



Strategic Plan for the period 2026-2029

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Executive summary

The achievement of the universal and transformative goals and targets as set out in the 2030 Agenda and other global agreements is directly tied to how we plan, manage, and govern our territories, cities, and human settlements.

This plan introduces a strategic focus for 2026–2029: adequate housing, land, and basic services, **including digital ones**, for all, including the urgent transformation of informal settlements and slums. This integrated focus is a powerful **people-centred and inclusive** approach, directly or indirectly, to achieving an impact on peoples' lives.

With this focus, in the context of sustainable urbanization, the strategic plan of UN-Habitat for 2026-2029, adding value to the efforts of the United Nations and the broader multilateral system, seeks to address global challenges mirrored by three impact areas:

- a) equitable and inclusive prosperity for poverty eradication;
- b) preparedness, response, recovery and reconstruction; and
- c) environment and climate action.

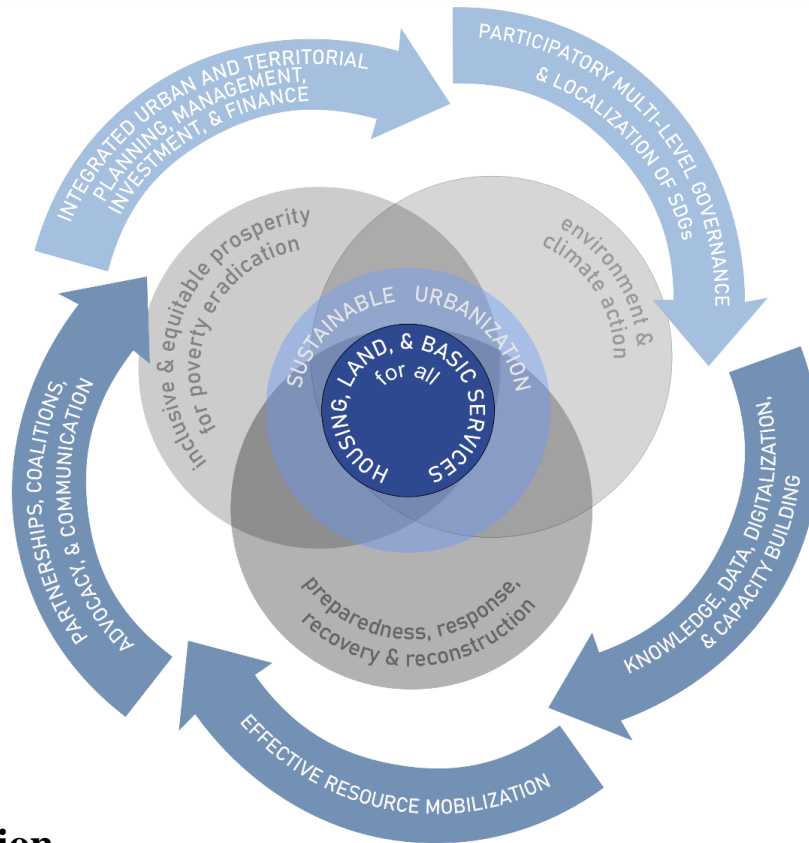
The expected global impact is that more people in cities and human settlements, including people living in informal settlements and slums and those affected by humanitarian crises and climate impacts, prosper and have their lives transformed through **smart cities technologies** and increased access to adequate housing, land, and basic services for all, **including digital ones**,

Driven by the strategic focus, the improvement of people's lives in all impact areas will be sought through five means of implementation. They enable UN-Habitat to seek the impact through expected outcomes:

- a) integrated urban and territorial planning, management, investment and finance;
Outcome: Spatial development plans, policies and legislation, planning systems and finance frameworks foster the social and ecological function of land and catalyse public and private investments for adequate housing, land and basic services for all, **including digital ones**.
- b) participatory multi-level governance and localization of the SDGs;
Outcome: Participatory multi-level governance mechanisms support adequate housing, land, and basic services for all, **including digital ones**, mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment, and accelerate SDG localization.
- c) knowledge, data, digitalization, and capacity development;
Outcome: Improved knowledge, capacities **and sharing of smart cities best practices** inform evidence-based, innovative policies on adequate housing, land, and basic services for all.
- d) partnerships, coalitions, advocacy and communication;
Outcome: Increased awareness and strengthened collaboration among relevant stakeholders promote adequate housing, land, and basic services for all.
- e) effective resource mobilization.
Outcome: Increased and predictable resources for UN-Habitat and its partners advance adequate housing, land, and basic services for all.

The outcomes of these means of implementation will be delivered through outputs that are defined as planned results of the annual work programmes.

i. Key elements of the strategic plan



I. Introduction

1. The strategic plan for 2026-2029 builds on lessons learned from implementing UN-Habitat’s strategic plan for the period of 2020-2025 and responds to today’s most pressing global challenges where the agency is best positioned to act, using its mandate and expertise in sustainable urban development and housing to contribute, where relevant, to the efforts of other United Nations entities and the broader multilateral system. It refines the previous plan with a clearer focus.
2. The 2026-2029 plan ensures continuity of UN-Habitat’s strategic planning by rearticulating the current domains of change as impact areas and refines the themes as key challenges to global society, as set out in the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda.
3. It takes into account the lessons learned from the mid-term evaluation of the strategic plan for the period of 2020-2025 by the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) which recognized key strengths and gaps that provide valuable future direction. It emphasized that:
 - a) weak strategic prioritization hindered a focused implementation of the strategic plan by UN-Habitat¹;
 - b) several areas of UN-Habitat’s work were not sufficiently captured in the strategic plan, including: housing and slum upgrading, among others²;

¹ Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) 2024. Mid-term Evaluation of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme Strategic Plan 2020-2025; Summary

² Ibidem, page 12

- c) the United Nations Habitat Assembly second session adopted ten resolutions on a wide variety of issues related to the strategic plan's domains of change, but UN-Habitat was challenged to implement them effectively³;
 - d) The results framework prioritized individual projects over broader strategic goals, hindering the ability to assess the overall contribution to sustainable urbanization⁴.
4. The evaluation called for a simpler structure with clearer focus and more straightforward language, drawing inspiration also from the strategies of other United Nations entities.
 5. The purposes of the strategic plan are:
 - a) to articulate the relevant global challenges and strategic focus for 2026-2029;
 - b) to identify UN-Habitat's added value to address these global challenges; and,
 - c) to guide the work of UN-Habitat, including the annual work programme and allocation of core resources.
 6. To fulfil these purposes, the five guiding principles for the strategic plan are to be:
 - a) ambitious, relevant, and responsive;
 - b) focused on impact and prioritized;
 - c) flexible and adaptable to specific contexts;
 - d) evidence- and knowledge-based; and,
 - e) manageable, realistic, effective, and measurable.

