



Twenty-fourth session

Nairobi, 15–19 April 2013

Item 7 of the provisional agenda*

**Work programme of the United Nations Human
Settlements Programme and budget of the United Nations
Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation for the
biennium 2014–2015**

**Proposed work programme and budget for the biennium
2014-2015**

Addendum

**Gender equality and empowerment of women in sustainable
urban development**

Report of the Executive Director

I. Introduction

1. By its resolution 21/1, the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) requested the Executive Director to develop a specific gender equality action plan for 2008–2013 concerning the policies, programmes and activities of UN-Habitat together with performance indicators to ensure tangible and measurable gains for the realization of gender equality, to be submitted to the Governing Council at its twenty-second session.
2. By its resolution 22/7, the Governing Council noted with satisfaction the gender equality action plan for 2008–2013 and requested the Executive Director to report on progress made in its implementation to the Governing Council at its twenty-third session.
3. By its resolution 23/1, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director to strengthen the Gender Mainstreaming Unit and, with the Unit, to manage a unified system of gender focal points and a gender task force effective throughout UN-Habitat; encourages the Executive Director to continue strengthening staff capacity and competency in gender mainstreaming, including in the regional offices; encouraged UN-Habitat to incorporate fully a gender perspective into all its work; requested the Executive Director to encourage the establishment of a consultative mechanism with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the gender units of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and other relevant agencies with a focus on human settlements, to promote coherence, coordination and alignment within the United Nations system and, in particular, to involve grass-roots women and community-based organizations, to inform these consultations.

* HSP/GC/24/1.

4. In the same resolution, the Governing Council also requested the Executive Director to set up an advisory group on gender issues consisting of representatives of women's organizations (both grass-roots and professional organizations), academic institutions, the private sector, local authorities and policymakers and decision makers in Governments, taking into account equal regional representation, to advise the Executive Director on all issues related to gender mainstreaming in the work of UN-Habitat and to provide oversight regarding the implementation of the gender equality action plan within the existing programme of work and budget.

5. The gender equality action plan is a strategic and ambitious tool for strengthening gender mainstreaming in UN-Habitat normative and operational work. It contains commitments by UN-Habitat programmes and partners to foster gender equality and the empowerment of women within the context of sustainable urban development. It complements the United Nations system-wide policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women, focusing on results and impact,¹ which is monitored by UN-Women. UN-Women became operational on 1 January 2011 and was created by the General Assembly to function as a secretariat and carry out operational activities at the country level, consolidating the mandates and functions of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Secretariat, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women.

6. While progress has been recorded in a number of areas, much remains to be done, particularly with regard to regular monitoring of the implementation of the gender equality action plan in line with the medium-term strategic and institutional plan for 2008–2013 adopted by the Governing Council in its resolution 21/2 and the impact of gender mainstreaming initiatives at all levels. Work has focused on the following themes: advocacy and monitoring gender equality in cities; local governance and decentralization; women's rights to land, housing and security of tenure; water and sanitation; safety and security for women; cities and climate change; and women's economic empowerment through land, housing development and access to housing finance. This work has been undertaken in partnership with Governments, Habitat Agenda partners and United Nations agencies, as part of the "One United Nations" initiative.

7. The present report describes progress to date in the implementation of the gender equality action plan, synthesizing information from recent evaluations on gender mainstreaming in all UN-Habitat programmes, feedback from the second gender equality action assembly at the sixth session of the World Urban Forum (September 2012), and internal assessments, including a gender audit (to be shared with senior management).

II. Partnerships, advocacy and gender equality monitoring in cities

8. The Executive Director of UN-Habitat, Mr. Joan Clos, and the Deputy Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Lakshmi Puri, signed a memorandum of understanding during the sixth session of the World Urban Forum held in Naples, Italy, in September 2012. The memorandum of understanding covers all the countries where the two entities have common interests or agree to collaborate and its normative and operational scope will cover the developmental and organizational objectives related to gender equality and the empowerment of women for both entities. It will allow various activities, including, but not limited to, the development of analysis and research on issues relating to gender; the implementation of specific joint programmes and projects, joint technical cooperation, advocacy and technical advisory services, joint or coordinated resource mobilization; engagement in joint collaboration with networks of organizations working on the empowerment of women and girls, gender equality, sustainability, urban and community safety, crime and violence prevention and other related issues; the sharing of expertise to develop institutional capacity. The memorandum of understanding is broad and non-exclusive (and supersedes an earlier memorandum of understanding that was specific to the Safer Cities Programme). In this regard, UN-Women have provided a fully funded gender adviser to the Gender Coordination and Support Unit to provide recommendations on an optimal "gender architecture" within UN-Habitat and to assist with reviewing the gender policy.

