Draft proceedings of the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme at its twenty-fourth session

I. Organization of the session (agenda items 1–4)

A. Opening of the session

1. The twenty-fourth session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) was opened at 10.30 a.m. on Monday, 15 April 2013, by Mr. Albert Nsengiyumva (Rwanda), President of the Governing Council.

2. The formal opening of the session was preceded by a welcoming a cappella singing performance by the Moipei Quartet.

3. Opening statements were made by Ms. Sahle-Work Zewde, Director General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi, who also read a statement on behalf of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon; Mr. Joan Clos, Executive Director of UN-Habitat; Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta, President of Kenya; Mr. Evans Kidero, Governor of Nairobi County; Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, United Nations Special Adviser on the post-2015 development agenda; Mr. Achim Steiner, Executive Director of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); and Ms. Aminata Traore, Chair of AGGI and former Minister of Culture of Mali.

4. In his welcoming remarks, Mr. Nsengiyumva thanked Mr. Kenyatta for taking the time, so soon after his election as President, for attending the session to open it officially. His presence was a clear manifestation of the importance that the Government of Kenya attached to improving the living conditions of the people of Kenya and to the work of UN-Habitat.

5. In her statement, Ms. Zewde congratulated Mr. Kenyatta on his recent inauguration and the people of Kenya for the peaceful and orderly conduct of the 2013 elections, which were a milestone for democracy and an important step in the implementation of the country’s new constitution. The United Nations, she said, was committed to supporting Kenya’s efforts to achieve development and good governance. Kenya had been a vital member of the United Nations since its independence, as reflected in the presence in Nairobi of the headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and UN-Habitat. The UN-Habitat Governing Council was meeting at an opportune moment following the first universal session of the UNEP Governing Council, which was a landmark in strengthening UNEP and establishing Nairobi as the environment capital of the world. It was an important time for the efforts spearheaded by the Secretary-General to reform the operation of the United Nations and increase efficiency; as part of those efforts a number of United Nations functions were being consolidated in single locations and the United Nations Office at Nairobi, which was working to upgrade the facilities in Nairobi to the standards of New York, Geneva and Vienna and to create a centre of global excellence, was in a strong position to serve as one such location.

6. In his statement, the Secretary-General emphasized the need to respond adequately to the demands of rapidly expanding urban populations, including especially the young and the poor. As urban development continued unabated, particularly in developing countries, it was important to build...
on the successes of the Millennium Development Goals in improving the lives of slum dwellers and to
strive for the achievement of the targets that remained, for example in respect of sanitation and
combating climate change. While urbanization posed many challenges, it also provided opportunities
to promote sustainable development and contribute to overcoming global challenges. Governments
had recognized in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable
Development (Rio+20) that with better planning and management urban settlements could contribute
to the reduction of poverty and the promotion of sustainable societies. He welcomed the emphasis in
the proposed strategic plan of UN-Habitat for 2014-2019 and in its 2014-2015 budget on addressing
the challenges and opportunities presented by urbanization, and he urged the Governing Council to
provide guidance on the preparation of the third United Nations Conference on Housing and
Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) and to make progress with the process of reforming UN-
Habitat.

7. In his statement Mr. Clos congratulated Mr. Kenyatta on his recent election and the people of
Kenya for the exemplary manner in which the elections were conducted. He expressed gratitude to
member States and partners for their financial and moral support to UN-Habitat over the years, and he
welcomed the appointment of the new Deputy Executive Director of UN-Habitat, Ms. Aisa Kirabo
Kacyira.

8. He drew attention to two key issues, namely, the achievement of the Millennium Development
Goals and the role of sustainable urbanization in development. Successes had been achieved in cutting
extreme poverty, providing safe drinking water and reducing maternal and child mortality rates, but
many challenges remained, notably in sanitation and the fight against killer diseases. Although the
target of improving the lives of 100 million slum dwellers had been achieved, the number of new
arrivals in slums had brought the total number of slum dwellers to 863 million in 2012, surpassing the
level in 2000. He urged Governments and partners to continue to work on the Millennium
Development Goals in the 1,000 days remaining for their achievement and to ensure that the targets on
slums and water and sanitation were included in the post-2015 development agenda.