II. Global challenges to be addressed

7. The global housing crisis is the main challenge to which UN-Habitat's strategic plan 2026-2029 responds, given its magnitude and urgency. An estimated 2.8 billion people worldwide are affected by different forms of housing inadequacy. This number is expected to grow due to population growth, increasing urbanization, forced displacement, and economic pressures, among other drivers⁵. The pandemic and inflation have caused the worst housing affordability crisis in over a decade. The Internationally Monetary Fund Housing affordability index shows that affordability has deteriorated in the developed countries in the recent decade. Affordability tends to be worse and more volatile in developing countries and emerging markets, in part reflecting their less developed regulatory and financial frameworks and markets⁶. This increases inequality in many societies. The plight of 1.1 billion people living in informal settlements and slums⁷ and over 300 million homeless people calls for urgent and effective collective action **on smart cities promotion**.
8. As recognised by the second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly, the right to adequate housing, as derived from the right to an adequate standard of living⁸, is not realized for many throughout the world, and in most countries, the disparity between housing costs and

³ Ibidem, page 15

⁴ Ibidem, page 17

⁵ UN-Habitat (2023). Rescuing SDG 11 for a Resilient Urban Planet 2023: SDG 11 Synthesis Report

⁶ International Monetary Fund (2024). The Housing Affordability Crunch, in The Economics of Housing

⁷ UN-Habitat (2023). Rescuing SDG 11 for a Resilient Urban Planet 2023: SDG 11 Synthesis Report

⁸ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25.1

income levels has grown while access to finance is constrained⁹, thus compromising affordability of housing to many people.

9. The global housing crisis must be seen in a broader context of poverty and inequality. As of 2023, over 700 million people - roughly nine per cent of the global population - still live below the international extreme poverty line (less than \$2.15 a day), while moderate poverty, affecting those living on less than \$3.65 a day, impacts more than 1.8 billion people worldwide¹⁰. A significant proportion of global poverty is urban, especially when the poverty threshold is increased to \$6.85 a day¹¹. While urban areas generate 80 per cent of the world's gross domestic product, the economic benefits are not evenly distributed¹².
10. This crisis is compounded by the accelerating impact of climate change, which could force an estimated 216 million people to migrate within their own countries by 2050 due to rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and other climate-related factors¹³. Cities face the brunt of climate exposure with 92 per cent of people settled in low-elevation coastal zones living in urban centres. More than two billion people currently living in cities could be exposed to an additional temperature increase of at least 0.5 degrees Celsius by 2040¹⁴. Informal settlements, often located in environmentally sensitive areas, experience the harshest impacts of climate change while having the least capacity to recover.
11. Cities generate 70 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions and more than two billion tons of waste annually¹⁵. Furthermore, 99 per cent of the world's urban population live in areas that do not meet the new World Health Organization guidelines on air quality¹⁶. The loss of biodiversity – with around one million species at risk of extinction – further threatens the sustainability of ecosystems that support urban and rural livelihoods¹⁷. Urban sprawl, driven mainly by unsustainable consumption of land for housing, has led to a 2.5 per cent decline in urban population densities globally from 2000 to 2020¹⁸, which further exacerbates the erosion of biodiversity and ecosystems while increasing spatial inequalities.
12. There is a growing convergence of crises impacting urban areas. Urban centres worldwide, especially in developing countries, often have characteristics that make them and their inhabitants especially vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change and other natural and human made hazards, including earthquakes, extreme weather events, flooding, subsidence, storms, including dust and sand storms, heatwaves, water scarcity, droughts, water and air pollution, vector-borne diseases and sea level rise¹⁹. Disasters cause \$300 billion in damages to infrastructure globally each year, with cities accounting for a significant portion

⁹ HSP/HA.2/Res.7

¹⁰ World Bank (2023). Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2023: Correcting Course. World Bank Group

¹¹ World Bank (2024) Poverty, Prosperity, and Planet Report: Pathways Out of the Polycrisis

¹² UN-Habitat (2022). World Cities Report 2022: Envisaging the Future of Cities

¹³ World Bank (2021). Groundswell Report: Acting on Internal Climate Migration

¹⁴ UN-Habitat (2024). World Cities Report 2024. Cities and Climate Action

¹⁵ UNEP (2021). Cities and Climate Change: A Global Perspective on Emissions

¹⁶ Ibidem

¹⁷ UN IPBES (2019). Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

¹⁸ UN-Habitat (2023). Rescuing SDG 11 for a Resilient Urban Planet 2023: SDG 11 Synthesis Report

¹⁹ A/RES/71/256 (New Urban Agenda), OP 64

of this loss²⁰. Their effects exacerbate existing inequalities and place immense pressure on urban systems, particularly in informal settlements, where infrastructure is often poor.

13. The growing prevalence of conflict has displaced over 100 million people, causing severe hardship for refugees and internally displaced persons. It worsens land and housing shortages and strains efforts to create stable living environments, as more than 60 per cent of the displaced seek refuge, livelihood opportunities and access to services in cities and human settlements²¹, often disrupting social cohesion and fuelling informality when migration is unmanaged.

III. UN-Habitat's mandate and our role in addressing the challenges

14. As repeatedly acknowledged at the United Nations Conferences related to Human Settlements, notably in the Vancouver Declaration (1976), Habitat Agenda (1996), and New Urban Agenda (2016), effective human settlement strategies are essential for promoting inclusion, social equity and economic growth, and human settlements are inseparable from national development²². The transformative potential of urbanization lies in its ability to address spatial and social inequality, foster economic opportunities for all, create access to essential services, **including digital ones, without discrimination or exclusion, based on human-centred and inclusive approach**, and build resilient communities across the rural-urban continuum.
15. UN-Habitat's mandate was articulated by the United Nations General Assembly when mandating the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development and when adopting its outcomes in 2016²³, reaffirming the role and expertise of UN-Habitat as a focal point for housing and sustainable urban development within the United Nations system. With 55 per cent of the global population being urban and set to rise to 68 per cent by 2050²⁴, UN-Habitat's mandate is ever more critical as the attainment of global development outcomes becomes increasingly tied to how we plan, build, manage and govern our cities and human settlements.
16. Urbanization presents both a challenge and a significant opportunity for achieving sustainable development, **especially within smart cities**. When guided by proper spatial planning, **smart city approaches** and managed and developed sustainably, cities and human settlements –along with their systems – can drive innovative solutions to address housing shortages, access to land, and basic services, **including digital ones**, taking the territorial dimension of sustainable development into account. To achieve this, all territorial scales need adequate **physical and digital infrastructure, digital transformation of governance system covering all spheres** and effective institutions that underpin productive and equitable economies, ~~leaving no one behind~~.