9. The Gender Coordination and Support Unit is currently located in the Project Office. The gender advisor, in addition to providing recommendations on the "gender architecture" will also provide advice on the final organizational placement of the Unit

10. In October 2012, the Gender Coordination and Support Unit conducted a gender audit of the organization, including its regional offices. The gender audit is a self-assessment mechanism whose

¹ CEB/2006/2.

purpose is to assess the extent to which gender has been mainstreamed into current policies, projects, programmes, the organizational structure, internal practices and procedures (human resources, budgeting and strategic planning) within UN-Habitat and provide training on how to effectively implement gender mainstreaming throughout UN-Habitat as per its mandate. The audit results highlight solid successes in a number of areas, such as the Global Land Tool Network, water and sanitation, and safer cities, and minimal successes in others. Gaps identified include shortage of human and financial resources for gender mainstreaming, insufficient gender capacity-building of programme staff at all levels and a lack of midstream monitoring of implementation, among others.

11. Achievement of the priorities of the gender equality action plan have been noted in most of the areas of intervention, including improved advocacy, addressing gender inequalities in access to and ownership of land and property, and improved women's access to affordable housing through community banking for low-income women.

12. The gender equality action plan progress report highlights two main challenges that need to be addressed: first, that there is inadequate understanding among most staff about the gender equality action plan's strategic purpose of alignment with the medium-term strategic and institutional plan to facilitate gender mainstreaming in all UN-Habitat core focus areas and, second, besides the absence of accountability for gender equality work for senior management, attempts to promote more coherent work in the context of the gender equality action plan are not being monitored. These aspects were also made evident by the 2011 evaluation of gender mainstreaming in UN-Habitat.

13. Institutional arrangements are in place to coordinate gender mainstreaming activities with a system of gender focal points established at headquarters and in the regional offices.

14. In response to Governing Council resolution 23/1, the Advisory Group on Gender Issues held its inaugural meeting on 1 September 2012, at the sixth session of the World Urban Forum, and held its second meeting on 30 November and 1 December 2012 in Nairobi. The meeting resulted in the development of the Advisory Group's two-year workplan, which was submitted to the Executive Director in December 2012. The workplan will allow the members of the Advisory Group to provide relevant advice to the Executive Director on gender mainstreaming issues and harmonizing UN-Habitat activities with the strategic plan.

15. The abridged version of "The State of Women in Cities 2012/2013: Gender and Prosperity of Cities", a report on gender and prosperity in cities, was launched at the sixth session of the World Urban Forum, in September 2012. The report emphasizes that the time has come for cities and local governments to implement gender equality policies, strategies and programmes that promote sustainable livelihoods for and the economic empowerment of women. It further stresses the fundamental importance of partnerships in ensuring women's prosperity and equitable and inclusive cities.

16. In September 2012, UN-Habitat organized the second session of the Gender Equality Action Assembly immediately prior to the sixth session of the World Urban Forum in response to Governing Council resolution 22/7, in which the Governing Council requested the Executive Director to facilitate a gender equality action forum that would meet in conjunction with the sessions of the Governing Council and World Urban Forum to enable partners to assess progress made in the implementation of the gender equality action plan.

17. The second session of the Assembly provided an opportunity for partners to work with key policymakers and decision makers, especially women mayors, ministers of women's affairs, housing and urban development, and parliamentarians, to explore ways of strengthening gender mainstreaming in international, regional and national sustainable urban development policies and programmes. The lessons learned from this experience, especially the need critically to review progress in the implementation of the gender equality action plan by all partners, have been taken into account in the preparations for the third session of the Assembly to be held in Medellin, Colombia, in 2014.

18. The gender and women's round table, also held during the sixth session of the World Urban Forum, provided an opportunity for partners to explore ways of promoting women's economic empowerment with particular emphasis on access to land and housing.