



**BRIEFING BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ON THE PREPARATIONS
FOR THE 2025 **FIRST** SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD TO BE
HELD FROM 25 TO 27 MARCH 2025.**

7 March 2025, 10.00 **am** to 12.00 **noon** East Africa Time EAT

SPEAKING NOTES FOR THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Opening remarks and overview

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,

Good morning, good afternoon, good evening to all delegations - from all corners of the world.

You are most welcome to this briefing on the preparations for the first session of the Executive Board for the year 2025 scheduled to take place from 25 to 27 March 2025 here at the UN-Habitat headquarters in Nairobi.

It is my pleasure to provide this update which will outline some of the overall expectations of the upcoming session of the Executive Board, with a particular focus under the substantive agenda items to be considered at the session.

As you may be aware, this is a standard briefing to Member States which takes place before each session of the Executive Board as a requirement from rule 6 paragraph 10 of the rules of procedure of the Executive Board. That rule provides that a briefing on the matters to be covered under each item on the provisional agenda be done at least two weeks before each session.

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,

Notification and Provisional Agenda.

The formal notification and provisional agenda for the upcoming session was shared with Member States on 12 February 2025, well ahead of the required 42 days prior to the session as provided for in the rules of procedure.

The core pre-session documents for the session have also been made available online in all six UN official languages by 26 February 2025, at least four weeks prior to the session in accordance with the rules.

The provisional agenda for the session - as decided upon by the Executive Board in Decision 2024/4 and further reviewed by the Bureau of the Executive Board - is now [shown](#) on screen.

(NOTE: ED you do not have to read these out as they will be on the screen)

Provisional agenda

1. Opening of the session.
2. Organizational matters:
 - (a) Adoption of the agenda and the workplan for the first session of 2025;
 - (b) Adoption of the report of the Executive Board on the work of its second session of 2024.
3. Reports of the chairs of the ad hoc working groups.
4. Financial, budgetary and administrative matters.
5. Update on the draft work programme of UN-Habitat and the draft budget of the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation for 2026.
6. Update on the preparation of, and possible recommendation of, the draft strategic plan of UN-Habitat for the period 2026–2029.
7. Briefing on the Sustainable Cities and Communities Foundation.
8. 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.
9. Update on the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the United Nations Habitat Assembly.
10. Implementation by UN-Habitat of the reform of the development system and management of the United Nations.
11. Action by UN-Habitat to strengthen protection against sexual or any other type of exploitation and abuse and against sexual harassment in the workplace.
12. Annual report on action by the Executive Director to update and improve the internal management, policies and procedures of UN-Habitat.
13. Consideration and adoption of the outcomes of the session, including the provisional agenda for the second session of 2025.
14. Other matters.
15. Closure of the session.

Agenda item 3. Reports of the Chairs of the ad hoc working group

Before moving on to the briefing for the upcoming session, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to Colombia and Nigeria, as co-Chairs of the ad hoc working group on programmatic, budgetary and administrative matters (PBA); and also to Portugal, as Chair of the ad hoc working group on the development of a stakeholder engagement policy.

Alongside the Bureau of the Executive Board, the two ad hoc working groups play an instrumental role in preparing the political outcomes of the upcoming session of the Executive Board. Accordingly, under agenda item 3 of the Executive Board meeting, it is expected that the Chairs will provide a briefing to the Board on the work conducted by the two ad hoc working groups.

Chair, with your permission, I will focus the rest of my presentation on the substantive items of the provisional Agenda, specifically, items 4 to 12.

Agenda item 4. Financial, budgetary and administrative matters.

The interim financial status report of UN-Habitat as at 31 December 2024 was made available to Member States earlier last month. The final financial statements for 2024 will be released by 31 March 2025 as they are currently in production. Regarding the foundation non-earmarked resources, a total of USD 5.782 million was received in voluntary contributions, which is just short of the target USD 5.944 million to activate package I of the scalability model. With expenditures at about \$3.7 million in 2024, UN-Habitat has repaid \$1.0 million towards the loan, **reducing the outstanding balance to \$1.0 million.**

For 2025, the Executive Board approved a budget of 4.7 million US dollars in the non-earmarked Foundation fund. As of 5 March 2025, a total of **USD 73,000** was recorded in voluntary contributions. **I deeply value your Government's continued support, and invite to you to kindly consider an early remittance of your annual core contribution this year, enabling us to implement the 2025 work programme, and sustaining our collective efforts in advancing sustainable urban development.**

During the upcoming session we will share with you the latest updated figures as of 28 February 2025 and look forward to your guidance. Let me take this opportunity

to express my sincere gratitude for your financial support to the Organization in 2024 and for the goodwill already shown to me since my arrival. We trust that in 2025 we'll be able to strengthen this position further to enable modest growth for UN-Habitat within its core mandate as established by the Executive Board. Revenue.