²⁰ World Bank (2019). Lifelines: The Resilient Infrastructure Opportunity.

²¹ UNHCR (2023). Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2022

²² This is underpinned by the following statements of the Vancouver Declaration (A/CONF.70/15: Report of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat I): “*The goals of settlement policies are inseparable from the goals of every sector of social and economic life. The solutions to the problems of human settlements must therefore be conceived as an integral part of the development process of individual nations and the world community*” (p.4); *National policies for economic and social development can no longer afford to neglect or minimize the role of human settlements*” (p.13); “*Human settlement policies can be powerful tools for the more equitable distribution of income and opportunities*” (p.15)

²³ A/RES/67/216; and A/RES/71/235

²⁴ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019). World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision (ST/ESA/SER.A/420). New York: United Nations

17. Against this background, UN-Habitat will focus on guiding and promoting strategic planning, synergetic investment and coherent implementation to prevent urbanization from exacerbating existing inequalities, overburdening infrastructure and increasing vulnerabilities to climate and environmental risks. Therefore, in the period of 2026-2029, UN-Habitat will actively leverage its capacity as a focal point of the United Nations system on sustainable urbanization²⁵ to support territorial systems to **develop smart city technologies as well as to integrate urban and rural functions into sustainable national and subnational spatial frameworks and systems of cities and human settlements**²⁶. This will also include promoting integrated, polycentric and balanced territorial development policies and plans²⁷.
18. While other entities in the United Nations system lead on addressing specific global challenges related to poverty eradication, crises emerging from climate change, disasters and conflict, and the environment, UN-Habitat makes a unique contribution to addressing the urban and territorial dimensions of these global challenges by providing guidance and support to the Member States and other actors on harnessing the transformative potential of sustainable urbanization, critical role of adequate housing, and urgency to address the issue of informal settlements and slums. This contribution is guided by the United Nations System-wide Strategy on Sustainable Urban Development, which defines the role of UN-Habitat in the promotion of sustainable urban development within the United Nations system through a collaborative implementation framework, building on existing structures/processes²⁸.
19. UN-Habitat continues to partner with United Nations entities at various scales to advance the New Urban Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 11, and the targets of other Sustainable Development Goals that have urban dimensions. At the global level, UN-Habitat collaborates within the United Nations system as a partner and contributor to legislative and inter-agency mechanisms, as well as the follow-up and review of global agendas and action frameworks, including the Pact for the Future. Through established mechanisms such as the Regional Sustainable Development Forums and the Regional Collaborative Platform, UN-Habitat actively coordinates with United Nations actors at the regional scale. At national and sub-national levels, UN-Habitat participates in United Nations country teams and contributes to United Nations Sustainable Development Frameworks to support the urban dimension of national development priorities.
20. Guided by the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, UN-Habitat's approach is people-centred and anchored in international human rights standards²⁹. This ensures urban development prioritizes inclusivity, equity, and resilience, preventing inequality and exclusion that undermine the sustainability of cities and human settlements. Without this approach, urban growth risks perpetuating inequality and exclusion, undermining the sustainability of cities and human settlements and the well-being of their inhabitants.

²⁵ A/RES/71/256 (NUA), OP 165; also A/RES/73/239, preamble

²⁶ A/RES/71/256 (NUA), OP 49

²⁷ A/RES/71/256 (NUA), OP 95

²⁸ United Nations System-wide Strategy on Sustainable Urban Development; endorsed by A/RES/77/173, OP 19

²⁹ As agreed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

IV. Our strategic focus in addressing the challenges

21. Addressing the global housing crisis and challenges related to poverty, climate change, and humanitarian crises is key to ensuring that cities and human settlements evolve into sustainable, equitable, resilient and **smart** spaces and communities where no one is left behind. Within the broader context of sustainable urban and territorial development, UN-Habitat will focus on the opportunity to address the global challenges above through adequate housing, land, and basic services for all, including the transformation of informal settlements and slums.
22. This focus will maximise our added value from 2026 to 2029. Building on the resolutions of the United Nations Habitat Assembly on Adequate housing for all³⁰ and Accelerating the transformation of informal settlements and slums³¹ as well as on Action 6 of the Pact for the Future³², it returns housing to the centre of UN-Habitat’s work and sustainable urban development.

ii: *The seven aspects of adequate housing*³³



23. Access to adequate housing, as a fundamental human right, in all its seven aspects: tenure security, basic services, **including digital ones**, affordability, habitability, accessibility, location, and cultural adequacy, is a cornerstone of a new social contract, crucial to fostering inclusive, sustainable, and equitable development. Due to its multi-faceted and cross-sectoral nature, adequate housing has shown its potential as the engine of inclusive and sustainable urbanization with linkages to most of the other Sustainable Development Goals – particularly to end poverty in all its forms everywhere (SDG 1), **to reduce mortality (SDG 3), and to reduce inequality within and among countries (SDG 10)**, and to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (SDG 5). Many of the Sustainable Development Goals cannot be achieved if people do not have adequate housing.

iii: *Housing at the centre of sustainable and inclusive development*



³⁰ HSP/HA.2/Res.7

³¹ HSP/HA.2/Res.2

³² A/RES/79/1, Action 6 (c): “Ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and support developing countries to plan and implement just, safe, healthy, accessible, resilient and sustainable cities”

³³ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: General comment no. 4: The right to adequate housing, 13 December 1991

24. The New Urban Agenda elevates housing as a fundamental means to enable economic development and poverty eradication. Housing is most importantly about providing good-quality homes for all, with all the associated social and economic benefits, and should not be viewed just as a physical structure or commodity to be bought and sold. Adequate housing is essential for health, education, dignity, safety, and social inclusion, as recognized in earlier global frameworks, including the Istanbul Declaration and Habitat Agenda³⁴ of 1996.
25. Similarly, the important social and ecological functions of land and its economic value must be emphasised from a public good perspective. Proximity and socio-economic accessibility to public facilities and basic services, **including digital ones**, are at the heart of adequate housing. Adequate housing underpins secure access to services, employment, and urban life, enhancing social cohesion and well-being and requires well-functioning cities and human settlements. **Development of smart cities initiatives can significantly contribute to adequate housing in terms of digital master-planning and smart city governance as well as enhancing citizens engagement.** The prioritization of implementing the right to adequate housing in local, national, and global frameworks is key to ensuring dignity and empowerment for all and as a pillar of social protection³⁵. Affordability of housing and access to basic services, **including digital ones**, are universally important, even if the means of improving them might differ in developed and developing countries: from access to housing finance to availability of affordable building materials.
26. The transformation of informal settlements and slums, which in 2022 housed 24.8 per cent of the global urban population, equivalent to 1.12 billion people, is equally vital yet even more urgent³⁶. This figure is expected to reach three billion by 2050 if no effective action is taken to prevent the proliferation of slums and informal settlements and transform the existing ones. As acknowledged by Member States, Sustainable Development Goal indicator 11.1.1 – “the proportion of urban population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing” – is one of nine indicators whose improvement has regressed globally, stressing the need for more concerted efforts to meet the target by 2030³⁷. Slum dwellers are members of our communities who should be equal in rights and dignity and who play important cultural, economic and social roles.
27. The strategic focus aligns with the core areas of UN-Habitat’s mandate and its unique position as a United Nations system focal point for adequate housing, sustainable urbanization and human settlements³⁸.

