Executive Board meeting.

I thank you for your attention and will remain available to provide additional updates to the Bureau at upcoming meetings.

Chair, back to you.