Report on the status of preparations for the 24th Session of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat

Statement

By

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Agenda Item 4

Extra-ordinary Meeting of the CPR: 8 April 2013
Agenda Item 4: Preparations for the 24th Session of the Governing Council

Introductory Statement by Dr. Joan Clos, Executive Director

Mr. Chairman, Excellences, Distinguished Representatives,

I wish to start by thanking the Committee of Permanent Representatives and your Working Groups for the hard work that you have put into the preparations for the 24th session of the Governing Council. I thank you for your constructive guidance throughout the preparatory process. I would also like to thank you, especially, for your hard work on the draft resolutions. I believe this will make the work of the Governing Council easier and lighter.

Mr. Chairman, the agenda of the 24th session of the Governing Council will consist of three substantive items. These are: Agenda Item 5, on Activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, including coordination matters; Agenda Item 6, on the Dialogue on the special theme for the twenty-fourth session of the Governing Council; and Agenda Item 7, on the Work programme of UN-Habitat and budget of the UN Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation.

In this short statement, I wish to highlight key substantive issues under each of these three agenda items and the nature of decisions expected from the Governing Council.

Under Agenda Item 5 of the Governing Council session, I would like to highlight two substantive issues, Review of the Governance of UN-Habitat and the proposed Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development. Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Representatives, you will recall that by its resolution 23/13, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director and the Committee of Permanent Representatives to continue with the Governance Review process in order to: firstly, further examine the options for reform and develop a preferred option; secondly, develop procedures for the examination phase; thirdly, seek consensus on the identified option; and, fourthly, develop an action plan and present it to the General Assembly at its 67th Session, if possible. As you all know, we were not able to complete this work before the beginning of the 67th session of the General Assembly. However, we have been able to identify four governance options which we are still discussing, namely: the ‘Managerial/Incremental Reform Option’; the Universal Membership Option; the ‘Executive Board Option’; and the ‘Combined Hybrid Option’.

It is my hope that the work of the recently designated Friends of the Chair of the Open Ended Consultative Group on Governance Review will conclude their work this week so as to enable us to present specific proposals to the Governing Council. At this juncture, Mr. Chairman, I would like to express my profound gratitude to the Open Ended Consultative Group on Governance Review, ably chaired by Ambassador Paulsen, for all the hard work that has gone into this process.

Mr. Chairman, turning to the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, or Habitat III, you may recall that the General Assembly, by its resolution 67/216 adopted in December 2012, requested me, in my capacity as the Secretary-General of Habitat III, to prepare a proposal for consideration by the Governing Council of UN-Habitat at
its twenty-fourth session, as to how best to provide inputs for and support to the preparatory process of the conference. The General Assembly expects me to proceed with implementation of the proposal soon after its approval by the Governing Council.

As you already know, the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for Habitat III will be held in New York in 2014 at the beginning of the 69th session of the General Assembly, and the Committee’s second meeting will be held here in Nairobi in 2015 at the time of the 25th session of the Governing Council. To prepare for these meetings, we have made specific proposals on the basic documentation required at the national, regional and international levels. We have also proposed inclusive methods and mechanisms for the preparation of this documentation. In addition, we have suggested a number of meetings to be held between June 2013 and April 2015, taking full advantage of already scheduled meetings of intergovernmental regional bodies. In general, our proposals are intended to reduce the burden of preparatory work on Governments and the UN Secretariat, in terms of both cost and time. I am very grateful for the inputs to this proposal that CPR members have already made during the CPR Working Group discussion of the Habitat III draft resolution.

In terms of decision-making, we expect the Governing Council, following its consideration of my proposal, to adopt a resolution authorizing me to carry out very specific tasks in preparation for the first and second meetings of the Habitat III Preparatory Committee, including the national, regional and international reports and meetings required.

Mr. Chairman, allow me also to make a few remarks on Agenda Item 6, Dialogue on the special theme of the 24th session of the Governing Council. As you may recall, the Dialogue will be on the theme of “Sustainable urban development: the role of cities in creating improved economic opportunities for all, with special reference to youth and gender”. The objective of the dialogue is to facilitate exchange of ideas and innovative practices among representatives of Governments, local authorities and other Habitat Agenda partners. The dialogue will also provide additional guidance on a key priority of the UN-Habitat Strategic Plan for 2014-2019 and Work Programme and Budget for 2014-2015. In addition, the dialogue will contribute to the preparatory process for the Habitat III conference to be held in 2016, and to the negotiations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and Post-Rio+20 Sustainable Development Goals.

The Secretariat expects that the Governing Council will, through a resolution on the theme, send a clear message to these three processes about the critical role of sustainable urbanization in achieving sustainable development, focusing on the economic pillar of sustainability and on the role of youth and gender equality.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, Excellences and Distinguished Delegates, under Governing Council Agenda Item 7, I would like to highlight some aspects of the proposed Strategic Plan for 2014-2019, and the proposed Work Programme and Budget for the 2014-2015 biennium.

As you may recall, the Governing Council at its 23rd session requested, through resolution 23/11, the Executive Director to develop, in consultation with the Committee of Permanent Representatives, a Strategic Plan for 2014–2019, for presentation to and approval by the Governing Council at its twenty-fourth session. At its regular meeting on 13 June 2011, the Committee of Permanent Representatives established an Open-ended Contact Group to facilitate the preparation of the strategic plan and approved a roadmap for the process. The
Group met fifteen times between 24 August 2011 and 4 July 2012 to prepare the Draft Strategic Plan, largely following the approved roadmap.

The Draft Strategic Plan was presented to and considered by the CPR at its regular meeting on 28 June 2012 and was finally endorsed by the CPR at its extraordinary meeting of 22 August 2012. Mr. President, I am very grateful to the CPR and its Open-ended Contact Group, ably chaired by Mr. Joseph Murphy, the then Permanent Representative of the USA to UN-Habitat, for the huge amount of work put into the preparation of the draft Strategic Plan.

Mr. Chairman, turning to the **Work Programme and Budget for 2014-2015**, you may recall that this was discussed at several meetings of the CPR Working Group and of the CPR itself during the last quarter of 2012. With your endorsement, the Work Programme and Budget Document was sent to Headquarters in New York in January 2013, where it has been discussed by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ). The ACABQ has now sent us its report, and I am happy to inform you that the Committee has recommended approval of the proposed Work Programme and Budget for 2014-2015 by the Governing Council.

The 2014-2015 programme of work reinforces the agency’s catalytic role of mobilizing Governments and other Habitat Agenda Partners for the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, with a shared vision of the role of sustainable urbanization in sustainable development and a clear vision of the city of the 21st century. The proposed Work Programme reflects a strong results orientation and was informed by the new six-year Strategic Plan for 2014-2019 and by lessons learnt from implementation of the programme during the previous biennia.

Mr. Chairman, the Secretariat expects the Governing Council to approve the proposed Strategic Plan for 2014-2019, the Work Programme for 2014-2015 and the proposed general-purpose budget of US$45,617,400. We also expect the Governing Council to endorse the proposed special-purpose budget of US$123,187,800 and to take note of the proposed technical cooperation budget of US$202,482,400.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Representatives, I have highlighted only the main substantive issues that will be discussed by the Governing Council and that will require important decisions. However, as you are aware, the CPR has worked on a number of resolutions, for which I would like to thank you once again. I believe we have prepared well for the 24th session of the Governing Council, and I personally look forward to lively and constructive deliberations. With your permission, Mr. Chairman, I would like to invite Mr. Chris Mensah, the Governing Council Secretary, to brief you on the logistical aspects of our preparations.

I thank you for your kind attention.