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Item 5 of the provisional agenda\*

**Activities of the United Nations Human Settlements  
Programme, including coordination matters**

**Progress in the implementation of Governing Council resolution  
25/6 on the international guidelines on urban and territorial  
planning**

**Report of the Executive Director**

**I. Introduction**

1. In resolution 25/6, the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) approved the international guidelines on urban and territorial planning and requested the Executive Director to report on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution to the Governing Council at its twenty-sixth session. The present report provides an overview of progress made during the biennium 2015–2016 in the process of generating knowledge and guidance for the localization of the guidelines, and the establishment of partnerships and a community of leadership for their implementation.
2. Since their approval in 2015, the *International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning* have been translated into 11 languages and the English version has been downloaded from the UN-Habitat website over 105,000 times. The guidelines have been launched in four countries (Belarus, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Japan) and awareness has been raised in various settings and countries with a view to having them used and adapted to the local context and planning practices.
3. The approval of the guidelines was timely given the global discourse on urban development: they are explicitly referred to in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), held in Quito in October 2016, entitled the “New Urban Agenda”, as a means for the effective implementation of the Agenda. The guidelines are therefore a global reference framework to which national Governments, local authorities, planning professionals and civil society representatives can refer in the development of policies, plans and actions that target the improvement of urban areas towards more sustainable development.
4. In that context, UN-Habitat has conceptualized and executed the activities described below, with major contributions from partners, in order to answer the Governing Council’s call, set out in paragraph 4 of resolution 25/6, to assist interested member States in using the guidelines and adapting them to their territorial and national contexts, where appropriate, including through capacity and tool development and the establishment of partnerships.

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## **II. Key activities**

### **A. Country experiences in the implementation of the guidelines**

5. Working with local planning constituencies and authorities, the guidelines are being piloted and tested for the development, review and implementation of urban and territorial planning and policy frameworks in the following four countries: Belarus, China, Saudi Arabia and the State of Palestine. Following the launch of the guidelines in those countries, UN-Habitat has engaged in a discussion with relevant stakeholders (the Institute for Regional and Urban Planning, Belarus, the Wuhan Land Use and Urban Spatial Planning Centre, China, and the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs, Saudi Arabia) to illustrate the principles and recommendations provided in the guidelines, with the aim of strengthening local planning practices and capacities.

6. UN-Habitat has provided technical assistance to China and Sri Lanka in the form of rapid assessments of their regional and local development plans with the aim of identifying strengths and opportunities for improvement of their planning systems and the way forward towards implementing those improvements.

7. In Minsk, a pilot project, a training event and two seminars have been held to improve master planning processes and outcomes.

8. UN-Habitat has also encouraged the establishment of partnerships and collaborated with other international bodies to advance the guideline implementation process. For instance, Cities Alliance collaborated with UN-Habitat in the formulation of city development strategies in Tam Ky and Quy Nhon, Viet Nam.

9. In paragraph 18 of resolution 25/4, on the implementation of the strategic plan for 2014–2019, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director to consider health and well-being aspects, including the promotion of and access to health services, in developing policies on urban and territorial planning and human settlements and in the operational work of UN-Habitat. In response to that request and with funding from the Government of Norway, UN-Habitat is working with the World Health Organization in the implementation of the guidelines, with a particular focus on addressing health issues in urban planning and development in selected countries, including Belarus, Ghana and Liberia.

### **B. Monitoring progress in the implementation of the guidelines**

10. In paragraph 7 of resolution 25/6, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director, in close consultation with member States and other relevant stakeholders, to report on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution, which, together with the call made in paragraph 4 of the resolution, has inspired UN-Habitat to develop a global survey on urban and territorial planning to track progress by member States and guideline partners in the implementation of the guidelines.

11. The first monitoring survey in the guideline implementation framework was conducted from December 2016 to January 2017. During the survey, UN-Habitat collected 22 responses from 20 member States.

12. Section III of the survey specifically addressed the implementation of the guidelines in order to identify challenges, actions and experiences in their implementation and use. The results revealed that only 20 per cent of respondents occasionally used the recommendations provided in the guidelines, while 25 per cent of respondents were using the recommendations on a regular basis. However, 55 per cent of respondents said that they never used the recommendations provided. The survey revealed three main challenges related to the use of the guidelines: low awareness of the guidelines (68 per cent), lack of financing for international or local expertise (45 per cent) and lack of information on what it meant to implement the guidelines (41 per cent).

