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**Implementation by UN-Habitat of the reform of the
development system and management of the United Nations**

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Note by the secretariat

I. Background

1. Since 2020, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) has provided regular updates to the Executive Board on its support for the repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development.¹ The updates have been complemented by an information document containing a checklist on the implementation by UN-Habitat of the reform of the United Nations development system, developed pursuant to General Assembly resolution 76/4, to facilitate the oversight role of Member States, including monitoring alignment and adherence to the dual reporting model.
2. The present note has been submitted along with an updated version of the checklist. Together, the two documents provide a status update on the support provided by UN-Habitat for the reform of the United Nations development system at the global, regional and country levels. In line with the reform, UN-Habitat continues to actively engage with United Nations country teams to advance the implementation of its mandate. As the technical entity mandated to advance the New Urban Agenda and urban-related Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 11, UN-Habitat views the reform as an opportunity to strengthen advocacy for sustainable urbanization.
3. This approach is consistent with the recommendation of the Executive Board² to UN-Habitat to facilitate the implementation of the United Nations system-wide strategy on sustainable urban development³ by strengthening engagement with the United Nations Sustainable Development Group as well as other relevant entities; by actively participating in regional collaborative platforms, including issue-based coalitions and knowledge hubs; and by working closely with resident coordinators and United Nations country teams through common country analyses and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.

* HSP/EB.2026/1.

¹ See General Assembly resolution 72/279.

² Executive Board decision 2020/3, para. 18.

³ CEB/2019/4/Add.4.

4. The present note highlights selected activities that demonstrate the continued commitment of UN-Habitat to serving Member States by advancing its mandate through integrated United Nations results.

II. Introduction

5. In resolution 72/279, the General Assembly launched a comprehensive reform to reposition the United Nations development system, primarily at the country level, to strengthen the delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

6. Since 2019, significant efforts and resources have been invested at the institutional level to strengthen and empower resident coordinators in leading key planning instruments, including common country analyses and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, which are developed in close collaboration with country programmes.

III. Overall support by UN-Habitat for common country analyses and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks

7. The aims of the repositioning of the United Nations development system were as follows: first, to establish a revitalized, strategic and results-oriented United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework as the primary instrument for planning and implementing United Nations development activities at the country level; and second, to enable United Nations country teams to deliver collective results aligned with the national priorities set out in the Cooperation Frameworks. While implementation challenges persist, the Cooperation Framework has become the central instrument for aligning United Nations system support with national development goals.⁴

8. UN-Habitat embraced the reform from the outset. Between 2018 and 2020, UN-Habitat underwent restructuring in order to align itself with the Secretary-General's reform agenda. That resulted in the establishment of a new regional architecture that strengthened country presence and advisory services, reinforcing the role of UN-Habitat as the technical lead on sustainable urbanization in United Nations country teams.

9. In 2025, the support provided by UN-Habitat for United Nations development system reform entered a consolidation phase, marked by strong alignment with country-level planning instruments, consistent engagement with the resident coordinator system and further internalization of the management and accountability framework. As a non-resident entity in many programme countries, UN-Habitat maintains broad coverage through regional and subregional hubs, enabling engagement even in countries where it has no physical presence. Through its activities in more than 100 countries,⁵ UN-Habitat contributed to the priority outcomes of at least 82 per cent of United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks,⁶ promoting sustainable urbanization as a cross-cutting enabler across outcomes related to: (a) climate and environmental sustainability; (b) resilience and adaptation; (c) inclusive growth, adequate housing and service delivery; (d) governance and decentralization; and (e) migration, crisis recovery and resilience.

10. In addition, all common country analyses in countries where UN-Habitat has active operations included substantive urban, housing or territorial analysis. Those analyses identified urbanization as both a development accelerator and a risk multiplier, drawing on UN-Habitat data and policy input related to informal settlements, housing deficits, spatial inequality, climate and environmental pressures, municipal finance and disaster risk.

⁴ More than 120 countries around the world have signed United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (E/2025/57, para. 10).

⁵ Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), Report No. 2025/020 on the audit of management of implementing partners at UN-Habitat, 27 June 2025 (assignment No. AA2024-250-01).

