



United Nations Conference Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III)

Second session of the Preparatory Committee

Agenda Item 4: Preparations for the Conference

By

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Secretary-General of Habitat III

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Excellences,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

1. Allow me to start by thanking again the **Co-Chairs and all the members of** the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee for their leadership and the dedication during the last months, in close collaboration with the Habitat III Secretariat.
2. Since the election of the Bureau in September last years, particularly under the co-chairmanship of France and Ecuador, the preparatory process has gained lot of traction. I am pleased to update you on the status of the preparations and the next steps ahead of us on the way to the conference in 2016.
3. I will start with the status of the preparations at **national level**. As you may recall, Member States have been encouraged to prepare a national, evidence-based progress report on the implementation of the 1996 Habitat Agenda and other internationally agreed goals and targets relevant to housing and sustainable urban development.
4. The **National Reports** are key documents for identifying new challenges, emerging trends and a prospective vision for sustainable human settlements and urban development.
5. To date, **more than 100 countries** have started the preparation of the Habitat III National Reports. Just in the last few days several Member States have submitted their report and have shared with the Secretariat the details of the process of engagement and participation in which they have been elaborated.

6. I would like to make special mention to Member States which have included the establishment or strengthening of national habitat committees as part of the preparation of Habitat III national reports, considering the support provided by the private sector, non-governmental organizations and academia, as encouraged by the General Assembly in resolution 68/239.
7. In March this year, I reminded all member states to prepare and officially forward the report, providing the Secretariat the permission to share it publically through a clear procedure. I have also committed specific support from the Habitat III Secretariat for Least Developed Countries to ensure that preparation of the report is as inclusive as possible.
8. I would like to encourage all countries to engage in national preparations towards Habitat III in collaboration with the Habitat III Secretariat. I would also like to stress the importance of stakeholders' participation in the process. To this end, I strongly advise countries to make use of public forums such as **National Urban Forums** and similar platforms, in order to enrich the report and share the contents widely.
9. National Urban Forums have been so far organized in several African countries, including Cameroon, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Senegal. Others are being organized elsewhere with strong linkages to the Habitat III process. These Forums contribute to building knowledge base, policy debate and advocacy activities that support the National preparations. I am pleased to inform you that detailed guidelines are now available on the Habitat III website for those countries who would like to use this mechanism.
10. National campaigns to raise the awareness on sustainable urbanization will be also encouraged. The Habitat III Secretariat is developing advocacy tools to facilitate this exercise to all Member States.

11. At the **regional level**, the process of preparation of **regional reports** has started with the effective contributions from the United Nations Regional Commissions and drawing on the contents of national reports. This regional process includes the organization of regional Inter-governmental meetings and other regional events. It is undertaken in all five regions and has been coordinated by the Habitat III Secretariat in collaboration with the Regional Commissions and the Regional Offices of UN-Habitat.
12. Specific roadmaps with events and milestone deliverables were prepared at regional level and will be published shortly. They include two Expert Group meetings for each region.
13. The regional reports, resulting from each roadmap of activities, are expected to be finalized by January 2016. It will provide an important evidence base for the process of preparation of the zero draft of the outcome document to be negotiated at the intergovernmental level.
14. The regional preparations are benefitting from the regional ministerial conferences on housing and urban development and other relevant expert group meetings. Already from 2013 and 2014, several regions organized high-level events to support the preparations for Habitat III.
15. In **Africa**, the High-level Panel on Urbanization and Structural Transformation in Africa was held in March 2015.

16. Previously, the fifth session of the African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development was held in N’Djamena, Chad, from 25 to 28 February 2014. It included in its agenda a discussion on regional aspects of the Habitat III preparatory process and the post-2015 development agenda. The main outcomes of the session were the N’Djamena Declaration and the N’Djamena Action Plan. These two documents stated the key priorities of Africa in the area of cities and other human settlements and actions on how to achieve them.

17. I am pleased to announce that the Government of Nigeria has submitted an initial proposal to host an African regional meeting on the New Urban Agenda before the end of 2015.

18. In **Asia**, the fifth session of the Asian Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development was held in Seoul from 3 to 5 November 2014 under the theme “Equal opportunity for sustainable development”. The ministers adopted the Seoul Declaration and the Seoul Action Plan. These documents emphasized the linkage between sustainable urbanization and sustainable development. They also decided to deepen the commitment to collaboration and cooperation across the region to make cities and human settlements integrated, inclusive, sustainable and resilient.

19. I am pleased to inform you that the High Level Asia Pacific Regional Meeting for Habitat III Preparation will be held in Jakarta, Indonesia, in October 2015.