13. The open-ended questions on the respondents' experience with regard to the use of the guidelines yielded a wide range of answers. Most respondents indicated no experience or referred to the general implementation of their country's planning practices, with no direct relation to the guidelines. For instance, Germany and Turkey were critical, saying that the guidelines were generic and needed to be better adapted to the context of each country. In general, the guidelines were considered to provide a basis that could be incorporated into pre-existing systems.

14. Interest in supporting the adaptation and use of the guidelines was predominantly shown at the national level, followed by engagement at the city and regional levels. Respondents said that they would be willing to use the guidelines at the national level for the following activities: institution building (63 per cent), policy dialogue (63 per cent) and financial incentives or instruments

(50 per cent). At the city and city-region levels, respondents said that they would be willing to use them for legal and regulatory adjustments (36 per cent), adapting planning instruments (32 per cent) and adapting planning practices (32 per cent).

15. While illustrating the progress in the implementation of the guidelines worldwide, the results of the global monitoring survey will also be used by UN-Habitat to determine the need to adjust the approach and implementation in the process of promoting and adapting the guidelines.

### **C. Tool development and capacity-building for urban and territorial planning**

16. In response to paragraph 4 of resolution 25/6, in which the Governing Council requested the Executive Director to assist interested member States in using the guidelines and adapting them to their contexts, where appropriate, and further developing tools and monitoring indicators for their implementation, UN-Habitat, with funding from the Government of Sweden, is developing a handbook and a toolkit for the implementation of the guidelines. The handbook and other tools that are being developed will assist member States and other stakeholders in implementing and localizing the guidelines to specific settings taking into consideration the various planning scales, while also enabling the integration of different sectors.

17. The handbook and associated toolkit for localization have been drafted, along with a set of methodologies to assist member States and other stakeholders from the planning sector in reviewing and reforming their planning systems, including a self-assessment questionnaire addressed at the four guideline stakeholder groups, namely national Governments, local authorities, planning professionals and their associations, and civil society organizations. Similarly, a monitoring framework is currently being developed to guide such planning reforms while remaining in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The monitoring framework and its set of 39 planning-oriented indicators will also support the efforts of UN-Habitat by tracking the influence of the guidelines at the national, regional and global levels. In addition, a capacity-building and learning package on the guidelines is in development.

18. In response to paragraph 5 of resolution 25/6, on the development of partnerships to support the adaptation and use of the guidelines, UN-Habitat has developed strong partnerships in the process of developing tools to be used for the adoption and implementation of the guidelines. In particular, the contribution and involvement of partners has been sought to provide technical expertise and validate the content of the guideline implementation resources, such as the handbook. International organizations such as the International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP), the Economic Commission for Europe and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) have supported the adoption of the guidelines at the global level by providing channels for their dissemination, while also opening platforms for the validation of tools and to undertake capacity-building.

19. Through this type of collaboration, a number of training and awareness-raising events were held in 2016. First, a training event for planning professionals on the localization of the guidelines was held during the fifty-second ISOCARP Congress in Durban, South Africa, in September 2016. Second, the localization package was disseminated to local governments at the 5th UCLG Congress, held in Bogotá in October 2016. Third, the two partners were brought together during Habitat III for a training event on the use of the localization package. Lastly, a different approach to capacity-building on the guidelines was tested in Kigali in November 2016 in the form of a land policy workshop on how the guidelines could be applied to a particular theme within the planning sector. The workshop was hosted by the Global Land Tool Network; the Land Policy Initiative of the African Union Commission, the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank; and the Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development.

20. To facilitate the adoption of the guidelines and develop the capacities of planning constituencies, a learning package has been drafted to create an effective and efficient learning strategy that expands from a transfer of learning focus and theory of change, as envisioned by the Regional and Metropolitan Planning Unit of the Urban Planning and Design Branch of UN-Habitat. The learning package includes an instructor's guide and a participant's workbook through which stakeholders can take on the role of promoting the principles and recommendations of the guidelines in their respective urban environments by designing learning events that bring together the different stakeholders of the planning realm. The learning package has been drafted and is in the stage of validation and testing, and will be added to the guideline implementation framework.

