

**Third Bureau Meeting of the Executive Board of UN-Habitat**  
**Monday, 24 March 2025**  
**10:00am – 12:00 pm EAT**

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**Speaking notes for the Chair of the ad hoc working group on PBA**

**H.E. Dr. Pedro Leon Cortes Ruiz**

**Permanent Representative of the Republic of Colombia to UN-Habitat**

Good morning Chair and Members of the Bureau of the Executive Board, Good morning Executive Director; Deputy Executive Director.

It is my great pleasure to provide an update on the work of the ad hoc working group on programmatic, budgetary, and administrative matters particularly on the status of the draft outcomes to be considered by the Executive Board at its upcoming first session.

Following the last Bureau meeting on 6 March, the ad hoc working group held two meetings to consult on the draft outcomes. These included a full-day session on 12 March, during which we also discussed the draft international guidelines on people-centered smart cities, and a morning session on 19 March, which was fully dedicated to the draft outcomes.

With regard to the draft Strategic Plan for the period 2026–2029, the working group held extensive consultations. Many of the comments and suggestions from Member States were incorporated into the document prior to its submission to the Secretariat for editing and translation. I hope the Executive Board will reach consensus on a clear recommendation for adoption by the Assembly at its upcoming meeting.

As part of the preparatory work for the upcoming session of the Executive Board, we have completed a full second reading of all four draft decisions. We are pleased to note that good progress has been made overall, with many paragraphs agreed ad referendum.

However, a few outstanding issues remain to be resolved:

1. First, Member States are still discussing recommendations related to the Sustainable Cities and Communities Foundation. Some Member States have proposed language encouraging the invitation of Executive Board members to join the Foundation's Advisory Board. Others consider such a recommendation premature, as an independent review of the Foundation is still pending. In addition, there is a proposal to invite representatives of the Foundation to brief the Executive Board on its activities, which will require further discussion.
2. Second, additional consultations are needed on several recommendations concerning the draft Strategic Plan 2026–2029.

3. Third, a few paragraphs remain open concerning UN-Habitat's implementation of development system and management reforms within the United Nations. These were not addressed due to time constraints, but I believe we can reach agreement on them relatively quickly.
4. Fourth, the draft recommendation on the Stakeholder Engagement Policy remains open, pending the outcome of ongoing consultations. We expect to hear more about this process shortly from the Chair of the working group on the Stakeholder Engagement Policy.
5. Finally, the working group has engaged in substantive discussions on a recommendation—initially raised by this Bureau and regional groups concerning the rotation of the Chair and Rapporteur positions of the Executive Board. While some progress has been made, additional time is needed to achieve full consensus on this matter.

Before concluding, I would like to inform you that Member States have agreed that the third session of the Executive Board will be held over two days, from 25 to 26 November 2025. As is customary, the agenda for that session will be considered during the upcoming second session of the Board, scheduled for 30 May. In that context, Member States have also suggested that the draft agenda for the third session be shortened to reflect the reduced duration of the meeting.

Finally, I wish to report that the working group also reviewed the draft international guidelines on people-centered smart cities. Following the consultations on 12 March, the Secretariat revised the document to reflect the inputs received from Member States before submitting it to UNON for translation. However, in line with the resolution adopted by the UN-Habitat Assembly on smart cities, the guidelines are not subject to detailed discussion or recommendation by the Executive Board, as their consideration falls under the mandate of the Assembly. For this reason, the working group deleted an earlier draft paragraph on this matter, and no recommendation is expected to be adopted by the Board.

Dear colleagues, as the Chair of the Executive Board has mentioned, I have formally submitted the latest version of the draft decisions to the Chair. While many paragraphs have been agreed ad referendum, the entire draft remains open for further consideration during the Board's consultations.

I stand ready to continue leading informal consultations on the draft, if requested, with the goal of reaching consensus on the remaining draft decisions for their final consideration and possible adoption during the last day of the Executive Board session.

With that, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the trust you have placed in me as Chair of the working group and for your continued support.

Thank you.