Agenda Item 2:

Draft Minutes of the Thirty-Seventh Regular Session of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, which was held on 14 June 2010 (HSP/CPR/38/2).
Draft minutes of the thirty-seventh regular meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, held on 14 June 2010

Opening of the meeting

1. The meeting was opened at 2.20 p.m. on Monday, 14 June 2010, by Mr. Macharia Kamau, Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

2. The meeting was attended by 74 participants from 44 countries and 1 observer mission.

3. The Chair welcomed the following new permanent representatives to the Committee: Mr. Tuncer Kayalar (Turkey) and Mr. Mohamed Ali Nur (Somalia). He also bade farewell to Mr. Parampreet Singh Ranghawa (India), who had left the Nairobi duty station, thanking him for his contribution to the Committee’s work, which had greatly assisted it in discharging its mandate.

Item 1: Adoption of the agenda

4. The agenda was adopted on the basis of the provisional agenda set forth in documents HSP/CPR/37/1/Rev.1 and Add.1/Rev.1.

Item 2: Adoption of the draft minutes of the thirty-sixth regular meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, held on 5 March 2010

5. The Committee approved and adopted the draft minutes of its thirty-sixth regular meeting, held on 5 March 2010, as contained in document HSP/CPR/37/2.

Item 3: Six-monthly progress report on the implementation of the medium-term strategic and institutional plan

6. Introducing the item, Ms. Anna Tibaijuka, Executive Director of UN-Habitat, presented the six-monthly progress report set out in document HSP/CPR/37/3 on the implementation of the medium-term strategic and institutional plan for the period 2008–2013. Noting that significant progress had been made in
implementation, she highlighted both achievements in the focus areas and a number of outstanding challenges to be tackled. She thanked the Committee for its support in the implementation of the plan and invited it to provide guidance on the report’s content and format and on specific points of implementation.

7. In the ensuing discussion, several representatives thanked the Executive Director for her report, which was generally acknowledged to be comprehensive and wide-ranging. One said that the document should be used as a road map for a new work culture within UN-Habitat that focused on results-based management. Views expressed by individual representatives included that the report served as a key document to monitor UN-Habitat on a biannual basis and that the report was a strategic vehicle showing steadfast guidance and genuine commitment, not only on paper, but through genuine organizational change.

8. The chair of the peer review panel on the implementation of the medium-term strategic and institutional plan reported on progress made in the review progress. She said that the report produced by consultants and discussed by the panel was being reviewed by a quality assurance group and would be discussed in a working group meeting of the Committee on 18 August 2010 and submitted thereafter to the Committee for its consideration in September 2010.

9. One representative welcomed improvements in the medium-term strategic and institutional plan and reporting thereon; he noted, however, that structural and personal challenges remained, including those related to interlinkages between UN-Habitat and the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the Committee of Permanent Representatives and the Governing Council, and donor country policies and priorities. He stressed that donor countries, sitting as they did on various boards and committees, often had too much influence on the organization’s activities. He was confident, he said, that, once the review process had been finalized prior to the twenty-third session of the Governing Council in 2011, the organization would ensure a more strongly aligned response in close cooperation with member States.

10. Another representative said that, even though his impression of the report was that it adequately reflected UN-Habitat achievements, there was no link between the quarterly country activities reports and six-monthly strategic and institutional plan reports and indicators needed to be refined. There was a need for more explicit indicators to show the achievement of objectives and the six-monthly report should include cross-cutting priorities in each area rather than by sector.

11. In response, the Executive Director welcomed the comments made, noting that, as the secretariat was considering the modification of indicators, practical advice in that regard was welcome.

12. The Committee took note of the report.

Item 4: Quarterly report on UN-Habitat country activities

13. Introducing the item, the Executive Director presented the quarterly report on UN-Habitat country activities set out in document HSP/CPR/37/4.

14. In the ensuing discussion, several representatives thanked the Executive Director for her report, which was generally acknowledged as being comprehensive. One said that the content of the report was well balanced, noting that projects under way were important to the implementation of the Habitat Agenda in line with the targets of the Millennium Development Goals. He also highlighted the need for a balanced regional approach. Welcoming the role of UN-Habitat in post-conflict and disaster relief, he said that more action was required for country-level continuity.