V. Impact areas to address the challenges

28. The expected global impact is that more people in cities and human settlements, including people living in informal settlements and slums and those affected by humanitarian crises and climate impacts, prosper and have their lives transformed through increased access to adequate housing, land, and basic services for all, **including digital ones**.

29. The impact areas below mirror the key challenges global society faces. Through its strategic focus and in the context of sustainable urbanization, the organization aims to contribute to the

³⁴ A/CONF.165/14: Report of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)

³⁵ Cairo Call to Action, Twelfth session of the World Urban Forum; Action 1

³⁶ United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) Urban Indicators database, 2024

³⁷ HSP/HA.2/Res.2

³⁸ Reaffirmed by the General Assembly in its Resolution pertaining to the New Urban Agenda (A/RES/71/256, OP 165) as well as the United Nations Habitat Assembly in 2023 (HSP/HA.2/HLS.1)

efforts of other multilateral actors, including United Nations entities leading in these areas, to achieve an impact on people's lives in these domains.

A. Equitable and inclusive prosperity for poverty eradication

30. A more prosperous and inclusive society is fostered through properly planned and managed urbanization and the sustainable development of smart cities and human settlements by developing infrastructure and institutions that support social inclusion and reduced inequalities, equitable economic growth, and by creating more ~~dent~~ decent jobs and promote the potential of digital economy.
31. Adequate housing, aside from being a precursor to other essential aspects of social inclusion, such as education and health, also serves as an asset in creating livelihood opportunities. Well-located and connected, mixed-use and socially mixed neighbourhoods enable equitable access to services and opportunities for all as a part of smart city. Well-designed networks of accessible, green and high-quality public spaces, accessible to all and free from crime and sexual harassment – in view of the urgent need to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence and harassment, especially against women and girls³⁹ – along with safe and equitable mobility systems, are key to promoting inclusive prosperity. Digitalisation is also a focal point enabling to ensure equitable access to all digital services and opportunities for everyone. All these interventions help eradicate poverty, underpinning gender equality and the empowerment of people in vulnerable situations, prioritising their needs.⁴⁰
32. Adequate housing, land, and basic services, including digital ones, are essential to lay the groundwork of a society where everyone can thrive. When strong, functional, and leaving no one behind, this nexus also prevents the proliferation of informal settlements and slums and reinforces their transformation. The housing sector touches most aspects of a country's economy and interacts with many other sectors, including industry, trade, technology, finance, transport and social development. Recognising the social function of land is central to guiding and financing sustainable urban development. Equitable access to basic services through well designed planning and institution is the basis of sustainable community and sound economic development. It thus plays a major role in enabling inclusive economic growth and prosperity to eradicate poverty and reduce inequalities. The provision of services is eminently dependent on adequate infrastructure investments and can only be achieved effectively and equitably in well-planned and sufficiently dense settlements.
33. UN-Habitat's role in addressing this impact area is to promote equitable and inclusive prosperity for poverty eradication through robust data, policies and practices for better access to adequate housing, land, and basic services, including digital ones. It promotes the efficient and equitable use of land to deliver sustainable urban development, including adequate housing, and to maximise the security of tenure for the social and economic benefits that this provides, including the protection of dignity. UN-Habitat supports Member States in achieving adequate housing for all by promoting effective land governance and management, especially via digital instruments such as digital twins and big data platforms, as well as the provision of adequate basic services. This contributes to harnessing the potential of urbanization to foster more inclusive prosperity, overcome existing spatial and social inequalities across the rural-urban continuum, and transform the lives of people living in informal settlements and slums.
34. UN-Habitat's expertise encompasses an integrated approach to urban and territorial planning, ensuring that housing, land, and basic services are addressed holistically to advance equitable

³⁹ A/RES/71/256 (NUA), OP 13 (c)

⁴⁰ A/RES/71/256 (New Urban Agenda), OP 13 (b) and (c)

prosperity and poverty eradication. In line with the United Nations Habitat Assembly Resolution on Urban planning and sustainable infrastructure⁴¹, UN-Habitat provides technical assistance and capacity-building support to countries, cities and other stakeholders in developing and implementing participatory and sustainable integrated urban planning and infrastructure development initiatives⁴².

B. Preparedness, response, recovery and reconstruction

35. A shared understanding of the complex impact of converging crises on cities, human settlements, their communities and territories can guide more effective preparedness, response and recovery, with particular attention to the most affected by natural and human-caused disasters ~~and conflict~~, leading into reconstruction to “build back better” and resilience strengthening.
36. Improved risk assessment and foresight analysis can help anticipate and prepare for the impact of crises on cities, human settlements and territories, strengthening mitigation and resilience. Working across the whole cycle allows UN-Habitat to help integrate humanitarian and development efforts and leverage its comparative advantages as called for as in the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review, adopted in 2024⁴³. As recalled by the United Nations Habitat Assembly in its Resolution on the Creation of an operational human settlements’ resilience framework for early warning, foresight, risk reduction, crisis response, and post-crisis recovery and reconstruction⁴⁴, UN-Habitat has a key role in assisting national, regional, and local governments in these areas.
37. UN-Habitat, as a member of the humanitarian Inter-Agency Standing Committee, helps the humanitarian system to adapt their response to the increasing urban nature of crisis. This includes promoting settlements-based approaches to inform preparedness, support contextualized local coordination and more integrated response; empowering local governments and community-based organizations to help localize humanitarian interventions; helping to restore basic services at community level and ensuring a focus on housing, land and property rights to protect those affected. This makes the humanitarian response more effective, reducing the humanitarian caseload and transitioning to recovery whenever and wherever possible.
38. A more cohesive response to displacement can advance solutions from the start during the humanitarian response, fully integrated into urban and territorial development strategies. Addressing adequate housing, land, and access to basic services, **including digital ones**, can help provide a framework for a more integrated response with all actors involved, using urban and territorial planning and multi-level governance to localise and enable solutions for the displaced.