9. Outlining the challenges facing cities and towns, chiefly in developing countries but also in the
developed world, he emphasized the proven and positive correlation between urbanization and
development despite those challenges. The strategic goal of UN-Habitat in the coming years was to
promote the role of urbanization in achieving sustainable development, building on the United Nations
Conference on Sustainable Development, which recognized that integrated urban planning and
management could promote prosperity and jobs for future generations. Combined efforts were needed
to change the negative perception of urbanization and view it as an opportunity and source of
sustainable development. Concluding, he urged member States to give strong political and financial
support to the work of UN-Habitat and to use Habitat III as an opportunity to set a new urban agenda.

10. Mr. Kenyatta, declaring the session officially open, recognized the crucial role of UN-Habitat
and UNEP in helping developing countries to address the challenges of sustainable development.
Welcoming the decision to strengthen UNEP and the convening for the first time of a UNEP
Governing Council with universal membership in Nairobi in February 2013, he expressed the hope
that the present Governing Council session would lead to a similar outcome for UN-Habitat. He
affirmed the desire of the Government of Kenya to maintain the position of Nairobi as the central hub
of the United Nations system in the developing world and pledged more resources for the
improvement of United Nations facilities there. Since independence, the Government of Kenya had
advocated strong multilateralism as the basis for peace and prosperity; the solutions to global
challenges would not emerge from only one part of the world and called for coalitions of various
countries and organizations. The Government of Kenya supported international law and was a
champion of sovereign rights, and it expected others to reciprocate.

11. The theme of the current session of the Governing Council (Sustainable urban development: the
role of cities in creating improved economic opportunities for all, with special reference to youth and
gender”) was opportune, he said, and provided member States with an opportunity to consider the
challenges of urbanization and solutions to those challenges. The trends in urbanization in Kenya
matched the global pattern of rapid urban expansion; the lives of many city dwellers were blighted by
poverty, illness and vulnerability to natural and man-made disasters, leading to the breakdown of
social harmony and security. In line with the UN-Habitat agenda, the new Government of Kenya had
pledged in its manifesto to tackle the challenges of sustainable urban development; to generate
economic opportunities, especially for young people; to expand entrepreneurship; to promote
economic growth; and to devolve power to local governments. The Government would continue to
promote the inclusion of urbanization in the post-2015 development agenda and to support the
governance review of UN-Habitat to ensure the organization’s ability to deliver its mandate effectively
and efficiently. He also called for universal membership of the UN-Habitat Governing Council, like that of the United Nations Environment Programme.

12. Mr. Kidero welcomed participants to the city of Nairobi and recalled the historic promulgation of the new Kenyan constitution in 2010, which had provided for the devolution of governmental authority to one national Government and 47 county governments, thereby allowing greater responsiveness in respect of public goods and services at the local level. Nairobi, as host city to the global headquarters of UN Habitat and UNEP and the only United Nations headquarters in a developing country, was well placed as a leading diplomatic hub in the region. The location of the United Nations Office at Nairobi afforded Kenya considerable direct and indirect benefits and provided significant opportunities for its citizens. He pledged to continue working closely with UN-Habitat, UNEP and the United Nations Office at Nairobi, ensuring that his administration’s strategies took into account the needs and presence of the United Nations in the city and responding to any incidents and emergencies in accordance with its mandate. In closing, he wished the Governing Council fruitful deliberations.

13. Ms. Mohamed congratulated the President and the people of Kenya on the recent successful general election. She stressed the importance of a holistic approach to economic development, social inclusion and environmental sustainability in the international framework for sustainable development. In the Rio+20 outcome document, “The future we want”, Heads of State and Government and other high-level representatives had highlighted the need to strengthen the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and had emphasized that, when well planned, urbanization represented a powerful engine for development. Nevertheless, cities were currently failing to provide economic opportunities for all and systemic barriers impeded progress for certain groups, including young people, women and the disabled. The youth bulge in many countries had produced a severe crisis of unemployment, leading to widespread disillusion among young people. In many cities, the informal economy was growing significantly faster than the formal economy, which had a critical impact on the lives of women in particular. As the deadline for the attainment of the targets of the Millennium Development Goals approached, the time had come to assess achievements, failures and lessons learned. The post-2015 development agenda needed to be ambitious and universal and should aim for three broad achievements: first, it must reduce inequality based on human rights, the rule of law and non-discrimination; second, it must transform economies, providing new job opportunities and sustainable production and consumption patterns, empowering women and leaving nobody behind; and, third, it must ensure that environmental sustainability was an integral part of a holistic development framework.