15. Another representative said that the quarterly report enabled member States to be more familiar with UN-Habitat activities. He underscored the need for UN-Habitat to be a transformative agent of change for the urban agenda; projects must be replicable to reach the scale required. He stressed that the strategic normative approach was the most promising for the organization. A third representative called for UN-Habitat to plan activities within a framework of a strategic vision and to ensure that the quality of its activities was controlled and that they were distributed in a manner that took into account geographical balance.

16. Several representatives drew attention to the activities in their own countries. One said that UN-Habitat had influenced his Government to create sustainable conditions for the implementation of urbanization policies. The representative of Nigeria welcomed the signing of a memorandum of understanding between UN-Habitat and his Government for the establishment of a one-stop centre for
young people in the capital, marking a milestone in their ever-expanding cooperation. The representative of Pakistan thanked UN-Habitat for assistance provided to returnees from conflict areas in the form of shelter. He said that, while his country was facing security challenges, the situation was improving. He requested that the quarterly report record that over 2 million internally displaced persons had returned home.

17. One representative welcomed UN-Habitat activities in Haiti, which constituted a positive example of teamwork and good use of capacities. He called for UN-Habitat to provide integrated services over and above post-disaster recovery.

18. Another representative highlighted the importance of projects in Afghanistan, saying that to stabilize the situation in that country there was a need for support through national solidarity programmes targeting local communities. He expressed his confidence that UN-Habitat would ensure that projects were successful and underscored the need for their urgent implementation. He drew attention to a recent article in a Kenyan newspaper on a Kibera slum upgrading project, which stated that, while local residents were grateful for their new housing, they had lost their sense of community in the move. He sought clarification on the project’s status.

19. The Executive Director welcomed the comments made and information provided. She also thanked the Government of Japan for its instrumental financing of UN-Habitat operations. In response to the question raised regarding the Kibera slum upgrading project, she said that UN-Habitat was promoting pilot programmes for adoption by Governments. The project had been initiated in Kibera and was being replicated in other areas. It was currently funded in full by the Kenyan Government; further resources were required to move the project to scale. She emphasized the importance of forming housing cooperatives, involving financial institutions and developing long-term pro-poor mortgage systems to make dwellings affordable. She drew attention to a complementary project under way in Athi River, outside Nairobi, where land had been purchased by the Government of Finland.

20. The Committee took note of the report.

**Item 5: Report on the outcome of the fifth session of the World Urban Forum**

21. Introducing the item, the Executive Director presented a report on the outcome of the fifth session of the World Urban Forum. She expressed her appreciation to the Government of Bahrain for its offer to host the sixth session of the World Urban Forum, in 2012, the agreement on which had already been signed.

22. All the representatives who took the floor thanked the Executive Director for her report and most also commended the various stakeholders on their efforts to ensure the success of the Forum’s fifth session. A number of representatives expressed their gratitude to the Government of Bahrain for agreeing to host the Forum’s sixth session.

23. Many representatives stressed the importance of detailing and disseminating the proceedings of Forum sessions more effectively. One, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that, the positive signals of the Forum’s growing potential notwithstanding, it was crucial to improve the assessment of substantive reports of sessions to ensure more a effective evaluation of the impact of initiatives, efficient planning of future sessions and the integration of session outcomes into UN-Habitat programmes. Another representative underscored the importance of linking the conclusions of Forum sessions with formal bodies, including the Governing Council and the Committee. He noted the need in the preparation of sessions to plan the use of resources and the selection of host cities wisely. A third representative suggested integrating lessons learned from the fifth session into strategies for the implementation of the medium-term strategic and institutional plan. One representative underlined the importance of the Forum’s outcomes in guiding Governments in the implementation of national sustainable urban development and management policies. Another suggested that the Forum should be strengthened and transformed from an advisory platform to a statutory body in the UN-Habitat governance structure to ensure better implementation of the outcomes of sessions in addition to more predictable funding and hosting.

24. Several representatives said that the Forum provided an opportunity for the generation of ideas, the exchange of best practices and experiences, the development and strengthening of partnerships and transformative opportunities for communities, in addition to showcasing the work and achievements of UN-Habitat. One expressed the hope that lessons learned from the session would help African countries to articulate sustainable solutions to problems of rapid urbanization on the continent. Another noted that the
session’s positive outcomes had reaffirmed the Forum’s status as the leading global platform for discussions on important social and economic development issues, including the Millennium Development Goals. He said that meetings during the session had enabled States and Habitat Agenda partners to discuss and reach a mutual understanding on a number of global issues against the backdrop of the global financial and climate change crises, which required the pooling of efforts, including the transfer and adoption of innovative technologies. One representative expressed his satisfaction at the increased high-level participation at Forum sessions.