⁶ This includes at least 65 out of 79 reviewed by OIOS in 2024, which articulated the contribution of UN-Habitat. (OIOS, Midterm Evaluation of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme Strategic Plan 2020–2025, 8 April 2024 (assignment No. IED-24-009), p. 34). The most recent contributions by UN-Habitat to United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, in 2025, included those of Bahrain, Ethiopia, Georgia, Iraq, Lesotho, Rwanda, Türkiye and Ukraine.

IV. UN-Habitat engagement with the resident coordinator system and the management and accountability framework

11. The resident coordinator system is the primary mechanism for delivering the United Nations development system reform at the country level. Under the management and accountability framework, the resident coordinator leads the development and implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, ensures its alignment with national priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals, and guides the United Nations country team towards integrated results across the development, humanitarian and peace nexus.
12. The management and accountability framework serves as the operational backbone of United Nations development system reform. It enhances complementarity within United Nations country teams, replaces fragmented accountability with collective responsibility and strengthens coherence and accountability for results at the country level.
13. UN-Habitat applies the management and accountability framework in both policy and practice. Collaboration with resident coordinators has been strengthened, in particular in countries where UN-Habitat maintains a physical presence, enabling more systematic integration of sustainable urbanization into United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and joint programming processes. In other countries, the effective mainstreaming of urban perspectives relies on proactive engagement with resident coordinators' offices and United Nations country teams, supported by regional technical backstopping. Regional directors and heads of country offices lead field-level delivery and strategic positioning, operating under established dual reporting arrangements with the resident coordinators' offices. Regular consultations and coordinated planning mechanisms ensure that urban priorities are reflected in the Cooperation Frameworks and translated into implementation programmes.
14. UN-Habitat recognizes the primacy of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and aligns its country-level priorities and interventions accordingly, deriving its programmatic focus from the relevant Cooperation Framework following its adoption. The Executive Board approves the strategic direction, work programme and budget of UN-Habitat, which are subsequently operationalized at the country level by UN-Habitat country teams, in consultation with resident coordinators and United Nations country teams. In 2024 and 2025, at least 82 per cent of the country-level activities of UN-Habitat demonstrated effective collaboration with other UN entities under the leadership of a resident coordinator. The regional offices further reinforce that alignment by supporting resident coordinators' offices through regional coordination mechanisms, including regional collaborative platforms and issue-based coalitions. This engagement strengthens system-wide prioritization within United Nations country teams and enhances policy dialogue and integrated support for governments.

V. Contribution of UN-Habitat to regional collaborative platforms and issue-based coalitions

15. In 2024 and 2025, UN-Habitat strengthened its engagement with United Nations regional coordination mechanisms, including by participating in regional collaborative platforms and providing technical expertise across regions. UN-Habitat supports regional collaborative platform processes by providing urban data and policy input and by monitoring progress in the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 11, including through peer reviews and regional coordination.
16. UN-Habitat also plays an active role in issue-based coalitions, which includes co-chairing or contributing to thematic coalitions in which urbanization intersects with other areas, such as migration, climate, housing, resilience, innovation, youth, gender and local governance. This engagement spans Africa, the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Through those mechanisms, UN-Habitat advances the integration of urban dimensions into regional policy dialogue and cross-sectoral coordination.
17. In 2025, UN-Habitat assumed co-leadership or a substantive role in several system-wide coalitions and partnerships, including the Local2030 coalition, a United Nations platform for advancing Sustainable Development Goal localization and advocacy co-chaired by UN-Habitat and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the Global Urban Data Coalition, a multi-stakeholder initiative promoting urban data harmonization and Sustainable Development Goal monitoring in collaboration with United Nations entities, development banks and civil society.

18. Achieving those results has required sustained effort. Effective regional coordination depends on clear positioning, strategic leadership, adequate resources and strong linkages to country-level delivery, and such conditions are not consistently in place. Urban issues are therefore not consistently prioritized in regional collaborative platforms, which sometimes focus on macroeconomic, social protection or humanitarian agendas. Moreover, despite its normative mandate, UN-Habitat is not systematically positioned as lead or co-lead and faces increasing competition with larger entities at the regional level.