C. Environment and climate action

39. The interlinkages between climate change, environmental degradation, and the current global housing crisis create obstacles to effective climate adaptation and mitigation. Housing and infrastructure provisions that encourage urban sprawl and increased reliance on motorised

⁴¹ HSP/HA.2/Res.8

⁴² HSP/HA.2/Res.8

⁴³ A/RES/79/226 including paragraphs 19 and 46

⁴⁴ HSP/HA.2/Res.9

transport lead to traffic congestion, declining green cover, and exacerbate air pollution, with detrimental effects on human health, the environment and climate change mitigation. A deficit of adequate housing aggravates the human cost of weather-related disasters and can hinder adaptation to the environmental effects of climate change - such as drought and aridification, wildfires, pollution and floods - on people in vulnerable situations, especially in informal settlements and slums⁴⁵.

40. Well-managed urbanization and improved access to adequate housing, including through urban and land-use planning and design, is essential in addressing the causes and impacts of climate change in cities and human settlements at all scales across the urban-rural continuum. **Digital technologies enable to prevent the possible climate obstacles in proactive manner, as well as improve resource efficiency, including smart grids, waste management monitoring, climate monitoring, and other areas.** A shift towards a circular model in the buildings and construction sector and the use of sustainable building materials is urgent to reduce the carbon imprint of construction. Urban planning and management that ensure adequate densities, green space retention and expansion, and the promotion of nature-based solutions offer potential for urban heat mitigation, flood risk reduction, biodiversity preservation, enhanced human well-being and socio-economic co-benefits. Energy-saving infrastructure and effective waste management are also critical for both climate change mitigation and sound economic development.
41. Strengthening resilience to climate-related hazards through risk-sensitive urban and land-use planning, building codes applied to housing, and resilient infrastructure that provides adequate housing, land, and basic services, **including digital ones**—especially for those in most vulnerable situations⁴⁶—must be at the core of global climate change adaptation efforts.
42. In the area of environment and climate action, UN-Habitat adds value to the efforts of other actors in the multi-lateral system by supporting their work through the lens of people-centred urban planning and mainstreaming biodiversity and ecosystem services into urban and territorial planning and management, as requested by the United Nations Habitat Assembly in its Resolution on Biodiverse and resilient cities⁴⁷. Additionally, UN-Habitat enriches the efforts of the United Nations system by addressing the urban and territorial dimensions of key issues, such as water resource planning and management across the rural-urban continuum.
43. This added value includes support to subnational authorities who have a key role in implementing policies to adapt to climate change and mitigate its effects, including through risk assessments and early warning systems. To scale up impact in cooperation with relevant partners, as requested in the United Nations Habitat Assembly Resolution on Enhancing the interlinkage between urbanization and climate change resilience⁴⁸, UN-Habitat must continue efforts to support Member States and other key actors in productively leveraging this connection.

VI. Our means of implementation and expected outcomes

44. The means of implementation (MoI) are instruments for seeking outcome that jointly serve to attain the global impact through the strategic focus (adequate housing, land, and basic services). Two substantive and three supportive MoI have been formulated in the draft SP. To

⁴⁵ UNISDR (2015). The Human Cost of Weather-Related Disasters 1995-2015

⁴⁶ A/RES/71/256 (New Urban Agenda), OP 34, 57 and 148

⁴⁷ HSP/HA.2/Res.4

⁴⁸ HSP/HA.2/Res.5

be effective and efficient, they must be used coherently in horizontal (among the MoI) and vertical (headquarters – field) collaboration.

45. Outcomes constitute a distinct level in the hierarchy of the results chain:

- a) impact at the top, where we have only indirect influence: what occurs in people’s lives;
- b) outcomes in the middle, where we have a more direct influence: what we help our partners to do better; and
- c) outputs at the bottom, where we have full control: deliverables of our work. This hierarchy of results will be monitored through corresponding levels of indicators.

46. Special attention will be given to empowering women and girls, children and youth, older persons and persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and local communities, refugees, and internally displaced persons and migrants, particularly the poorest and those in vulnerable situations who are disproportionately affected by the global housing crisis and other hardships⁴⁹.

A. Integrated urban and territorial planning, management, investment and finance

47. **Outcome:** Spatial development plans, policies and legislation, planning systems and finance frameworks foster the social and ecological function of land and catalyse public and private investments for adequate housing, land, and basic services, **including digital ones.**

48. An integrated approach to urban planning and infrastructure development is central to promoting sustainable development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals⁵⁰. Long-term urban and territorial planning and design underpins the delivery of urbanization’s positive outcomes across social, economic, and ecological aspects, as envisioned in the New Urban Agenda, and is key to providing adequate housing, land, and basic services, **including digital ones.**

49. Effective urban planning is the backbone of delivering inclusion, resilience, accessibility and sustainability in cities and communities. Integrated land-use planning and management is fundamental in opening the fiscal space of national and local governments through stable local revenues, especially from land-based finance, to maximise the social and economic functions of land, **and can be further enhanced through smart city solutions such as digital platforms for citizen engagement in planning processes, real-time data analysis for optimizing land use, and online portals for efficient urban planning management and governance.**

50. At the national level, given urbanization’s significant impacts on development, spatial planning is vital for improving strategic prioritisation and sequencing of investments for coherent territorial development across the rural-urban continuum⁵¹. This is essential to guiding and implementing local development plans and achieving their targets.

51. In line with the strategic plan, UN-Habitat will provide normative guidance and technical assistance to Member States and other partners on participatory, inclusive, and sustainable integrated evidence-based urban planning and infrastructure development to improve the capacity of all levels of government to coherently plan, manage and implement productive, equitable, inclusive and environmentally sustainable urban development. This includes planning for urban densification, urban extension, renewal and regeneration, with efficient

⁴⁹ A/RES/71/256 (New Urban Agenda), OP 34, 57 and 148

⁵⁰ HSP/HA.2/Res.8

⁵¹ African Union. Africa urban forum on sustainable urbanisation for Africa’s transformation. Declaration, Addis Ababa, 4 to 6 September 2024

and accessible public transport systems, as well as public open green spaces. The agency will promote spatial planning for cohesive economic development and public investment at all scales, strengthening environmentally sensitive economic productivity and social inclusion in cities, human settlements and territories across the urban-rural continuum, seeking to decrease disparities of living conditions in rural and urban areas.