Agenda item 5. Update on the draft work programme of UN-Habitat and the draft budget of the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation for 2026.

Excellencies,

The Annual Work Programme and Budget is structured into two parts: Part A, which addresses the Programme of Work itself and will be presented and discussed during the first session of the Executive Board in 2025; and Part B, which focuses on the budget, to be developed subsequently as the Programme of Work progresses.

The draft work programme for 2026 was discussed by the Ad Hoc working group on programmatic, budgetary, and administrative matters of the Executive Board on February 3, 2025. Feedback from this meeting was incorporated into the draft, which was then submitted to the Programme Plan and Budget Division (PPBD) for initial review on February 7. Following the internal review by the PPBD, the ad hoc working group may further discuss and revise the draft work programme 2027 before following discussions.

The Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) is scheduled to review the draft work programme in its next session during May, 2025. The CPC's report will be made available before the second session of the Executive Board, where both the draft work programme and budget will be discussed.

As for the document's preparation, UN-Habitat is currently preparing the 2026 budget which is due for submission shortly to PPBD. The 2026 budget will largely be a maintenance budget, as elements of the Strategic Plan may only be incorporated subsequent to its approval at the Assembly. The 2027 budget will therefore incorporate resource requirements necessary to operationalize the strategic plan.

Regarding the budget for 2026, UN-Habitat received the budget guidance and no objection to prepare the budget on 23 February 2025 for submission to UNHQ on 5 March 2025. Due to the rise in actual post costs in the previous year, UNHQ has increased the 2026 working envelope for Regular Budget from USD 13.0 million in

2024 to USD 15.0 million. Actual payroll costs and non-discretionary costs have led to the increase in the Foundation non-earmarked budget from USD 4.7 million to USD 5.0 million. Project funding projections estimate programme support cost expenditures of USD 12.3 million while foundation earmarked and technical cooperation budget will be at USD 48.1 million and USD 109.9 million respectively.

Agenda item 6. Update on the preparation of, and possible recommendation of, the draft strategic plan of UN-Habitat for the period 2026–2029.

The development of the strategic plan for the period of 2026-2029 reached its final phase. The Member States have been refining the language of the plan in the last weeks, improving the message it carries. For most of the concept and the language, the guidance of the Member States led to a clear, focused, succinct, and straightforward document for the UN-Habitat that will be easier to implement and monitor.

It has not been easy to find common ground in some cases, however, the goodwill of the Member States brought about the spirit of mutual understanding and willingness to reach consensus.

Following the guidance of the Member States, we have submitted the draft of the strategic plan to the Executive Board and to the Division of Conference Services for translating it to all official languages of the United Nations for the resumed 2nd session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly yesterday. I believe that any differences, should they remain, will not derail the adoption of the strategic plan.

Agenda item 7. Briefing on the Sustainable Cities and Communities Foundation.

Excellencies,

UN-Habitat entered into an agreement in 2023 with the Sustainable Human Settlements Foundation (SHSF), whose name was changed to the Sustainable Cities and Communities Foundation (SCCF). UN-Habitat has prepared and will present a report to the Executive Board at the next meeting. Meanwhile, UN-Habitat wishes to inform you and the Board of its intent to conduct an independent due diligence of SCCF in consultation with United Nations Headquarters (UNHQ).

Agenda item 8. 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.

This agenda item is comprised of several parts, offering insights into UN-Habitat's normative and operational activities.

This includes a discussion on our activities in Ethiopia and Central America, across the different domains of change of the UN-Habitat strategic plan for the period 2020–2025. Looking through the lens of two different contexts and challenges, the report provides an overview of how impacts can be achieved through the implementation of both normative and operational activities.

For Ethiopia, the presentation will focus, amongst others, on capacity-building for sustainable urban development; enhanced urban and regional planning; developing green spaces; building resilient settlements for the urban poor; strengthening resilience among displaced and disaster-affected communities; integrating landfill technology; and the development of minimum compliance standards for shelters hosting returning migrants.