25. One representative expressed her gratitude to the Government of Brazil, as host nation of the Forum session, for raising the profile of Latin American and Caribbean countries and for the opportunity afforded to representatives of her Government to work with the Executive Director and the Regional Director in preparations for and during the session. She expressed the hope that the Regional Director would visit her country in the near future.

26. In that context, the representative of Spain said that the session had afforded the opportunity for the signing of a framework cooperation agreement between his Government, the Ministry of Housing of Brazil and UN-Habitat and thanked the secretariat for having facilitated that agreement.

27. The representative of Bahrain gave a presentation on preparations for the sixth session of the World Urban Forum followed by an audiovisual presentation about his country.

28. Responding to comments, the Executive Director said that the secretariat shared the concerns expressed about the need for improved substantive reporting of Forum sessions, but were constrained by a lack of resources. Report-writing at Forum sessions was currently undertaken by staff members from UN-Habitat or partner organizations who were not always familiar with the task or able fully to capture the substance of the sessions. As the Forum was an instrument of the World Urban Campaign, it was to be hoped that the Campaign secretariat would assist in that regard.

29. She explained that she submitted a report on each Forum session to the Governing Council and suggested that the outcomes of sessions might be integrated more effectively into UN-Habitat work if a draft resolution were elaborated on the basis of that report. In accordance with the rules related to pre-session documentation, the report would be finalized at least six weeks prior to a Governing Council session, allowing ample time for member States to develop a draft resolution on the session’s outcomes.

30. She thanked the representative of Bahrain for the hospitality accorded to her during her visit to his country and looked forward to the success of the sixth session. She reiterated that Forum sessions were costly undertakings and beyond the organization’s means; it was important to plan the way forward in that regard. The apparent willingness of a number of Governments to host the sixth session notwithstanding, no firm offers had been received in advance of the fifth session. She had therefore made a personal appeal to Mr. Khalifa Bin Salman al Khalifa, Prime Minister of Bahrain, to host the session and, with unprecedented speed, the agreement had been signed just three months after the fifth session. She stressed the need for other member States to support the Government of Bahrain.

31. The Committee took note of the report.

**Item 6: Quarterly report on the financial status of UN-Habitat**

32. Introducing the item, the Executive Director presented the quarterly report on the financial status of UN-Habitat contained in document HSP/CPR/37/6.

33. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, thanked the secretariat for its efforts to improve its relationships with donors and increase transparency within the organization. Expressing his concern with regard to the financing of UN-Habitat, he said that it was crucial to increase the organization’s donor base to ensure adequate financing to maximize its response to challenges; to prioritize resources to maintain a strategic presence and tackle the urban agenda successfully in the light of the global financial crisis and economic belt-tightening policies; and to continue to generate and enhance confidence among donors.

34. Another representative said that his country’s new Government was reviewing its contributions to international organizations; although it was to be hoped that it would continue to provide significant support to UN-Habitat, it could not be assumed that its multi-year funding would be guaranteed in the long term.
35. Supplementing the information contained in her report, the Executive Director acknowledged with thanks the contributions received from the Governments of Angola and the United States of America of $2,550 and $2 million, respectively. She expressed her gratitude to those donors who had provided financial support to UN-Habitat in 2000 at a time of budgetary crisis for the organization and acknowledged the importance of transparency in the organization’s activities.

36. The Committee took note of the report.

**Item 7: Progress review on the governance review process**

37. The co-chair of the governance review implementation team provided an update on the progress achieved in the governance review.

38. In the ensuing discussion, several representatives expressed their satisfaction at the progress achieved to date in the governance review process. One noted that the joint team, comprising secretariat and member State representatives, had performed well together, leading to increased empathy among team members. A number of what he termed “quick wins” had emerged from the initial findings of the review that promised to make the organization’s governance more accountable, transparent, effective and efficient.

39. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed his full support for the governance review process, which would ensure that difficulties of a structural nature would be overcome and that the responsibilities of each unit would be aligned with UN-Habitat objectives for greater consistency and increased participation. Several representatives highlighted the work of member States in the process and suggested that the review might be further strengthened by increasing the number of Committee members participating.