52. The implementation of these plans should be backed by territorially coherent investment and well-coordinated finance on all levels of governance, anchored in a strategic approach that prioritises the deployment of resources through spatially informed capital investment planning and municipal and national finance strategies. Acknowledging the different roles of specific finance sources and instruments, leveraging enhanced own-source revenues and ensuring the adequate sharing of the value created by urban development and public investments are critical to ensuring sustainable urban financing and achieving inclusive urban prosperity⁵². UN Habitat will support Member States in the design and review of financial instruments, such as credit lines, subsidies and incentives, land-based finance mechanisms, to ensure alignment of financial and urban frameworks, supporting local and regional governments in developing urban plans that incorporate zoning and regulatory mechanisms to leverage the supply of affordable housing.

B. Participatory multi-level governance and localization of the SDGs

53. **Outcome:** Participatory multi-level governance mechanisms support adequate housing, land, and basic services for all, **including digital ones**, mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment⁵³, and accelerate SDG localization

54. The Sustainable Development Goals must be met for all segments of society and leave no one behind, including through the localization of sustainable development, **especially within smart cities**⁵⁴. Transforming the global goals into long-lasting change at the local level and the collective pursuit of more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient cities and human settlements requires effective localization processes fostering alignment between national frameworks and communities' priorities⁵⁵.
55. National and local governments' capacities to create enabling environments for sustainable development anchored on multi-level governance and policy coherence are essential. These environments must focus on advancing cities' transformation for social progress, shared prosperity, and environmental protection **that could be fostered by digitalisation instruments**. Localization of the Sustainable Development Goals is the collaborative and impact-oriented approach to transform governance systems through partnership and coordination, enabling the effective local delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals to meet the needs of cities and local communities.
56. UN-Habitat is requested by the Member States to promote the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals⁵⁶. Rooted in the localization approach, the agency will leverage its leadership and expertise on sustainable urbanization, data, planning, capacity building, and

⁵² A/RES/77/173 OP 15

⁵³ HSP/HA.1/Res.4 para 1 (a)

⁵⁴ A/RES/79/1; Pact for the Future, Action 6

⁵⁵ Cairo Call to Action, Twelfth session of the World Urban Forum; Action 2

⁵⁶ HSP/HA.2/Res.6

finance to promote city-level transformation by building robust multi-level governance systems that serve the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

57. It will work across scales and with platforms, networks, communities of practices, and coalitions of cities, local and regional governments and authorities **to contribute to the smart cities best practices exchange** and connect local and indigenous knowledge, innovations and partners with relevant global dialogues and decision-making processes while offering a convening space for partnership building and joint action for the Sustainable Development Goals.

C. Knowledge, data, digitalization, and capacity development

58. **Outcome:** Improved knowledge and capacities inform evidence-based, innovative policies on adequate housing, land, and basic services, **including digital ones**, for all.

59. The United Nations Habitat Assembly resolutions recognise and call for improvements in data and monitoring of sustainable urbanization. It is urgent to leverage digital technology for a better quality of life in cities and human settlements⁵⁷, while managing the associated risks to ensure an inclusive, open, sustainable, fair, safe and secure digital future for all⁵⁸. **These risks could be mitigated by development of smart cities that are based on three key pillars: data, city governance system and technologies. The latter include** participatory methods, **feedback platforms**, geo-spatial tools, data platforms for modelling, training, research partnerships, **AI** and digital twin technology are crucial for **effective city management, digital master-planning and building sustainable and resilient urban environment for all. These tools are also valuable** in ensuring that data reflects the lived realities of diverse communities, thereby supporting more inclusive and equitable urban planning. Disaggregated localized data is a pathway to empower communities while enriching the evidence base for monitoring urbanization.

60. To support effective evidence-based policy formulation and implementation to advance sustainable urban development, UN-Habitat will continue to undertake and lead global monitoring of SDG 11, the New Urban Agenda and the territorial dimensions of other Sustainable Development Goals. It will also continue to provide technical support to Member States and other stakeholders in implementing and monitoring the New Urban Agenda.

61. UN-Habitat will continue to undertake **evidence-based** research on cities and human settlements in the rural-urban continuum, intelligence gathering, and data analytics to inform policymaking, with foresight playing a critical role in managing uncertainty and planning for effective policy action⁵⁹ **and community engagement**. Stronger communities of practice will be promoted, joining the efforts of **government officials**, diverse researchers and practitioners to shape effective solutions for sustainable urban development.

62. UN-Habitat will reinvigorate and mainstream its capacity development efforts, building on **evidence-based research**, well-studied practices, integrating normative and operational dimensions across the organisation. Through contextualised capacity-building initiatives, UN-Habitat will support key actors in assessing and addressing the capacity gap to support the implementation of, and monitoring and reporting on, the New Urban Agenda and in building national and local capacity to develop and implement public policies and programmes commensurate to resources available in countries, cities and human settlements. These activities are grounded in and geared for action, seeking that knowledge development and practice inform one another.

HSP/HA.2/Res.1

⁵⁸ A/RES/79/1; Pact for the Future, Annex 1: Global Digital Compact

⁵⁹ As agreed in the A/RES/79/1; Pact for Future, Action 45, para 73 (a) and in reference to UN 2.0

63. UN-Habitat will support ~~knowledge~~, **best practices** exchange and cross-learning among countries **and smart cities** to transfer knowledge and successful experiences. The potential of digital technologies to accelerate sustainable urbanization will be promoted through a people-centred smart cities approach that fosters international cooperation between institutions, and governments, promotes academic research and educational initiatives, and aligns with international guidelines⁶⁰. UN-Habitat will further strengthen its normative work by better integrating feedback between the global scale and **smart cities**, regions and countries.

D. Partnerships, coalitions, advocacy and communication

64. **Outcome:** Increased awareness and strengthened collaboration among relevant stakeholders promote adequate housing, land, and basic services, **including digital ones**, for all.

65. To seek impact at scale and to reinforce the role of adequate housing, land, and basic services as a key driver of sustainable development globally, achieving this outcome will build on advancing global coalitions that foster and strengthen partnerships, leveraging the expertise and resources of diverse key actors in sustainable urban development. One key platform to advance this outcome is the Open-ended Intergovernmental Expert Working Group on Adequate Housing for All, created by the United Nations Habitat Assembly in June 2023 through resolution 2/7⁶¹. It is a strategic mechanism to foster coalition and collaboration, displaying practice, knowledge and data as a public good.

66. UN-Habitat will strengthen its partnerships and stakeholder collaboration by actively engaging its advisory groups and prioritising strategic coalitions. This includes partnerships among institutions responsible for urban development policies, **national and local governments**, universities and research institutions to support data-based decision-making, the organization of meetings, debates and sharing of good practices at the regional and international levels.

67. Additional attention will be given to partnerships with other United Nations entities, at the global and country levels, seeking to include the themes highlighted in this strategic plan's focus, where relevant, in Common Country Assessments and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.