20. Habitat III was also discussed at the twenty-third General Assembly of the Ministers and High-level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in **Latin America and the Caribbean**, held in Mexico City in August 2014, with representation from 17 Governments. In the outcome document, participants expressed their desire to actively engage in the preparatory process of Habitat III, as well as in the Conference itself.
21. I am pleased to announce that the Government of Mexico has submitted a proposal to organize a regional meeting in the first trimester of 2016.
22. In the **European region**, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) hosted the Ministerial Meeting on Housing and Land Management in October 2013. The ministers adopted the Strategy for Sustainable Housing and Land Management in the ECE region for the period 2014–2020. The Strategy contains specific targets to be reached by member States by 2020 and is a strong contribution to Habitat III.
23. Another important input from the Economic Commission for Europe came from the seventy-fifth session of the Committee on Housing and Land Management took place in October 2014. The Committee approved the **Geneva United Nations Charter on Sustainable Housing**. This Charter aims to improve the sustainability of housing in the ECE region through effective policies and actions at all levels, supported by international cooperation.
24. I am pleased to inform you that the Government of Czech Republic has submitted a proposal to organize a regional meeting in the first trimester of 2016.

25. All the regional meetings commented are the result of the call for proposal made in January-February 2015 and details of each meeting will be discussed with the respective governments to ensure a successful outcome. These meetings will be crucial to further discuss and make recommendations on the regional process, including the regional reports.
26. At the **global level**, a global report will be prepared drawing on the national and regional reports. This will include all available knowledge, resources and data, as input to and support for the preparatory process of the Conference.
27. Supplementary to the global report, important inputs at the global level will continue to come from many initiatives and platforms.
28. In 2014 many of you experienced the seventh session of the **World Urban Forum**, held in Medellin, Colombia. This provided an important contribution to the preparatory process by holding focused sessions and discussions on Habitat III. The next host of the World Urban Forum, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, has already started to prepare WUF9 in close connection with the Habitat III process.
29. The host of the next World Urban Forum has already been announced, thanks to the generous offer of the Government of Malaysia and the City of Kuala Lumpur. The host has already started preparations, closely linked with the Habitat III Secretariat.
30. Since 2010, Habitat Agenda partners and other stakeholders partners have continued to engage in the **World Urban Campaign** in order to identify and collect urban solutions that can contribute to the new urban agenda.

31. This global platform has evolved from a knowledge-sharing network into a think tank, and has been considerably strengthened in terms of credibility and number of partners.
32. Prior to the World Urban Forum in March 2014, the World Urban Campaign launched the first version of “**The City We Need**”. This document represents a first consensus of all partners engaged to date on key principles for urbanization outcomes.
33. Building on these deliberations, the first **Urban Thinkers Campus** was organized in October 2014 in Caserta, Italy. This event attracted new thinking and further strengthened the City We Need process. The Urban Thinkers Campus was acknowledged by participants as a model for debates and discussions on principles, policies and action plans on key issues for the Habitat III conference and the New Urban Agenda.
34. Participants took the first steps in the creation of a global partners deliberative platform for Habitat III, named the **General Assembly of Partners**. This platform aims to serve as a broad-based platform for non-governmental partners in order to develop a consensus on contributions to the outcome document and other related matters for Habitat III.
35. The **General Assembly of Partners** has convened their inaugural meeting on 13 April 2015 here in Nairobi and approved a statement to be recognized as a significant mechanism for stakeholder involvement in the preparatory process towards Habitat III.
36. Other important substantive inputs will come from the **thematic meetings**, which will be hosted by cities around the world and form part of the official process. After the call for proposals made in January-February 2015, cities like Montreal (Canada), Mexico Federal District (Mexico), Cuenca (Ecuador), Barcelona (Spain), Tel Aviv (Israel) or Johannesburg (South

Africa) will organize thematic meetings as part of the preparatory process towards Habitat III.

37. Other cities and countries have expressed their willingness to join and we are in the process of evaluating a few more proposals that reached us before April 2015.
38. As part of the participatory process, innovative tools are also being considered to ensure that the views of citizens are heard on their urban priorities and concerns are well known. The Secretariat is in this regard reviewing the experiences of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and other innovative meetings.
39. The General Assembly requested that the preparatory process should ensure effective mobilization of the **expertise of the United Nations system** as a whole, including the regional commissions, and other relevant international, regional and sub-regional organizations, for the Habitat III preparatory process.
40. To this end, a **United Nations Task Team on Habitat III** has been established in January 2015. This Task Team is comprised of the focal points of United Nations agencies and programmes and has been coordinating system-wide preparations towards Habitat III for the UN family. Close linkages are ensured with ongoing processes and existing platforms, especially those related to the post-2015 development agenda.
41. The UN Task team is currently preparing a series of stock-taking **Issue Papers** on 22 topics identified within six main areas. These papers are inspired on the Rio+20 Issue Briefs and aim to highlight general findings, and identify research needs. More than 20 agencies and programmes of the United Nations are represented in this exercise and a first draft has been finalized and shared as non-papers in this PrepCom. You will hear presentations on the main areas later today.

