The eighty-first meeting of the ad hoc working group on programmatic, budgetary and administrative matters of the Executive Board

Monday, 26 October 2026, from 9.00 to 12.00 East Africa Time

Chair: Amb. Beatrice Karago, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kenya to UN-Habitat, on behalf of H.E. Amb. Susan Nakhumicha Wafula, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kenya to UN-Habitat

Summary of discussions

Agenda item 1: Opening of the meeting and adoption of the provisional Agenda

1. The eighty-first meeting of the ad-hoc working group on programmatic, budgetary, and administrative matters was called to order at 9:10 am (EAT). The provisional agenda was adopted without any changes.

Agenda item 2: Preparations for the Second Session of the Executive Board 2026 on update on normative and operational activities of UN-Habitat

a. Country programme in Kenya
b. Country programme in Lao PDR
c. Update on the work of Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance (GWOPA)

2. The secretariat presented the country programme in Kenya, the Country programme in Lao PDR and on the work of Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance.

3. The representative from Kenya made a statement that has been made available here.

4. Member States welcomed the presentations and made following comments:
   - Welcomed the update on normative and operational activities particularly the implementation of the Kenya Country Programme, efforts to strengthen the link between scientific knowledge and practical urban action and its alignment with the Strategic Plan.
   - Welcomed the successful organization of WUF13 and suggested that future Forums adopt a more expert-oriented format, aligned with substantive objectives and available resources.
   - Encouraged greater visibility for UN-Habitat's normative and operational work and welcomed efforts to advance gender equality, human rights, equal access to services and opportunities, and gender-responsive urban planning and legislation.
   - Sought clarification on the design, implementation, resource mobilization and potential replication of the progressive funding model piloted in Kenya.
   - Requested information on lessons learned and challenges in scaling up peer-to-peer cooperation among water utilities, as well as UN-Habitat's engagement in the 2026 United Nations Water Conference.
   - Commended the China–UN-Habitat capacity-building programmes and requested that their achievements, including training for officials from developing countries be reflected in relevant UN-Habitat reports.

5. The Secretariat thanked Member States for their comments, and provided the following responses:

- Explained that the progressive funding model in Kenya, supported by the Joint SDG Fund and implemented jointly with UNDP and UNDRR, seeks to leverage public and private resources for sustainable urban development. Five pilot projects in five counties focus on urban and climate resilience, informal settlements and disaster risk reduction, building on existing government initiatives. While implementation began only two months ago, indications show strong private-sector and foundation interest. Lessons and results will be documented and shared as the programme progresses.
- Highlighted the Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance as a cost-effective mechanism for South–South, North–South and triangular cooperation. Key challenges include retaining skilled utility staff, sustaining capacity gains and mobilizing adequate domestic financing for water and sanitation services.
- Reported that UN-Habitat is actively preparing for the 2026 United Nations Water Conference, co-hosted by Senegal and the United Arab Emirates, by participating in preparatory meetings, contributing to six thematic papers, and advocating for stronger recognition of the links between urban water, housing, land, informal settlements and sanitation.
- Informed that planned conference engagement includes a flagship Blue Zone event on the housing–water–sanitation nexus, an event on water operators' partnerships with World Waternet and GWOPA, and "Green Zone" events.
- Acknowledged the contribution of the China–UN-Habitat capacity-building programmes and confirmed that their achievements will be reflected in future reporting.

d. Update on urban crisis prevention and response initiatives

e. Status of the development of the efforts to reconstruct the human settlements in the Gaza Strip: comprehensive report

6. The Secretariat provided a presentation on it work on urban crisis prevention and response initiatives, including a comprehensive report on the status of the development of the efforts to reconstruct the human settlements in the Gaza Strip.

7. Member States welcomed the presentation and provided the following comments:
   - Welcomed UN-Habitat's work on urban crisis prevention and response, including in Ukraine, and emphasized the importance of mandate-compliant technical cooperation in housing, urban planning, basic services and capacity-building.
   - Expressed concern about UN-Habitat's financial vulnerability and reliance on earmarked contributions for this work, which may cause programme priorities being driven by donor preferences rather than intergovernmentally agreed mandates.
   - Highlighted the Moscow SDG Localization Project and UN-Habitat´s support for Moscow's Voluntary Local Review, urban policy development and the sharing good practices.
   - Welcomed the analysis of the damage to housing, infrastructure and public services in Gaza, in support of recovery and reconstruction.
   - Emphasized concerns about restrictions preventing access of UN-Habitat staff to Gaza, inquired why this circumstance was not explicitly reflected in the report, and asked for information on how UN-Habitat can enable direct assessment and reconstruction activities in future.
   - Welcomed the Housing, Land and Property framework as a tool for future reconstruction and noted UN-Habitat's continued presence in Gaza through a national officer, and through projects supported by Norway and Japan.
   - One Member State reaffirmed its commitment to support to recovery and reconstruction in the Palestinian territories, citing approximately €400 million provided in humanitarian assistance and €400 million in development cooperation since October 2023, and expressed willingness to provide further support when conditions permit.

- Sought clarification on how UN-Habitat cooperates and coordinates with other UN agencies and Member States in Gaza.

8. The Secretariat thanked Member States for their comments, and provided the following responses:
   - Highlighted continued operational constraints in Gaza, including restricted access, limited internet connectivity and difficulties obtaining visas, and noted that while UN-Habitat has maintained a national coordinator in Gaza to support communication and limited assessment findings, complete field access remains essential for detailed technical verification.
   - Confirmed that efforts to ensure access have been escalated through field offices, headquarters, the Office of the Executive Director and the New York office, and that requests for authorization for international missions will continue.
   - Explained that assessments in areas with limited access rely predominantly on satellite imagery, information from other UN agencies, and previously available datasets. The latest verified findings reflect conditions up to October 2025 and will require further verification.
   - Noted that the restricted access to international missions had been reported in earlier reports to the Executive Board.
   - Emphasized that UN-Habitat's engagement in crisis settings forms part of a coordinated UN response, working closely with country teams, UN agencies and established inter-agency mechanisms to ensure complementarity.

Agenda item 3: Any other matters

9. The Secretariat of the Governing Bodies informed that the next meeting of the working group will take place on 11 November 2026 and the agenda and supporting documents will be made available on a dedicated meeting portal.

10. The eighty-first meeting of the ad hoc working group on programmatic, budgetary, and administrative matters of the Executive Board was adjourned at 11:40 am (EAT).