For Central America, the presentation will focus, amongst others, on the development and implementation of national urban policies; data generation, mapping and upgrading of vulnerable human settlements; regional, national and local capacity-building; and a vision for the future collaboration with the Central American Integration System region.

The progress made by UN-Habitat in implementing its current capacity-development strategy will also be discussed under this agenda item. This will include the implementation plan for the UN-Habitat capacity-building strategy for 2025 and the proposed way forward for enhanced capacity development across UN-Habitat programmes.

In this agenda item, we will also provide brief updates on the progress in the provision of normative guidance and operational support to countries affected by conflicts and disasters.

As usual, my report on this agenda item is accompanied by a document containing highlights from activities across the whole strategic plan, covering the period from July to December 2024.

Agenda item 9. Update on the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the United Nations Habitat Assembly.

Mr. Chairman,

We will continue to provide updates to the Executive Board on all resolutions adopted by the United Nations Habitat Assembly at its first and second sessions in 2019 and 2023, respectively. The pre-session report prepared for this agenda item for the EB highlights progress made within the September 2024 - January 2025 reporting period, including some elements of the presentation on resolution implementation delivered at the second session of UN-Habitat's Executive Board in 2024 (December 2024). Importantly, the creation of UN-Habitat's Assembly Resolution Tracker and the activation of the Urban Action Funding Window mark the full implementation of Resolution 2/10 and the tracker provides continuous access to detailed financial and programmatic information for each resolution.

Excellencies,

Some of the key achievements that I can flag here, just as examples, are:

- **Development of the Human Rights, Gender and Social Inclusion Handbook for Project Managers, under Resolution 1/4** – This was developed in 2024 and is set for internal launch in the coming weeks.
- **Development of the International Guidelines on People-Centred Smart Cities, mandated through Resolution 2/1** - The draft was shared for your consideration and comments on February 10 and furthermore discussed during the 63rd, 64th and 65th meetings of the Ad-Hoc Working Group on Programmatic, Budgetary, and Administrative Matters (PBA) on February 17, February 24, and March 5 respectively.
- **Celebration of World Cleanup Day (WCD) on 20th September 2024, mandated through Resolution 2/3** - UN-Habitat, together with the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, GRID-Arendal, the FRAM - High North Research Centre for Climate and the Environment and Let's Do It World, celebrated the inaugural WCD in Tromsø, Norway. More than 50,000

cleanup events in 180 countries were registered as organising a cleanup on the day.

- **Establishment of the Partnership Platform on Localizing the SDGs, under Resolution 2/6:** With funding support from Ministry of the Environment and Energy Security of Italy, UN-Habitat will help develop SDG Localization Country Frameworks to facilitate SDG localization in different countries.
- **Organization of the first session of the Open-ended Expert Working Group on Adequate Housing for All, mandated through Resolution 2/7** - The first session was held from 9 to 11 December 2024 in Nairobi and deliberated on several substantive agenda items, captured in a summary by the Chair. Kenya and France were elected as co-chairs of this OEWG.

Excellencies,

There are many more updates on the resolutions that you will see in the pre-session document HSP/EB.2025/7. I would like to flag, though, that implementation of resolutions continues to be uneven, directly linked to the resources mobilized for each of the mandates. I invite member states to step up their support for accelerating implementation of the resolutions through financial and in-kind contributions.

[Agenda item 10. Implementation by UN-Habitat of the reform of the development system and management of the United Nations](#)

Excellencies,

On Agenda item 10, we have been reporting to the Board since 2020 on the “*implementation by UN-Habitat of the United Nations development system (UNDS) and management reform of the United Nations*”, pursuant to Decision 2019/4 of November 2019, which in para 7 decided to include item 10 into its deliberations, and more importantly – while doing so, we have been responding to GA resolution 76/4 of 2 November 2021 on the “*Review of the functioning of the reinvigorated resident coordinator system, including its funding arrangement*”, which in para 14, requested the “*Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group to provide adequate information and tools to the governing bodies of the United Nations development system entities to facilitate their oversight role, including monitoring alignment and entity adherence to the dual reporting model*”.