19. Regional directors have therefore been encouraged to strengthen the positioning of UN-Habitat as the system-wide technical authority on sustainable urbanization and to expand co-leadership of relevant regional collaborative platforms and issue-based coalitions in which urbanization and housing are cross-cutting drivers of climate, resilience and inequality agendas. Where mandates overlap with those of the regional commissions (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, Economic Commission for Africa, Economic Commission for Europe, and Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), UN-Habitat seeks to move beyond ad hoc arrangements to strategic partnerships through joint programmes, flagship initiatives and formal cooperation agreements.

VI. Participation of UN-Habitat in business operations strategies and common back offices

20. The engagement of UN-Habitat in business operations strategies and common back offices follows guidance from the United Nations development system, which encourages joint operational arrangements at the country level to support the resident coordinator system and the respective United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. Participation in business operations strategies and common back offices promotes cost-efficiency through shared administrative services, strengthens coordinated operations of the United Nations country team under the leadership of the resident coordinator and aligns business processes with reform objectives on harmonization and transparency.

21. In 2025, UN-Habitat contributed to business operations strategy and common back office arrangements in several countries, despite its limited staffing and financial resources. Engagement included joint planning and operational coordination where such arrangements were established. The UN-Habitat headquarters in Nairobi fully participates in system-wide operational coordination mechanisms. In the Arab States, UN-Habitat contributes through the regional operations management team, co-led by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the United Nations Children's Fund, supporting the implementation of business operations strategies and common premises arrangements in Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Tunisia. In Latin America and the Caribbean, UN-Habitat participates in common back office arrangements in Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and Panama. In the Asia-Pacific region, UN-Habitat shares common premises in Bangkok. The contributions of UN-Habitat to system-wide efficiency gains are reflected in the reports of the Development Coordination Office and on the UN-Info platform; however, it is also important to acknowledge that limited resources and country presence constrain full participation in all business operations strategy and common back office arrangements.

VII. Updates on the funding compact

22. In 2024, UN-Habitat briefed the Executive Board on consultations among Member States, facilitated by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, on revitalizing the funding compact for the United Nations development system.⁷ As reaffirmed in General Assembly resolution 76/4, predictable and sustainable funding remains essential for the effective implementation of reform and the delivery of results.

23. Progress under the reform and the compact has been noted, including stronger alignment of the resident coordinator system with national priorities and improved system-wide coherence. Governments have reported enhanced coordination and reduced duplication. At the same time, the implementation of the compact continues in a challenging global financing environment and remains under discussion among Member States. A biennial global review is scheduled for 2026. The compact reflects mutual commitments: more predictable and flexible funding from Member States, and strengthened transparency, efficiency and collective results from the United Nations system.

⁷ See document HSP/EB.2024/9.

24. In this context, and consistent with previous guidance, the Executive Board may wish to reaffirm its support for the implementation of the funding compact. Increased and more predictable non-earmarked contributions would strengthen the financial sustainability, flexibility and operational agility of UN-Habitat, thereby strengthening its capacity to contribute effectively to the reform of the development system and to deliver on its normative and operational mandate in support of Member States.

VIII. Conclusion

25. In 2025, the engagement of UN-Habitat with the United Nations development system reform was further consolidated, with institutional alignment largely achieved. Participation in United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks is more systematic, collaboration with resident coordinators has been strengthened and urban priorities are more consistently reflected in collective United Nations results. The value of UN-Habitat as the system-wide focal point for sustainable urbanization is increasingly evident in joint analysis and programming, in particular in countries experiencing rapid urbanization, climate stress and protracted crises.

26. Structural constraints persist. Uneven country presence and limited core resources continue to affect the depth and consistency of engagement. As coordination demands increase, financial and institutional support have not always kept pace, particularly in fragile settings and on the humanitarian–development–peace nexus.

27. Sustained progress will require more predictable and flexible funding, clearer internal guidance and continued empowerment at the country level. As of early 2026, UN-Habitat is better positioned to contribute to system-wide results, in line with its strategic plan for the period 2026–2029. The priority ahead is to deepen integration with United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework outcomes, enhance accountability for collective results and further strengthen normative and policy leadership on sustainable urbanization across the United Nations system.