14. Mr. Steiner said that the partnership between UNEP and UN-Habitat had evolved over decades, and had done so not merely as a coincidence or a result of co-location. UNEP and UN-Habitat were inextricably linked, working together on the nexus between environment and urbanization, tackling the need for sustainability of resources and for cities designed to provide spaces where people could thrive. Cities needed to provide decent jobs and adequate infrastructure and living conditions for their citizens, but also had to address global environmental challenges such as climate change and energy and resource efficiency. It was necessary to find ways for the rising global population to flourish in cities while recognizing planetary boundaries and decoupling the provision of services from the degradation of natural resources. The theme of the current session, “Sustainable urban development: the role of cities in creating improved economic opportunities for all, with special reference to youth and gender”, reflected the reality that the majority of the world’s population currently lived in cities. Historically, urbanization had often been chaotic, characterized by a lack of planning and ad hoc development. The challenge was to reveal the opportunities in urbanization, providing jobs and sustainability of resources, and transforming urbanization into a driver of development. Sustainable development and the answer to the development challenges of the twenty-first century were to be found in the simultaneous pursuit of social, economic and environmental progress so that present-day development allowed the cities of the twenty-second century to continue as places of opportunity for their citizens.

15. Following the Executive Director’s introduction of the fifteen members of the Advisory Group on Gender Issues, which had been established pursuant to Governing Council resolution 23/17, Ms. Traore, the Group’s Chair, said that the Group was committed to fulfilling its mandate against the backdrop of a complex and difficult global economic and social situation. She highlighted the need to rethink the concept of development in striving to attain the targets of the Millennium Development Goals and said that the post-2015 development agenda represented a turning point in the pursuit of sustainable development and an opportunity to reassess the three pillars of the Charter of the United Nations, namely, peace, development and human rights. The Group, she said, would submit for
consideration by the Governing Council at the current session a draft resolution that would provide the necessary impetus to support UN-Habitat in the future.

**B. Election of officers**

16. At the 1st plenary meeting of the session, on Monday, 15 April 2013, in the absence of a nomination for the presidency by the Western European and other States, the Governing Council elected Ms. Amal Pepple (Nigeria) President of the Governing Council at its twenty-fourth session. Speaking on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States, the representative of Brazil said that while those States had been expected to nominate a candidate for Rapporteur they proposed instead to submit a nomination for Vice-President.

17. The Governing Council then elected the following officers for the session:

   Vice-Presidents:

   Mr. Sergey Trepelkov (Russian Federation)

   Mr. Fernando Rolandelli (Argentina)

   Mr. Abdul Mannan Khan (Bangladesh)

18. [To be completed]

**C. Credentials**

19. [To be completed]

**D. Adoption of the agenda**

20. At its 1st plenary meeting, on Monday, 15 April 2013, the Governing Council had before it documents HSP/GC/24/1 and Add.1. The Governing Council adopted the provisional agenda for the twenty-fourth session, as set out in document HSP/GC/24/1 as follows:

1. Opening of the meeting.

2. Election of officers.

3. Credentials.

4. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.

5. Activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, including coordination matters.


8. Provisional agenda and other arrangements for the twenty-fifth session of the Governing Council.

9. Other matters.

10. Adoption of the report of the session.

11. Closure of the session.

**E. Organization of work**

21. At its 1st plenary meeting the Governing Council established a sessional committee of the whole, to which it allocated agenda items 5, 7 and 8. The Council would consider item 6 and issues arising under items 5, 7 and other items during the plenary meetings of the Council.

22. The work of the plenary meetings for the first three days of the session was divided into two segments: a high-level segment, featuring general debate by ministers and other high-level representatives, would be held on the first and second days and a dialogue of Governments with local authorities and other Habitat Agenda partners on the special theme of the meeting, would be held on the third day.