40. One representative, highlighting the significant list of reforms identified during the review for the short and medium terms, underlined the need to identify appropriate financing mechanisms for submission to the Committee at its thirty-eighth meeting for its consideration.

41. The Committee took note of the information provided.

**Item 8: Farewell to the Executive Director**

42. The Chair took the floor to acknowledge the Executive Director’s exemplary work in championing the mission of UN-Habitat and in transforming the organization from a centre into a fully-fledged programme of the United Nations. That the organization had gained in stature and financing was a clear indication of successful leadership; the Committee had been very grateful to claim some of the Executive Director’s successes as its own.

43. The representative of the Group of 77 and China said that the Executive Director would always be remembered for her perseverance, for the fact that UN-Habitat had become more acknowledged than ever before, and for being a strong yet patient leader.

44. Another representative said that the Executive Director had raised the profile of UN-Habitat as never before, paying special attention to matters of greatest importance, such as the plight of women living in poverty, pro-poor policies and land rights. In addition, she had brought the agency into the humanitarian field, established a system of Habitat country managers and promoted regional ministerial gatherings representing each continent. She predicted that the Executive Director would emerge as the main architect of an organization of global significance.

45. The representative of the group of Latin American and Caribbean countries echoed the previous remarks, adding that the Committee would not forget the Executive Director and her work.

46. The representative of the European Union expressed his thanks and appreciation for the Executive Director’s partnership and hard work in raising the UN-Habitat profile in a complex and globalizing world, raising awareness of the urban agenda in general. He welcomed her energetic leadership, which had played a significant role in mobilizing financial and political support.

47. The representative of the group of African countries noted that, during the Executive Director’s two terms in office, issues such as shelter, water and sanitation had come to receive greater attention than before,
adding that Africa would always remember her untiring efforts to establish the African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development.

48. The representative of the group of Asian countries said that the Executive Director’s innovative thinking and relentless efforts based on results-based management had brought greater recognition and reputation to the organization during her tenure. The financial constraints faced by the organization notwithstanding, UN-Habitat had succeeded in helping those who were affected by natural disasters to the best of its ability under her leadership, with the Executive Director running the organization to its optimum capacity during that period.

49. Another representative drew attention to the Executive Director’s leading the role in helping to establish the United Nations pavilion at the Shanghai World Expo, together with her efforts to develop his country’s bilateral relationship with UN-Habitat.

50. In her final statement to the Committee, the Executive Director thanked the Committee members for their kind remarks and recalled the organization’s history. She expressed her regret that her successor had yet been named. She thanked all those who had assisted her during her period in office, urging them not to lose momentum in their task, but to ensure that the organization responded ever more effectively to the situation of the some 1 billion people currently living in slums and substandard housing worldwide. Although she was leaving the agency, she was not, she said, abandoning its noble mission and would be a firm friend and ally in her future role, particularly with regard to advocacy for the World Urban Campaign.

51. She underscored that UN-Habitat had moved from relative obscurity to its current role as an agency that, among other things, convened significant global forums, was responsible for the United Nations Pavilion at the Shanghai Expo that was attracting some 20,000 people every day, and was driving the World Urban Campaign to ensure that those who continued to live in poverty were not forgotten. She highlighted the importance for the organization of diverse partnerships, including with local authorities, women and young people, the media, universities and other United Nations entities. She expressed her gratitude to the Government of Bahrain for allowing her to leave UN-Habitat with a specific arrangement for the hosting of the sixth session of the World Urban Forum and wished the Government every success in that endeavour. In closing, she said that UN-Habitat, with the Committee’s support, had consolidated the gains that it had made and strengthened its activities to ensure a better urban future for humankind.

52. The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, presented the Executive Director with a bouquet of flowers and souvenir gifts.

53. The Executive Director expressed her gratitude to the Committee and to the representative who had given her a memento in the form of a football shirt bearing her name and the number 1.

Item 9: Any other matters

54. The representative of the secretariat provided a brief overview of preparations under way for the twenty-third session of the Governing Council. He said that documentation for the session was being prepared and had been shared with members prior to the working group meeting on 16 June 2010.

55. The Committee took note of the information.

Item 10: Closure of the meeting

56. The Chair declared the meeting closed at 5.50 p.m. on Monday, 14 June 2010.