Introductory Statement by Dr. Joan Clos

Executive Director’s Informational Briefing to the
Committee of Permanent Representatives

(a) Organizational Reform

Agenda Item 3 (a)

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Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Representatives

I am happy to provide an update on the progress we have made with the organizational reform process. As you may recall, the purpose of the organizational reform is to establish an organizational structure capable of ensuring more effective and efficient delivery of UN-Habitat’s mandate at the country, regional and global levels.

In general, I can say that we have made significant progress with the organizational reform, which was formally launched in February 2011. Various consultations with staff at large, staff representatives, as well as UNON and various other pertinent stakeholders have taken place throughout the restructuring process.

We have established a UN-Habitat Staff-Management Consultative Committee as a forum for addressing reform specific issues. In parallel, UN-Habitat has proceeded with direct consultation with the staff, providing them with information about the on-going restructuring process. So far the staff queries and concerns are mainly about the practical elements of the reform, including requests for clarification on issues such as reporting lines, organizational roles and responsibilities, and business processes and workflows. Policy guidance and advice on all these matters are currently being developed as part of the implementation of the reform.

UN-Habitat has received the UN Departments of Management’s clearance to proceed with the implementation of the transitional measures in anticipation of the finalization of the reorganization process. This process will culminate in the issuance of a new Secretary-General’s Bulletin on the organization of UN-Habitat. The implementation of the transitional measures is now underway. The transitional period will also allow some of the key change components to mature and take shape. The drafting of the new Secretary-General’s Bulletin has started and we already have a first draft.

As you may recall from my previous briefings, I have already assigned responsibilities to Branch Coordinators, Unit Leaders and Acting Heads for the Project Office, Management Office and External Relations Office. In line with the transitional organizational structure, some staff members have been transferred laterally to fill positions in the new branches and units. The full transitional staff list was shared with all staff earlier this month. We are now in the process of writing to each of the staff members officially notifying them of their new or continuing assignment within the new structure, together with a confirmation of their current job descriptions, grade and level. In this process, no staff members have lost their jobs, and all have been assigned to organizational units. All lateral staff transfers will all be assessed after issuance of the new Secretary General’s Bulletin in order to identify the need for possible reclassification of posts whose functions have changed by more than 50 per cent.

Change management is a long term process which requires careful consideration and gradual implementation. The Management Office, Project Office, External Relations and thematic Branches are
now all fully functional. They are increasingly responsible for the implementation of the change process, while the Executive Director’s Office continues with the overall coordination of the reform process. Consultations with the Department of Management is continuing, focusing on finalizing the revised Secretary General’s Bulletin.

The envisaged final organizational structure will incorporate the transitional measures. In addition, the External Relations Office, which is a part of the Office of the Executive Director during the present transitional period, will become a separate organizational unit.

I am also happy to inform you that the Committee for Programme and Coordination in New York last week recommended to the General Assembly approval of our two-year Strategic Framework for 2014-2015, which you endorsed earlier this year in February. As you may recall, it is through this document that we are changing the structure of our programme, from four subprogrammes to seven subprogrammes that are aligned with the new seven thematic branches.

Safeguarding rights, responsibilities and obligations of staff members as well as protecting their job security and welfare remain significant priorities in the ongoing restructuring of UN-Habitat. Particular consideration has been given to assuring the staff that their welfare and job security will not be impacted by the reorganization process. The recent management and cost control measures, such as the temporary moratorium on recruitment, are a result of the current financial constraints faced by the organization. At the same time, these measures have enabled us to avoid termination of staff contracts.

Thank you for your attention.