23. The Governing Council also established a drafting committee to consider the draft resolutions submitted to the Governing Council. It was agreed that the draft resolutions would first be considered
by the Committee of the Whole, that the Committee of the Whole would submit them to the drafting committee for further consideration and that following their consideration by the drafting committee the Committee of the Whole would submit them to the Governing Council for consideration and possible adoption in plenary.

24. In considering the agenda items, the Governing Council had before it the documents listed for each item in the annotations to the agenda for the session (HSP/GC/24/1/Add.1/Rev.1).

**F. Policy statement by the Executive Director**

25. In presenting his policy statement the Executive Director outlined the main strategic lines to be developed by UN-Habitat during the 2014–2015 biennium. The pace of urbanization and the number of people living in urban settings had increased exponentially over the course of the past century; more than 50 percent of the world’s population was now living in urban areas, a figure that was likely to rise to 75 percent by 2050.

26. The fastest rates of urbanization were in the developing world, where millions of people faced a number of challenges and where it was more difficult to govern the process without adequate institutional and financial measures. The first challenge was unemployment, which was a serious problem in cities and towns in developing countries. Another challenge was the hundreds of millions of people still living under life threatening conditions in slums, with inadequate urban basic services, especially water and sanitation, drainage, transport and energy. Third, many towns and cities were expanding rapidly without due regard to basic urban planning. Finally, recent decades had seen increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters and had led to higher levels of vulnerability for the urban poor.

27. Despite these challenges, there was a clear established positive correlation between planned urbanization and development. The urban economy was more productive due to the proximity of the factors of production, increased specialization and market size. Proper urbanization could and should be used as a powerful tool for creating employment and livelihoods.

28. UN-Habitat’s new strategic lines would address new priorities, namely, urban legislation, urban planning and urban economy. Those priorities were needed because urban planning needed to be grounded in rules and norms and it was therefore necessary to deepen knowledge of urban planning and legislation. It was also necessary to study further the link between urbanization and the economy, particularly as economic geographers had determined that density levels had to be managed to ensure proximity to factors of production. The design of urban areas would have an impact on the productivity of cities.

29. UN-Habitat would present its plan for administrative, programme and budget reform and its change of direction towards new emerging and pressing issues related to urbanization. Urbanization was taking place within a weakened global economy, and that had implications for urban economies and employment, particularly youth employment. The world had to be reshaped by redistributing wealth, promoting human rights, creating decent jobs and ensuring adequate housing. A business-as-usual scenario was not an option.

30. UN-Habitat would continue with the provision of water within urban settings and surrounding areas, in addition to focusing on adequate mobility and public transport, adequate access to energy and, in particular, the neglected area of urban drainage and sewerage, which had suffered from a lack of investment. A business model that could deliver those services had to be developed, as they could mean the difference between a good and a poor quality of life.

31. UN-Habitat was currently in the process of enlarging its portfolio of national and local level planning. African mayors had told UN-Habitat that the most pressing problems they faced were unemployment, a lack of livelihoods and inexistent public services. Local governments needed support in addressing those overwhelming problems. UN-Habitat advocated that in order to address these problems, countries should adopt national urban policies in which they compared current policies to projected needs 20 or 30 year in the future. The natural tendency was towards the development of megacities; incentives therefore had to be developed to promote market towns, as well as small and intermediate cities, with each country devising strategies suited to its particular needs. Energy, transportation, increased density and planned city extensions all needed to be planned, as unplanned growth would lead to the growth of slums.

32. Rapid urbanization was overwhelming the capacity of Governments. The main difference between a planned and unplanned city was the amount of public space. Without space urban productivity and efficiency could not increase. A longer-term vision was needed as the development of a business model for building a city took about 15 years and had to be bankable. New partnerships
were needed to address such issues. Countries needed support in moving forward to adopt a new strategic approach. Twenty countries, including ten in Africa, had to date requested assistance in drafting national urban policies, and thirty cities asked for assistance in respect of planned urban extensions.

33. The post-2015 Development Agenda, the post-Rio+20 sustainable development goals and the Habitat III process must take into account the potential of sustainable urbanization to promote long-term development.