## **D. Building partnerships: establishing a community for the implementation of the guidelines**

21. In line with paragraph 5 of resolution 25/6, a total of 27 partners, including other United Nations entities and regional economic commissions (the United Nations Centre for Regional Development, the Economic Commission for Europe, the World Health Organization), some countries (France, Indonesia, Japan, Norway, South Africa and Uganda), international organizations (Cities Alliance, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the World Bank) and civil society representatives (Environmental Development Action in the Third World and the International Real Estate Federation) have been engaged in the adoption and use of the guidelines.

22. International professional associations have also joined the partnership for implementation. ISOCARP and UCLG have established a partnership with UN-Habitat to support the adoption and use of the guidelines through their professional networks. In addition to supporting the drafting of the localization tools as described above, they have contributed new ideas to extend the work of the guidelines and committed to taking them forward through the Quito implementation plan for the New Urban Agenda.

23. More recently, the guidelines implementation framework has received support from the Prince of Wales's Charitable Foundation through its International Sustainability Unit. As a supporter of the guidelines, the Foundation has taken on the task of establishing a community of leadership to coordinate the activities within the implementation framework of the guidelines and consequently the Quito implementation plan. Two major events have been held to formulate and consolidate the partnership network: the first during Habitat III; the second, hosted by the Prince of Wales's Charitable Foundation, in London in February 2017.

24. In paragraphs 2 and 6 of resolution 25/6, the Governing Council encouraged member States to take leading roles in the adoption and use of the guidelines. In that regard, several initiatives and activities have been launched with the support of partner countries. For example, the Government of Japan has announced its commitment to establish a platform to implement international initiatives for urban and territorial planning, in which the guidelines will have a leading role. In addition, the Government of Norway, in collaboration with the World Health Organization, is supporting a thematic approach to the use of the guidelines, with a focus on urban health. In that context, several activities are being organized to support the generation of knowledge and development of tools for urban planning and health, such as the publication of a health edition of the compendium of inspiring practices and the production of a guidance document for stakeholders on healthy urban and territorial planning.

## **E. Disseminating the guidelines and raising awareness of urban and territorial planning**

25. The guidelines are the most popular publication of UN-Habitat. In order to accommodate the growing demand for a holistic and universal planning framework and to ensure its dissemination from the local to the global level, the guidelines are being translated and are already available in 11 languages (Arabic, Indonesian, Chinese, English, French, Indonesian, Japanese, Persian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Vietnamese).

26. Several communication instruments have also been developed to promote the use of the guidelines. For example, the "International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning: A Synopsis" sets out the background to, main components of and current development pertaining to the guidelines, and a video is available online that provides a summary of the guidelines and a description of the main achievements associated with the guidelines. Other resources were made available during Habitat III and the third session of the Preparatory Committee for Habitat III, including flyers, bookmarks and factsheets setting out country experiences.

27. The guidelines were disseminated at six events held during Habitat III to promote their use and highlight partnerships and various approaches to their implementation. The events also served to strengthen existing partnerships with partner countries, international professional organizations and other United Nations entities and regional economic commissions.

28. In paragraph 6 of resolution 25/6, the Governing Council encouraged member States and partners to support the future work of UN-Habitat, especially in promoting the use of the guidelines. The guidelines have been cited and referenced in a total of eight magazine and academic articles (including *The Thinker* and various journals on planning studies) and multiple postings have been published by partners and individuals on social media. In addition, explicit reference was made to them, as well as to the "Compendium of inspiring practices", in the message given by the Prince of

Wales at Habitat III in which he described the guidelines as an excellent and authoritative document, with its compendium of successful and sustainable cities that had stood the test of time and provided clear examples to follow.

### **III. Strategy for the implementation of the guidelines during the period 2017–2019**

29. While the first biennium of work since the launch of the guidelines was dedicated to generating knowledge on planning, the preparation of tools for the application of the guidelines and the establishment of partnerships for their adoption and use, the second biennium will represent a crucial period for advancing the portfolio of the guidelines towards more operational activities. Thus, major international events and demonstration projects for implementation across several geographical regions are contemplated within the period, including an international conference and the launch of several projects. Likewise, the work related to the guidelines will increasingly focus on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda given that urban and territorial planning has gained crucial momentum, especially as a result of Habitat III.

30. The year 2018 will represent a milestone for the guidelines as the first international conference on urban and territorial planning is expected to be held during the year (date and host country to be determined). It is anticipated that the conference will bring together participating partners and stakeholders of the planning sector (including Governments, international organizations and representatives of civil society and the planning profession) to discuss major issues relating to urban development through the planning lens and establish new commitments towards the creation of a global community for the implementation of the guidelines.

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