Minutes of the forty-eighth regular meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, held on 20 March 2013

1. The meeting was opened at 9.50 a.m. on Wednesday, 20 March 2013, by Mr. Chan Woo-Kim, Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).

2. The meeting was attended by 82 participants from 53 countries and 1 observer mission.

3. The Chair welcomed the following new permanent representatives: Ms. Yamina Karitanyi (Rwanda), Mr. Johan Borgstam (Sweden) and Mr. Martin Kimani (Kenya), and he bade farewell to the following departing representative, thanking him for his contribution to the work of the Committee: Mr. Per Ludvig Magnus (Norway).

Item 1
Adoption of the agenda

4. The agenda was adopted, as amended, on the basis of the provisional agenda set out in document HSP/CPR/48/1 and Add.1.

Item 2
Adoption of the draft minutes of the forty-seventh regular meeting of the CPR, which was held on 19 December 2012

5. The Committee adopted the draft minutes on the basis of the report set out in document HSP/CPR/48/2.

Item 3
Election to replace the departing member of the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives for the biennium 2012–2013

6. The Committee elected the Mr. Martin Kimani, Permanent Representative of Kenya to UN-Habitat, to the position of Vice-Chair of the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives for the biennium 2012–2013.
Item 4
Informational briefing of the Executive Director to the Committee of Permanent Representatives

7. Introducing the item, the Executive Director congratulated Kenya for hosting the recent peaceful election on 4 March 2013. He described the various activities under way in the context of the United Nations post-2015 development agenda and the elaboration of sustainable development goals.

8. At its sixty-seventh session, the General Assembly had emphasized the importance of appropriate consideration of sustainable urbanization in the post-2015 process; UN-Habitat was well placed to ensure that sustainable urbanization was adequately reflected in the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals. He recalled that attainment of the water and sanitation target of the Millennium Development Goals had lagged behind the other targets and UN-Habitat supported its continued inclusion in the post-2015 goals. The target on slums of the Millennium Development Goals had been amply achieved but that achievement had been significantly concentrated in a few countries. He cautioned that the total number of slum dwellers had not diminished and academic studies carried out around the world indicated that their number was increasing, with estimates putting the total number of people currently living in slums at close to 1 billion. It was important, he said, to include appropriate targets on slums in the new sustainable development goals. Other topics under discussion in relation to the post-2015 process included environmental sustainability, improved governance, water, energy and inequalities.

9. The Executive Director informed the Committee that UN-Habitat was co-chairing with the United Nations Population Fund and the International Organization on Migration one of eleven thematic discussion groups, the discussion group on population dynamics, and was participating in another five. The Deputy Executive Director had attended the Global Leadership Meeting on Population Dynamics held in Dhaka on 12 and 13 March 2013 and UN-Habitat would attend the meeting of the High-level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda to be held in Bali in late March 2013 in order to ensure that the role of sustainable urbanization and local authorities in sustainable development would be considered.

10. The secretariat was committed to highlighting the importance of urbanization, cities and other human settlements topics and stressing the crucial role of local authorities, which were important agents of sustainable development. The Executive Director highlighted the importance of urban development in relation to rural development, which were different faces of the same coin, he suggested, and should develop in parallel.

11. UN-Habitat was also participating in preparations for regional conferences of ministers, including the African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development (AMCHUD) and the Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean (MINURVI), at which the post-2015 development agenda was likely to be an important topic of discussion. The theme of the twenty-fourth session of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat and the seventh session of the World Urban Forum would be related to the post-2015 process.

12. The conference agreement for the seventh session of the World Urban Forum, to be held from 5 to 11 April 2014, had been finalized during a mission by UN-Habitat to Medellin in Colombia in February 2013.

13. The finishing touches were being put to the resource mobilization strategy, which would be presented to a working group meeting of the Committee prior to the forthcoming twenty-fourth session of the Governing Council to ensure that members would be able to accord it adequate consideration prior to the session.

14. In the ensuing discussion, one representative requested that a written report by the Executive Director on topics to be covered in his informational briefing be made available in advance of Committee meetings in order to enable adequate preparation by representatives.