42. A second draft of the issue paper will be available from 30 April 2015. A final version will be published by June 2015, opening at that time on-line thematic discussions
43. The Bureau of the Preparatory Committee has also approved the establishment of 10 **Policy Units** to further enrich the substantive preparations for the conference. These will be made up of 20 members each and two co-lead organizations. Selection of members will be guided by geographical and gender balance, as well as qualitative criteria for contribution to the Habitat III preparatory process. Member States will be approached to provide name of experts that can join each of the policy unit.
44. The objective of the units will be to identify good urbanization practices and lessons learned, and to develop independent policy recommendations critical to the definition and implementation of a new urban agenda.
45. The Policy Units will start to be formed in May-June 2015 and will meet three times during the preparatory process in 2015 and 2016. They will also take full advantage of the upcoming sessions of the regional and thematic meetings. The establishment of the policy units includes resource mobilization components that will aim to ensure that they are self-financed.
46. Logistical preparations for the Conference have also started. The Habitat III Secretariat is in close coordination with the host country, Ecuador, and the host city, Quito. Habitat III will be an innovative Conference in which the whole city will serve as a venue to showcase sustainable urban development. We also appreciate the collaboration with the Government of Indonesia on the preparations for the third session of the Preparatory Committee.

47. In the area of **resource mobilization** for Habitat III, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Governments of Germany, Indonesia, Spain and France for their contributions to the Habitat III Trust Fund. There will also be important contributions in relation to the regional and thematic meetings that are coming in 2015 and 2016. At the same time, I would like to appeal to you for further support wherever possible, in order to ensure a comprehensive and fruitful preparatory process.
48. Before to finish, I will like to direct your attention to the process ahead of us. There is a clear and positive correlation between **urbanization and development**. Good urbanization is a source - not just an outcome - of economic growth and poverty reduction.
49. Underlying the diversity of cities around the world, there is a set of three common measures employed by all well-performing human settlements. First, **enabling legislation** with adequate rules and regulations; second, **better spatial planning and design**; and third, a **financial plan** both to sustain the functioning of the city and to harvest economic prosperity.
50. All levels of governments must commit to ensuring that these three measures are employed strategically and an in an integrated framework in order to attain the results needed. Many fundamental issues affecting urbanization are decided by national governments and for proper urbanization to occur, a country needs a national urban policy to establish priorities and coordinate between different governmental bodies and levels.

51. **Regional and local governments** have an equally indispensable role to play in achieving sustainable urbanization. Local authorities must implement planning and design, protect public space and ensure financial viability. Only the public sector - the collective government of the city - can effectively secure public space and oversee good urban planning and design and attain common goods. Key amongst the tools at their disposal are planned city extensions.
52. Local governments must gain the legitimacy to oversee good cities. They are at the level closest to the people and have the greatest accountability to those who put them in place. Nevertheless, local governments cannot do everything on their own. While local authorities carry a great deal of responsibility, they also often have very limited power. National governments need to make sure that local governments have the necessary authority to deal with local governance.
53. I believe it is indeed crucial to keep the spirit of Habitat II in Istanbul towards Habitat III in Quito. Habitat II was an important step forward in the recognition of the relevance of the networks of local authorities.
54. I would like to encourage you to build on those successes. Habitat III is an opportunity to strengthen the partnerships between the United Nations and the regional and local governments. The full involvement of local and regional authorities as policy developers, and not simply as implementers, will enable the creation of an inclusive Habitat III Agenda, as well as the achievement of urban sustainable development in the future.
55. **The Second World Assembly of Local Authorities** in October 2016 will be one of the key platforms to unify local and

regional governments in the road of Habitat III and, also, as a continuation of a path that started in Habitat II.

56. I thank all of you for your dedication and support in preparing for a successful Habitat III conference. My special thanks go again to the members of the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee, under the leadership of the two co-chairs. They have hosted in a short period since their election. They have done a fantastic work of preparations for conference itself.

57. I thank you for your attention.