CONCEPT NOTE ON UN-HABITAT’S STRATEGIC PLAN 2014-2019

1. INTRODUCTION

Implementation of the present Medium-term Strategic and Institutional Plan 2008-2013 (MTSIP 2008-2013) will come to an end in two and half years. In light of this, the UN-Habitat Governing Council, at its twenty third session, requested the Executive Director to develop, in consultation with the Committee of Permanent Representatives, a strategic plan for 2014-2019, including a road map for preparatory work, taking into account the recommendations of the peer review and other reviews of the MTSIP 2008-2013, for presentation to and approval by the Governing Council at its twenty-fourth session in early 2013 (Governing Council Resolution 23/11).

The present concept note is in response to this request. Its purpose is to initiate the process of the preparation of the Strategic Plan for the period 2014-2019. It briefly highlights some lessons learnt from the preparation and implementation of the MTSIP 2008-2013 and, partly on the basis of this, the basic principles that will guide the preparation of the Strategic Plan for 2014-2019. It then presents a list of areas currently being considered as possible focus areas of the Plan, followed by the envisaged structure of the Strategic Plan. Key stages of the Plan’s preparation roadmap (currently being developed) are presented in the concluding section.

2. KEY LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE MTSIP 2008-2013

Several reports and processes over the last three and half years, including the Peer Review of the implementation of the MTSIP 2008-2013, six-monthly progress reports and discussions of these reports, have highlighted a number of problems regarding the implementation of the MTSIP 2008-2013. Four of these have a strong bearing on the preparation of the Strategic Plan 2014-2019.

(a) The MTSIP 2008-2013 is lacking in focus and has no strong prioritization of results and related activities. At the time that it was prepared, it essentially included most of the programmatic work that UN-Habitat was carrying out at the time, hardly dropping any area of work or activities.

(b) Gender is not properly reflected in all focus areas as a cross-cutting issue. It was addressed only later, in 2009, during the elaboration of the results framework. Partnerships, another cross-cutting issue, is located in one focus areas rather than being reflected across all focus areas.

(c) The MTSIP 2008-2013 was developed separately from the biennial Work Programme and Budget. Its focus areas are different from the subprogrammes of the Work Programme and Budget. Although the two documents have been progressively aligned over the last three and half years, an impression that UN-Habitat was implementing two separate documents was initially created, with the MTSIP being sometimes seen as a burdensome add-on.

(d) Because of the initial lack of alignment between the MTSIP and the Work Programme and Budget, reporting on implementation progress for the two documents used different
sets of indicators of achievement, as the MTSIP results framework was only developed later in 2009, rather than at the very beginning. By that time, both the 2008-2009 and 2010-2011 Work Programme and Budget documents had already been approved.

3. BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR PREPARATION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Partly on the basis of lessons learnt from the MTSIP 2008-2013, preparation of the Strategic Plan 2014-2019 will be guided by a number of basic principles:

- The Plan will reflect the official mandates of UN-Habitat, i.e. the Habitat Agenda, the Millennium Development Goals, and key General Assembly and Governing Council resolutions;
- It will be based on UN-Habitat’s strategic priorities as elaborated by the Executive Director at the twenty-third session of the Governing Council, which themselves take account of emerging urban development challenges;
- Gender, youth and partnerships will be reflected in all substantive focus areas as cross-cutting issues;
- While the Strategic Plan will reflect some continuity from the MTSIP 2008-2013, in terms of focus areas and implementation approaches, its programmatic focus and prioritization of results will be much sharper, due in part to resource constraints, but also because of the need to concentrate on UN-Habitat’s strategic or comparative advantage;
- The Strategic Plan’s focus areas will become subprogrammes in the biennial Strategic Framework and Work Programme and Budget in order to ensure complete alignment;
- The Plan will be simple, easy to understand and easy to use in terms of both implementation and reporting;
- The Plan’s results framework will be prepared at the very beginning, thus ensuring that reporting on the Strategic Plan and the Work Programme and Budget will be unified into a single process; and
- The Strategic Plan preparation process will be both top-down and bottom-up, i.e., the Executive Director will provide strategic direction on focus areas, while the elaboration of those focus areas, results framework and other components of the Strategic Plan will be through a participatory process.