15. One representative asked for more information on discussions related to the post-2015 development agenda envisaged at forthcoming meetings of AMCHUD and MINURVI. He emphasized the importance of working with global and regional forums and strengthening synergies with and among them. He also sought clarification on the themes or broad topics for discussion at the third United Nations conference on housing and sustainable urban development (Habitat III).

16. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, thanked the Executive Director for his extremely productive initiative in meeting with regional groupings and encouraged the secretariat to continue such arrangements to facilitate the exchange of ideas on UN-Habitat activities,
especially at the regional level. He highlighted a number of salient aspects in relation to the continuing governance review of UN-Habitat. Noting with appreciation the inclusion of his regional group’s proposed governance reform option in the related report for presentation at the current meeting, he emphasized the need to learn from the experience of the recently concluded twenty-seventh session, and first universal session, of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). It was important, he said, to accord sufficient time to the consideration of issues that could polarize the positions of member States given the divergent views that existed regarding the governance review. Certain aspects, including any major structural change to UN-Habitat, should be deferred to Habitat III, he suggested, failing which universal membership of the Governing Council should be adopted to enhance representation and the voice of member States. Greater flexibility was required in humanitarian and conflict-related activities. Poverty eradication and development should receive particular attention in preparations for Habitat III and the outcomes of the conference should take into account and build on the standards and principles emanating from the Habitat Agenda, Agenda 21, the Declaration on Cities, sessions of the World Urban Forum, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and the Millennium Development Goals. Goals on slum upgrading and urban planning should be included in the proposed sustainable development goals. Urban planning should create jobs and enable access to basic services, including water and sanitation. He expressed concern regarding a lack of focus on human settlements beyond cities and on development issues including poverty eradication. Planning should go hand-in-hand with implementation, and urbanization should be clearly linked with planning to ensure poverty alleviation and job creation in cities, towns and villages. He expressed his satisfaction with the work programme and budget for the forthcoming biennium. It was to be hoped, he said, that the resource mobilization strategy would be made available shortly and he stressed that the involvement of stakeholders other than Governments in the strategy should take place without prejudice to the decision-making process, which should remain under the exclusive purview of Governments. He emphasized the need for the work programme and budget to relate to member States’ national development plans and sought further information on regional analyses and aspects that had influenced the main thrusts of the work programme in that regard. In the light of the continuing difficult financial situation, he noted the possibility of a causal relationship between a reduction in contributions and the change in focus prioritization of UN-Habitat to urbanization and emergency response. He urged caution with regard to the inclusion of human rights in human settlements issues. Human rights should not be a conditionality for implementation or a central consideration in UN-Habitat activities given that other United Nations entities were focused on that issue. He requested more information on the human rights advisory group and its terms of reference. He asked UN-Habitat to provide technical support to the AMCHUD meeting immediately prior to the twenty-fourth session of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat. He stressed the importance of taking the views of all stakeholders into account in the continuing internal restructuring of UN-Habitat, including ensuring that the process was open and transparent. He sought clarification regarding the mandate for the internal restructuring, and possible outcomes and effects thereof.

17. The representative of Colombia said that some 10,000 visitors were expected at the seventh session of the World Urban Forum, in Medellin in 2014. The role of young people, the issue of unemployment and the post-2015 development agenda would be important topics for discussion at the session.

18. One representative expressed the hope that the resource mobilization strategy, which was closely related to broader governance issues, would be made available to members in a timely manner and discussed extensively at the twenty-fourth session. It was of the utmost importance that progress on the governance review was achieved.

19. Responding to comments, the Executive Director undertook to provide further information on the outcomes of regional conferences of ministers and to prepare a brief report in advance of Committee meetings on points to be raised during his regular informational briefings to the Committee. He said that the preparations for Habitat III, as a United Nations conference, would be directed by the General Assembly. Different actors in the General Assembly had requested that the conference should accommodate the post-2015 process and, if held in mid-2016 as expected, Habitat III would be the first implementing conference after the establishment of the post-2015 development agenda. Strong demand was likely to emanate from the General Assembly for Habitat III to be linked with the development agenda. It was premature, however, to enunciate specific topics. UN-Habitat continued to emphasize the positive effects that urbanization could have on development and, by the same token, the importance of development for the quality of urbanization. He undertook to respond to detailed comments on a bilateral basis. The resource mobilization strategy would be presented to the Committee in the first quarter of 2013 prior to the twenty-fourth session of the Governing Council to enable adequate consideration of and contribution to the strategy by member States. The financial
difficulties facing UN-Habitat were not peculiar to the Programme, he said, but were a common phenomenon across the United Nations system. The global financial crisis continued to affect many parts of the world with many in a stable recession. He said that the internal restructuring had reached the implementation phase and that the relevant Secretary-General’s bulletin had been transmitted to United Nations Headquarters for review after discussions with representatives of the United Nations Office at Nairobi and UNEP.