68. By advocating for sustainable urbanization and development, UN-Habitat will build on its convening power and partnership platforms, including the World Urban Forum organised and convened by UN-Habitat pursuant to paragraph 10 of resolution 18/5 of the Commission on Human Settlements on International cooperation and the review of mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of the Habitat Agenda⁶², the New Urban Agenda Platform, as well as World Habitat Day and World Cities Day as major observances during Urban October. UN-Habitat's active participation in United Nations conferences and summits aiming to address global challenges – including climate change, financial, social, and humanitarian issues – will further promote the importance of sustainable urban development within these global discussions.

⁶⁰ HSP/HA.2/Res.1

⁶¹ HSP/HA.2/Res.7

⁶² A/56/8; see also Resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly and the Governing Council of UN-Habitat relevant to the World Urban Forum (HSP/WUF/12/INF/2)

69. UN-Habitat will focus its communication on the strategic focus and expected global impact of the strategic plan, utilising a comprehensive **data-based** approach that spans conventional and social media, digital platforms, and a wide array of multimedia content. UN-Habitat will enhance its global presence and influence, ensuring that its work is **transparent, measurable, relevant and accessible** across a diverse range of stakeholders, including governments, civil society, **academia** and urban practitioners and communities.
70. Drawing on the strength of partnerships at different geographical scales, the organisation's strategic focus will be amplified by showcasing and tracking the expected global impact. This will foster a dynamic, action-oriented dialogue, inspiring local solutions that drive global sustainable urban development. The diverse ~~voices~~, expertise and capacities will reinforce productive stakeholder engagement, e.g., in communities of practice, expert advice, sharing experiences and best practices, and making scientific contributions to discussions.

E. Effective resource mobilisation

71. **Outcome:** Increased and predictable resources for UN-Habitat and its partners advance adequate housing, land, and basic services, **including digital ones**, for all.

72. Achieving sustainable urban development **and digital transformation of smart cities** requires mobilising substantial financial resources to provide more adequate housing and sustainable infrastructure **and city governance system across all spheres**, including transport and mobility, energy, water, and waste management⁶³. Among the Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 11 faces significant funding shortfalls. Scaling up financing efforts is critical to achieving the targets for housing, public services, **including digital ones**, and urban resilience, necessitating increased efforts to mobilise resources for sustainable urbanization⁶⁴.
73. Guided by this strategic plan, UN-Habitat will mobilise greater, diversified, and more predictable resources for its work, including the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the United Nations Habitat Assembly⁶⁵. This will draw on the UN funding compact and its commitments for mutual action by Member States and United Nations entities to support the Sustainable Development Goals.
74. UN-Habitat will leverage its existing capacities, intelligence and mechanisms for resource mobilization aligned to Member States **needs and** priorities to broaden and deepen donor engagement while also scaling partnerships with international financial institutions to leverage resources and expertise.
75. Through the programmatic means of implementation and their outcomes, resource mobilisation will enable partners and key actors globally and locally to access more resources to implement programmes delivering adequate housing for all on the ground, seeking the expected global impact as articulated above. The integrated approach to urban and territorial planning could, in the long term, lead to a more efficient use of public resources.
76. This engagement, in turn, will help to mobilise resources for the work of the Member States themselves, especially in response to the demand in developing countries and countries most in need. Beyond traditional donors, UN-Habitat will closely collaborate with multilateral

⁶³ Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development (A/RES/69/313)

⁶⁴ UN-Habitat. (2023). Rescuing SDG 11 for a Resilient Urban Planet 2023: SDG 11 Synthesis Report

⁶⁵ HSP/HA.2/Res.10

development banks, international financial institutions⁶⁶ and the private sector, leveraging its strategic focus.

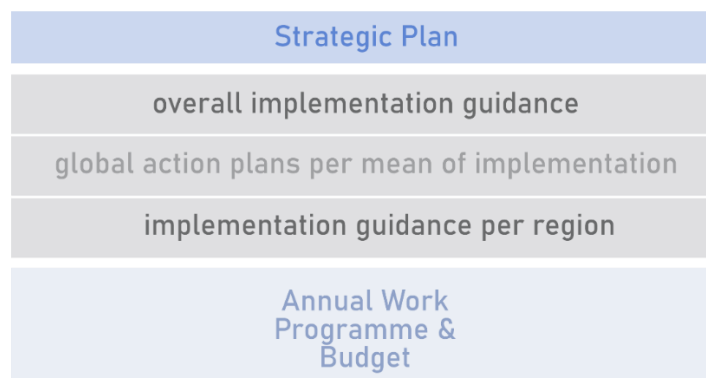
VII. Proposed implementation approach

77. The overall implementation will be guided by a set of brief documents bridging the quadrennial strategic plan with the annual work programme and budget. Global action plans for each mean of implementation will be developed to work towards expected outcomes, including adjustment of ongoing programmes. Regional implementation guidance will be developed, tailoring the outcomes in specific contexts.

78. Three goals will be set for implementation mechanisms:

- a) Ensure horizontal coherence and collaboration across all five means of implementation (MoI) by gearing all work in support of the strategic focus. This includes seeking alignment and integrated delivery through the global programmes and initiatives to integrate MoI across normative and operational pillars;
- b) Ensure symbiotic vertical coherence between the headquarters and field operations. To that end, global programmes and services work with country and regional-level field projects managed by country offices to promote the strategic focus. Whilst the headquarters supports regional and country operations with relevant knowledge and expertise, it harvests new and contextualised knowledge. This constant feedback loop enhances the expertise and serves as an interregional knowledge exchange;
- c) Prioritise, encourage and support collaboration with other United Nations entities and the broader multilateral system where the strategic focus adds value in the three impact areas. This will primarily assure the overall impact in the three impact areas in coordination with the United Nations system entities leading in those impact areas.

iv: Proposed implementation documents



79. The Annual Work Programme and Budget is the only statutory document for implementing the strategic plan. It is structured in subprogrammes and their results, which build on the strategic plan's key elements and results chain. The implementation documents are proposed with the purpose of bridging the strategic plan and the Annual Work Programme and Budget of UN-Habitat so that they are fully aligned.

⁶⁶ A/RES/77/173 OP20

80. The documents guiding implementation will guide collaboration across the means of implementation and the normative and operational work of the programme and outline coordination of collaboration in pursuing the strategic focus for achieving the global impact and how the responsibilities seeking outcomes under individual MoI will be assigned. The responsibilities for individual MoI and related outcomes, including for horizontal and vertical collaboration, will be assigned as appropriate at the headquarters and the regional offices, Executive Director being responsible for horizontal and vertical coordination and coherence. These responsibilities will be supported by organisational and resource alignment to ensure integration and coherence so that accountability mechanisms can be established.