To date - all our reports demonstrated UN-Habitat's ability to raise up the profile of the urban agenda by capitalizing on the momentum created by the UNDS reform, also strengthening our commitments to supporting several regional and country level processes, e.g. by taking an active part in the regional collaborative platforms and issues-based coalitions, while delivering as a member of the UNCTs within the management and accountability framework (MAF) led by the UN resident coordinators in countries where we are present. In that connection, we contributed as signatories to over 60 collaborative frameworks (UNSDCFs), while engaging in various additional initiatives with soft contribution ensuring urban dimensions are factored into the UN interventions resulting from the UNSDCF.

One of recent steps forward for us has been the design of a new policy guidance meant to facilitate the development of the next generation of the UN-Habitat's country programme documents (HCPDs) aiming to facilitate the inclusion of the urban dimensions of SDGs and New urban agenda into the national priority settings and planning as captured by the UNSDCF. Our HCPDs therefore will henceforth draw from the UNSDCF, in alignment with the UNSDG guidance prioritizing the UNSDCF over individual agencies planning tools.

Agenda item 11. Action by UN-Habitat to strengthen protection against sexual or any other type of exploitation and abuse and against sexual harassment in the workplace.

Excellencies,

With regards to UN-Habitat's efforts and actions to strengthen protection against sexual or any other type of exploitation and abuse and against sexual harassment in the workplace, in line with the **Secretary-General's priorities**, I have certified in my management letter to the Secretary-General, covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2024, and attached to the report of the Executive Board on this Agenda item, UN-Habitat has **fully and accurately reported all SEA allegations**, ensured mandatory **training for staff and affiliated personnel**, and strengthened **preventive and response measures**. Key actions taken include victim-centred assistance, strengthened **accountability for implementing partners**, and continuous **awareness-raising initiatives**. Currently, **83% of staff and personnel have completed SEA training**, reinforcing their obligation to report any incidents.

To further enhance protection measures for the year **2025**, UN-Habitat will **expand awareness campaigns**, provide **targeted training** for outposted offices, and **strengthen participation** in inter-agency SEA referral mechanisms. Additionally, the agency plans to **increase data collection through surveys**, **enhance reporting mechanisms**, and **seek resources** to improve oversight. UN-Habitat reaffirms its **zero-tolerance policy** for any form of harassment, discrimination, or abuse of authority and remains fully committed to implementing the **UN system's highest standards** in prevention, response, and accountability.

Agenda item 12. Annual report on action by the Executive Director to update and improve the internal management, policies and procedures of UN-Habitat

Excellencies,

This report highlights key initiatives undertaken by UN-Habitat to strengthen its internal management policies and procedures during the 2024-2025 biennium. These efforts are aimed at improving efficiency, transparency, and accountability across its operations, and are focused on areas such as financial and human resource management, delegation of authority, procurement guidance, digital workflow management, communication procedures, and legal and compliance oversight. Notable achievements include the development of a comprehensive budgeting tool, improvements in recruitment processes, streamlined procurement procedures, and the launch of initiatives to digitize workflows and enhance internal communication.

The report also outlines efforts to enhance legal and compliance frameworks, including the review and finalization of key documents related to partner engagement and community contract management. Additionally, work is underway to establish a comprehensive Regulatory Framework to streamline the creation and compliance of regulatory documents across the organization. These initiatives demonstrate UN-Habitat's commitment to continuous improvement and innovation, positioning the organization to meet its operational goals effectively while adhering to best practices and maintaining accountability.

Agenda item 13. Consideration and adoption of the outcomes of the session, including the provisional agenda for the second session of 2025.

Excellencies,

The Executive Board is expected to make several important decisions and recommendations to give further guidance to secretariat as well as to the upcoming 2nd resumed session of the UN-Habitat Assembly.

To facilitate these deliberations, and as requested by the Bureau, the secretariat has provided technical inputs as a basis for possible decisions to be considered by the Executive Board at the upcoming session. I am aware that the ad hoc working group on PBA has already met several times to consult on the draft decisions.

Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies,

I thank all for you for your attention to this first part of my presentation. Mr. Chairman, with your permission, I will ask our Secretary of Governing Bodies, Mr. Ulf Bjornholm, to briefly provide some additional information relating to logistical arrangements.

Back to you Mr. Chairman.

(The Chair to hands over to Ulf to brief on any logistical arrangements for the Executive Board session as needed)

(After that, the Chair to open the floor for Questions and Answers)

Questions and Answers

END.