20. One representative called for a more detailed response to comments by members of the Committee rather than generalized statements by the secretariat. It was important, he said, that the whole Committee was privy to the answers to questions raised by its members.

21. The representative of the secretariat said that the secretariat was committed to responding to questions from members either during the meeting at which they were raised or, if further information was required or the relevant substantive officer was not immediately available, shortly thereafter. The extraordinary meeting of the Committee to be held on 9 April 2013 would afford an opportunity for responses to questions posed at the current meeting to be provided by the secretariat.

22. Ms. Aisa Kirabo Kacyira, Deputy Executive Director, said that specific requests for clarification required specific responses. The feedback provided by the Executive Director had served to recognize the pertinence of the issues raised and underline the secretariat’s commitment to respond thereto.

23. The Executive Director said that meetings of the Bureau, which comprised representatives of regional groups, were held prior to meetings of the Committee. Any issues to be raised during a Committee meeting were habitually raised at the Bureau meeting preceding it. The secretariat was committed to accommodating statements by regional groups and discussions thereon during Committee meetings. It was important, nevertheless, to ensure that members and the secretariat were afforded adequate time for preparation on topics raised for discussion.

24. Another representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, sought clarification on the internal restructuring process and requested that the relevant Secretary-General’s bulletin be made available to members. She reiterated the request that the resource mobilization strategy be provided to members as soon as possible.

Item 5

Report of the work of the Committee during the intersessional period

25. The Chair of the Committee introduced the report of the work of the Committee during the intersessional period as set out in document HSP/GC/24/3 for the consideration and approval of the Committee and for subsequent transmission to the Governing Council of UN-Habitat for consideration at its twenty-fourth session. He noted that the resolutions to be transmitted to the Governing Council were still being discussed and would be presented to the forthcoming extraordinary meeting of the Committee to be held on 9 April 2013 in document HSP/GC/24/3/Add.1.

26. At his request, the Committee agreed to include the report of the current meeting in the report for transmission to the Governing Council.

Item 6

Preparations for the twenty-fourth session of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat

27. The Executive Director presented an update on the status of preparations for the twenty-fourth session of the Governing Council, drawing attention in particular to the UN-Habitat website where registration of delegates could be carried out and most of the documents for the session could already be found. He recalled that the session would be PaperSmart in line with meetings of the Committee since June 2011. He drew attention to the theme of the session, namely “Sustainable urban development: the role of cities in creating improved economic opportunities for all, with special reference to youth and gender”. Regional groups were requested to put forward their nominations for the officers of the Bureau of the Governing Council and Governments were invited to request places on the speaker’s list for the high-level segment of the plenary. A number of requests for funding to attend the session had been received and he therefore appealed to member States to consider providing additional funding to enable participation by representatives of least developed countries.

28. In the ensuing discussion, several representatives thanked the Executive Director for his report.
29. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, emphasized the importance of the forthcoming Governing Council session, the first since the reorganization of UN-Habitat and the establishment of the organization’s new strategic priorities, and noted that the session outcomes would feed into the preparations for Habitat III. She sought clarification regarding the timetable for the meetings at the session and side events.

30. A number of representatives urged the Executive Director to make available the documents and draft resolutions for the Governing Council as soon as possible to allow sufficient time for their Governments to study those and provide meaningful contributions to the discussions. One representative sought clarification of the format for the high-level segment and requested webcast coverage of the proceedings.

31. One representative stressed the difficulty that many small delegations from developing countries faced in attending a number of simultaneous meetings and requested that the drafting committee should work in only one group. He also requested the secretariat to prepare brief summaries of all side events to be posted on the website for the session so that representatives who were unable to attend could be aware of their content.

32. The representative of France stated that his Government wished to introduce a resolution on urban planning that would give UN-Habitat the mandate to prepare guidelines thereon and would secure the necessary political endorsement of the importance of urban development.