34. Habitat III, scheduled for 2016, would take place after the elaboration of the post 2015 development agenda. United Nations Focal points for local governments had not been heavily involved in the discussions on that agenda, and Habitat III should therefore provide a platform for local and regional governments to add their voice to the debate on sustainable development.

G. Work of the Committee of the Whole (agenda items 5, 7 and 8)

35. [To be completed]

H. Work of the drafting committee and adoption of resolutions (agenda items 5, 7 and 8)

36. [To be completed]

II. High-level segment and dialogue on the special theme for the twenty-fourth session of the Governing Council (agenda items 5–7)

A. High-level segment

37. The Governing Council took up agenda items 5–7 at its 2nd plenary meeting, at which time it began the high-level general debate on those items. The general debate continued at its 3rd and 4th meetings, on Monday and Tuesday, 15 and 16 April. A summary of the general debate by the President of the Governing Council is set forth in annex III to the present proceedings.

38. Many representatives highlighted the massive urban transition that was taking place around the world. For the first time in history, more than half of the world’s population lived in urban settlements, a figure that was expected to increase to about 70 per cent by 2050. Almost all of that growth would take place in developing countries, where urban populations were growing at over 3 per cent per year, as opposed to less than 1 per cent in the more developed regions.

39. The unprecedented rate of urbanization had given rise to numerous challenges, including unbalanced competition for limited resources, which had resulted in negative social and economic trends such as increasing levels of poverty, inequality, hunger and unemployment. Several representatives mentioned the difficulties encountered in striving for sustainable urban development as a result of terrorism, internal strife, occupation and natural disasters. Others emphasized the additional challenges faced by developing countries, where urbanization often preceded industrialization. Some representatives drew attention to the efforts being made in their countries to counteract widespread rural exodus by boosting access to services beyond the confines of cities and stimulating agriculture as a significant source of employment.

40. There was general agreement that managing the realities of urbanization called for the proper planning of human settlements, including both cities and rural habitats, to ensure sustainable social, economic and environmental development. Strategic urban planning was a prerequisite for avoiding urban sprawl, promoting energy-efficient transport systems and buildings, improving solid waste management and enhancing water and sanitation services. Better urban planning could contribute to a greener economy by promoting resource efficiency, reducing greenhouse gas emissions while creating more productive and liveable cities and combatting urban poverty.

41. One representative emphasized that limited urban space was a challenge and that the efficient and creative utilization of available space was needed to achieve sustainable livelihoods, particularly in the face of the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment. A strategic approach to urban planning enabled the engagement of a wider platform of stakeholders in the development process. Inclusiveness was key to ensuring sustained growth because it promoted growth with equity. Participatory planning and decision-making would go a long way in spreading the benefits of growth to all members of society and ensuring greater sense of citizenship.

42. The well-being of millions of poor people across the world depended in large part on effective urban planning and access to affordable public services. There was a strong relationship between
adequacy of infrastructure and enhancement of income. Governments at various levels therefore needed to ensure the provision of those services at affordable prices. The delivery of municipal services to growing urban populations, however, was constrained by the insufficient financial resources available to municipal authorities to fund those services. Planning for sustainable human settlements would not be achievable unless local governments acquired the capacity, skills and authority to tackle that important task.

43. Many representatives highlighted the role of cities as drivers of economic growth and sources of job creation; wealth generation would become increasingly important as the world became more urbanized. Unfortunately, the benefits of urban development had not been evenly spread and poverty, the proliferation of slums and squatter settlements, inadequate infrastructure, poor access to social services and environmental degradation were still prevalent in many parts of the world. The linkage between housing and income generation was critical.

44. Many representatives mentioned the national urban policies undertaken in their countries to tackle the challenges of rapid urbanization and improve the urban environment. Such policies included initiatives to enhance public transport systems, provide social housing for those in need, improve access to water and sanitation and ensure a balanced distribution of the urban population; some had been developed with inputs from multilateral organizations such as the World Bank. One representative drew attention to her Government’s efforts to establish satellite towns on city peripheries with a view to decongesting city centres and relieving pressure on urban transport systems.