4. POSSIBLE FOCUS AREAS OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Work on the formulation of focus areas of the Strategic Plan for 2014-2019 has started and a number of focus areas are being considered. These are based on the strategic priorities of UN-Habitat, as elaborated by the Executive Director up to now. All of them conform to the Habitat Agenda, UN-Habitat’s main mandate, whose twin goals are “Adequate shelter for all” and “Sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world”. They also conform to other more recent United Nations mandates, including the Millennium Development Goals as well as General Assembly and Governing Council resolutions. While reflecting a number of distinctly new areas of emphasis such as new urban planning, urban legislation and job creation and urban economy, all of the proposed focus areas reflect varying levels of continuity from the MTSIP 2008-2013.
The areas under consideration as possible focus areas for the Strategic Plan 2014-2019 are listed below, along with an indication of their relationship with the current MTSIP. As discussions proceed, some of these areas may be combined, or new ones added.

(i) Sustainable Urban Planning
   (Currently Focus Areas 2 and 4 of MTSIP 2008-2013)

(ii) Governance and Urban Legislation and Conflict Prevention
    (Currently Focus Areas 2 and 3 of MTSIP 2008-2013)

(iii) Infrastructure and Basic Services
     (Currently Focus Areas 3 and 4 of MTSIP 2008-2013)

(iv) Urban Economy, Job Creation and Municipal Finance
     (Currently Focus Area 5 of MTSIP 2008-2013)

(v) Post-conflict and Post-disaster Recovery and Reconstruction
    (Currently spread in Focus Areas 2, 3 and 4 of MTSIP 2008-2013)

(vi) Urban Research and Training
     (Currently Focus Area 1 of MTSIP 2008-2013)

(vii) Advocacy, Outreach and Communication
      (Currently Focus Areas 1 and 6 of MTSIP 2008-2013)

(viii) Management and Programme Support
      (Currently Focus Area 6 of MTSIP 2008-2013)

5. PROPOSED STRUCTURE OF STRATEGIC PLAN

For now, it is envisaged that the Strategic Plan will consist of three parts: firstly, Strategic Analysis, providing what could be considered to be the rationale of the Strategic Plan, or answering the question ‘Why?’; secondly, Strategic Choice, containing the Strategic Plan itself, or answering the question ‘What?’; and, finally, Strategy Implementation, addressing issues of how the Strategic Plan will be implemented, i.e. answering the question ‘How?’.

The envisaged structure and content of the Strategic Plan is as follows:

A. STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

   1. Urban Development Challenges
   2. Lessons from MTSIP 2008-2013
   3. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

B. STRATEGIC CHOICE

   1. Vision
   2. Mission
   3. Values
4. Goals
5. Focus Areas, Objectives, Rationale, Scope, Implementation Approaches, Assumptions and Risks
6. Plan’s Results Framework: Focus Area Results and Indicators of Achievement

C. STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

7. Implementation Phases through the Biennial Workprogramme and Budget
8. Organizational Structure for Implementing the Plan
9. Financial and Human Resources Required to Implement the Plan
10. Performance Measurement Plan

6. CONCLUSION

A roadmap on the preparation of the Strategic Plan for 2014-2019, as requested by the Governing Council through its resolution 23/11 (operative paragraph 4), has been developed, in consultation with the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR). It was presented, for discussion and comments, to the CPR Working Group for Planning on 13 June 2011, and was approved by the CPR on 22 June 2011.

Elaboration of the focus areas of the Strategic Plan for 2014-2019 proposed by the Executive Director and the preparation of the other components of the Plan will follow a fully participatory process inclusive of Secretariat staff and the CPR. CPR participation will be mainly through an Open-ended Contact Group, as well as through formal presentation and discussion of drafts of the Strategic Plan to the CPR and its Working Group for Planning at different stages specified in the roadmap.

To enable the preparation of the two-year Strategic Framework for 2014-2015, which is required in New York by the end of November 2011, it is intended to first work on and get the CPR’s endorsement of Parts A and B of the Strategic Plan before this date. Preparation of Part C of the Strategic Plan (which is not required for the preparation of the two-year Strategic Framework for 2014-2015) will then follow, continuing until September 2012.

The proposed Strategic Plan will be presented to and approved by the UN-Habitat Governing Council at its 24th session, to be held from 15 to 19 April in 2013. Finally, it is clear that the time available to prepare Parts A and B of the Strategic Plan is quite limited. Much of the available time also coincides with the recess period for CPR members, i.e. late June to mid-August. In light of this, an extension of the deadline for the submission of the two-year Strategic Framework to UN Headquarters in New York is currently being requested. If granted, this will ensure full participation of CPR members in the Plan preparation process.