33. One representative sought clarification of the role of the Government of Kenya, as host, in the Governing Council session, particularly at the traditional opening ceremony, in the light of possible developments in the post-election transitional period in the country. He asked whether the secretariat had contingency plans in place for rescheduling the forthcoming extraordinary session of the Committee if that proved to be necessary.

34. Responding to comments, the representative of the secretariat outlined the provisional timetable for the Governing Council and assured the Committee that more details would be provided at the following meeting of the Committee. All documentation for the Governing Council would be posted on the UN-Habitat website as soon as possible and details of side events would also be made available on the website. He confirmed that contingency plans had been made should the need arise to change the date of the extraordinary session planned for 9 April 2013.

35. The representative of Kenya said that the Government of Kenya fully supported the Governing Council of UN-Habitat and was committed to meeting its obligations as the host country to ensure the success of the meeting. He highlighted the very successful first universal session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme, which had taken place at the height of election preparations in Kenya.

**Item 7**

**Six-monthly progress report on the implementation of the medium-term strategic and institutional plan**

36. The Executive Director introduced the 2012 annual progress report on the implementation of the medium-term strategic and institutional plan for 2008–2013, which was before the Committee, noting that amendments had been made in line with the recommendations of the Committee. In addition to detailed information on progress made in the six focus areas, the enhanced normative and operational framework and cross-cutting issues, the report also dealt with progress on institutional and organizational reforms, the preparation of the six-year strategic plan for 2014–2019, and on the governance review process.

37. Two representatives took the floor to commend the Executive Director for the annual progress report on the medium-term strategic and institutional plan. One, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed the format of the reporting on the focus areas and requested regional updates on those. She looked forward to further updates on the institutional reform process and requested that they be made available to the Committee in advance of the twenty-fourth session of the Governing Council. While welcoming the establishment of an independent evaluation function based in the Executive Office, she noted that the capacity of that function still needed to be strengthened. She said that she looked forward to the completion of the resource mobilization strategy and it being made available to the Committee.
Item 8
Quarterly report on the financial status of UN-Habitat

38. The Executive Director introduced the quarterly report on the financial status of UN-Habitat as set out in document HSP/CPR/48/7, highlighting the imminent completion of the resource mobilization strategy, which would be presented to the Committee by the end of March 2013. He expressed appreciation to the Governments and organizations, including private sector organizations, which had continued to provide support to UN-Habitat, particularly for country programmes. He also thanked the Government of Panama for the 2012 core contribution received since the previous financial report, and the Governments of Afghanistan, Argentina, Finland, Kenya and Pakistan for the pledges and contributions already received for 2013. UN-Habitat had recorded a deficit in core resources of $6.8 million in 2012; the organization was continuing to exercise cost control and management measures. He expressed the hope that the new resource mobilization strategy would assist in increasing financial support for the work of UN-Habitat.

Item 9
Progress report on the governance review process

39. The co-chair of the open-ended consultative group on the governance review process provided a progress report on the group’s work as set out in document HSP/CPR/48/9. She reviewed the recommendations of the report on governance reform options submitted to the Committee in December 2012 and subsequently revised to incorporate the comments and amendments proposed by the Committee. The present version of the report presented four reform options, namely, managerial incremental reform; universal membership; the establishment of an executive board; and a combined hybrid option. It also provided more information on the strengths and weaknesses of the different options and their financial implications. The report would serve as the main input to inform the decision-making process towards the recommendations to be submitted to the forthcoming Governing Council session. To facilitate that process the open-ended consultative group at its meeting in February 2013 had proposed two or three facilitators from among the Committee members to prepare an agreed position to be submitted to the Council and those negotiations and consultations were currently in progress.

40. One representative, thanking the co-chair for the report, commended the group for the final result of its lengthy and difficult task and requested further information on the progress and preliminary results of the work of the facilitators. The Chair of the Committee suggested that a meeting on the work of the facilitators should be convened before the Governing Council session so as not to lose momentum. The co-chair of the open-ended consultative group took note of the suggestion.

Item 10
Any other matters

41. There were no other matters.

Closure of the meeting

42. The meeting was declared closed at 12.15 p.m. on Wednesday, 20 March 2013.