45. Many representatives welcomed the emphasis placed on women and youth in the special theme of the twenty-fourth session of the Governing Council. There was general agreement that both deserved special attention in the global urban agenda because they often were the majority of the urban population yet were the most vulnerable to urban poverty and unemployment. Some drew attention to the obstacles of discrimination and gender-based violence that many women faced; others stated that young people encountered difficulties in accessing education, resources and employment, which undermined their productive potential. Mention was made of the “youth bulge” in many parts of the world and of the fact that by 2030 over 60 per cent of young people would live in cities. Both women and young people held great potential as drivers of change, and several initiatives were already under way to provide them with the training, technical expertise and entrepreneurship skills to enable them to fulfil that role. Further gender-equal policies and a much greater inclusion of young people and women in decision-making processes would be essential for the future of sustainable urban development.

46. The critical role that UN-Habitat would play in meeting the post-2015 sustainable development agenda needed to be borne in mind in the lead-up to Habitat III, including in particular its critical role in addressing the challenges and opportunities of urbanization in the twenty-first century. In preparing for Habitat III, member States should endeavour to adopt innovative approaches to issues such as the eradication of poverty and slums, urban sprawl, security, access to basic services, infrastructure provision and other key economic and social development considerations. Habitat III would also present an opportunity to start to build a solid base for a stronger UN-Habitat.

47. Several representatives welcomed the continuing reorientation of the programmatic focus of UN-Habitat and the emphasis on an urban agenda that was forward-looking and normative and helped to create enabling conditions for sustainable cities. There was also strong support for the increased focus of UN-Habitat on support for an integrated approach to urban development and a new urban agenda that placed greater emphasis on planning, municipal legislation and urban economy.

48. Many representatives said that strengthened governance was of key importance to the effective implementation of the UN-Habitat programme of work and therefore reiterated their support for the process of reforming UN-Habitat into a more accountable, efficient and well-resourced organization with an appropriate human resource complement that would enable it to deliver on its mandate. The structural reforms under review would enhance UN-Habitat’s capacity to respond to emerging challenges and ensure an institutional environment conducive to the promotion of the proposed new urban agenda. In addition, the strengthening of the evaluation office and the introduction of results-based management were major positive steps. Discussions on changes to the governance structure of UN-Habitat should be concluded at Habitat III in 2016, where a new Habitat Agenda would be drawn up.

49. One representative said that UN-Habitat was in a privileged position to facilitate the exchange of best practices and should take advantage of it by enhancing its role in promoting South-South and triangular cooperation. The strengthening of the regional offices could also greatly contribute to that effect, as well as to ensuring better coordination between the Secretariat and countries that requested UN-Habitat’s support.
UN-Habitat’s donor base was still weak and core funding was declining; the Programme – one of the smallest in the United Nations family – was continuing to experience difficulties in fulfilling its mandate. Having a significant and stable proportion of non-earmarked resources would be crucial to ensuring that UN-Habitat could deliver on its core mandate. The new UN-Habitat Resource Mobilization Strategy and the focus on mobilizing a broader and stronger base of core donors were welcomed.

The representative of Colombia, supported by a representative speaking on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States, invited representatives to participate in the seventh session of the World Urban Forum, to be held in the city of Medellín in 2014. The World Urban Forum had grown to be the most important locus of discussion for urban policymakers and experts, and its seventh session would be an invaluable opportunity to discuss the role of cities in the post-2015 development agenda and to give inputs for Habitat III. One representative, however, felt that a stronger linkage between the World Urban Forum and UN-Habitat’s work programme was still needed and that the Forum’s outcomes should be better reflected in UN-Habitat’s activities.

B. Dialogue on the special theme for the twenty-fourth session

At its 5th and 6th plenary meetings, on Wednesday, 17 April, the Council held a dialogue on the special theme for the session under agenda item 6. The dialogue featured four panel discussions, each with a moderator, and was chaired by the President of the Governing Council. The panel discussions covered four specific aspects of the theme: economics of urban form, financing of urban development, youth economic empowerment and women’s economic empowerment. A summary of the dialogue is set forth in annex [ ] to the present proceedings.

III. Other matters (agenda item 9)

IV. Adoption of the report of the session (agenda item 10)

V. Closure of the session (agenda item 11)