VIII. Monitoring implementation

81. A robust monitoring framework is essential for measuring progress and assessing the impact of the strategic plan during this period. This process responds to the challenges identified by the OIOS mid-term evaluation of the 2020–2025 Strategic Plan. The framework will:

- a) Draw on lessons learned from previous monitoring practice;
- b) Ensure coherence between global goals and organisational efforts;
- c) Build on existing indicators and performance measures while developing new ones;
- d) Take into account UN-Habitat’s capacity for data collection, analysis, and monitoring;
- e) Use insights from monitoring practices from other entities within the United Nations system.

82. The overall objective is to define an effective monitoring framework that allows UN-Habitat to measure and report on results and impact through the implementation of its Strategic Plan 2026-2029. The specific objectives of the monitoring framework are:

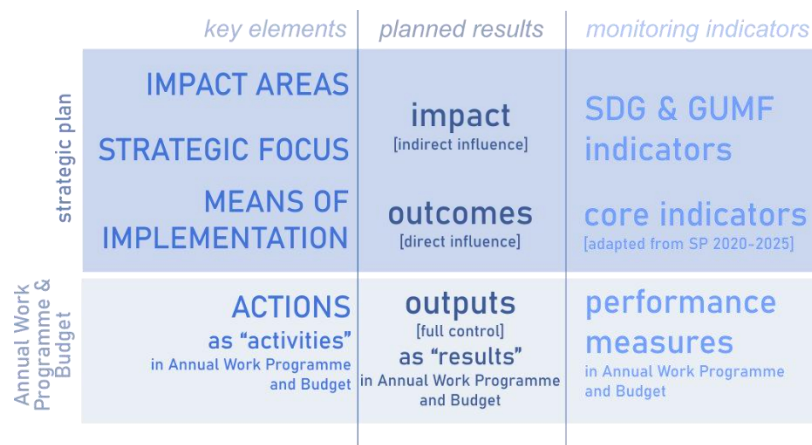
- a) To define the underlying principles defining the approach to monitoring implementation of the plan.
- b) To identify the specific methodologies that will be applied in monitoring the implementation.
- c) To inform the design, implementation and monitoring of UN-Habitat’s normative and operational initiatives.

83. During the process of elaborating the monitoring framework, the following will be considered:

- a) All indicators will be defined to assess progress in line with the strategic focus on adequate housing, land, and basic services for all, **including digital ones**, and the transformation of informal settlements and slums;
- b) A collaborative approach is needed as the engagement and support of Member States and partners’ will be essential for generating and collecting accurate data. Through structured consultations, capacity-building initiatives, and data **and best practices sharing** mechanisms, Member States play a crucial role in filling data gaps, refining methodologies, and advancing evidence-based decision-making at both regional and global levels. Recognising challenges related to the availability of adequate, harmonized or recent data, UN-Habitat partnerships with relevant institutions and actors will be critical to report on progress in the Strategic Plan 2026-2029;

- c) While the primary preference is to focus on available data, new indicators and data collection methods will be required, including surveys and other tools. For this, multiple data sources will be needed, drawing from Member States, partners, and UN-Habitat;
- d) The monitoring approach will need to strengthen coherence across and leverage existing UN-Habitat initiatives and intergovernmental processes. For example, the monitoring of housing is closely associated with the intergovernmental Open-Ended Working Group on Housing which may provide opportunities to advance data collection and availability;
- e) Given the substantial data gaps, as well as to ensure robust attribution of change to UN-Habitat’s work, careful consideration is needed to distinguish monitoring the overall global progress in comparison of the progress in the countries and cities where UN-Habitat works.
- f) Qualitative measuring will be added, where relevant, to complement quantitative indicators.

V: *KEY ELEMENTS, PLANNED RESULTS, AND MONITORING INDICATORS*



84. A results framework, also referred to as a results chain, explicitly defines the different levels of results expected from a specific intervention (e.g., projects, programs, or strategies):
- a) Impacts refer to the broader, long-term effects that result from an intervention, often reflecting systemic or transformative change that affects communities at large. These are the high-level, people-oriented results to which UN-Habitat will contribute;
 - b) Outcomes are the more immediate and direct changes that occur because of UN-Habitat’s actions. They are measurable in the medium term and serve as stepping stones toward achieving the larger, long-term impacts. For example, outcomes could include improved urban planning practices or enhanced local capacity to address housing challenges;
 - c) Outputs are the tangible, immediate deliverables produced by specific activities. They are within the direct control of the implementing organization and contribute to the achievement of the outcomes. Examples of the outputs are named as “results” in the UN-Habitat Annual Work Programme and Budget.
85. Impacts, outcomes, and outputs form the critical links in the results chain, with outputs serving as the building blocks that lead to achieving desired outcomes, which in turn contribute to broader impacts. The proposed monitoring framework for UN-Habitat’s Strategic Plan 2026-2029 is designed to systematically track and evaluate progress across the three levels of the plan. By aligning monitoring efforts with these results, UN-Habitat can

ensure accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement in delivering on its mandate.

86. UN-Habitat's monitoring framework will be aligned with results-based management (RBM) principles, including the focus on measuring outcomes and impacts, not just activities and outputs, and is being designed to systematically track and evaluate progress across the two levels of the plan: from the broad, transformative impacts to the more immediate and outcomes influenced by UN-Habitat's actions. This monitoring framework will be structured to ensure accountability, effectiveness and adaptability in achieving the strategic plan's objectives.
87. UN-Habitat is analysing and considering indicators from global frameworks, leveraging its existing monitoring frameworks and UN-Habitat's Results Based Framework SP 2020-2025 to identify indicators:
 - a) The Global Urban Monitoring Framework (GUMF – adopted by the UN Statistical Commission);
 - b) The SDG 11 indicators as well as other urban related SDG indicators (also linked to the GUMF);
 - c) The indicators for the New Urban Agenda global monitoring (also linked to the GUMF)
 - d) In addition, and to align with the directions of the strategic plan 2020-2023, UN-Habitat will be developing, where inevitable, new indicators to serve the strategic focus and other new elements.
88. Indicators will be selected taking into account the following:
 - a) Applying SMART principles (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound).
 - b) Considering the need for a manageable scope and coverage within the strategic plan period.
 - c) Demonstrating reasonable attribution to UN-Habitat's work and actions.
 - d) Indicators that have data available, or clear pathways of data collection, sources, data reliability, and data quality assurance.
 - e) Indicators whose budget resource and capacity requirements are within the capacities of the agency and implementing partners to collect and analyse data.
 - f) Indicators which generate evidence that is verifiable and observable.
90. Once the set of indicators is confirmed, the corresponding baseline data, targets, sources and means of verification will be established.