Committee of Permanent Representatives

Update on UN-Habitat’s contribution to the Post-2015 Development Agenda including the Sustainable Development Goals

As at 11 June 2014

A. Background on processes and engagement mechanisms

The Post-2015 Development Agenda processes are running alongside the Sustainable Development Goals processes, which are a follow-up to the Rio+20 Conference. However, these two sets of processes are very likely to end up as one set of goals. In responding to Governing Council Resolution 24/10, the objective of UN-Habitat’s participation in these processes is to provide adequate information to Governments, United Nations system organizations and other stakeholders on the role of urbanization in sustainable development, with a view to ensuring that sustainable urbanization is reflected in both the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as in the processes leading to these outcomes.

Since the beginning of 2012, UN-Habitat has been participating in the work of the United Nations System Task Team (UNTT) on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and its Working Group on Indicators. UN-Habitat also co-led a thematic consultation on population dynamics, part of 11 thematic consultations organized by the Millennium Development Goals Task Force. In addition, it contributed to five other thematic consultations relevant to its mandate, i.e. those on environmental sustainability, governance, energy, water and inequalities.

UN-Habitat further provided inputs on sustainable urbanization to the work of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. It has been participating in the Technical Support Team of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. In particular, UN-Habitat contributed significantly to the Seventh Session of the Open Working Group held from 6 to 10 January 2014, including co-drafting the related Issue Brief on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements.

It has also been participating in the activities of the Thematic Group on Sustainable Cities of the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), the United Cities and Local Governments’ Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments and the Communitas Coalition for Sustainable Cities and Regions.

In December 2012, UN-Habitat suggested a stand-alone goal on sustainable cities and human settlements. This has since been refined and a proposed goal to “Achieve safe, inclusive, productive and resilient cities and human settlements” and a compilation of four clusters of targets was shared with the CPR in December 2013.

Meanwhile, UN-Habitat has worked with Governments at the country level to explain the importance of sustainable urbanization in national development in the context of discussions on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals.
B. Outcome of UN-Habitat’s Efforts

The report of the High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, “A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development”, published in May 2013, emphasized that “Cities are where the battle for sustainable development will be won or lost…” and also recognized the key role of local authorities. However, the report considered cities as cross-cutting.

The UN Secretary-General’s report titled “A life of dignity for all: accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015”, released in July 2013, recognized “Meet[ing] the challenges of urbanization” as one of 14 key “…transformative and mutually reinforcing actions that apply to all countries…” that will be required to bring to life the vision of the development agenda beyond 2015 (paragraphs 82 and 94). The report also recognized that “… With rapid urbanization and population growth … the number of slum dwellers is on the rise” (paragraph 29).

The Global Task Force on Local and Regional Governments suggested, in March 2013, recognition of the role of local and regional governments as well as eight objectives, including one on urban planning and design, territorial cohesion and climate change resilience.

The Mayors Adaptation Forum Bonn Declaration of June 2013 urged “…nations to adopt a universal sustainable development goal for cities”. Rio de Janeiro Mayor Eduardo Paes, chair of the Large Cities Climate Leadership Group (C-40) has also endorsed an urban SDG, stating that ‘without an urban goal the SDGs will be incomplete’.

The Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) recommended, in June 2013, a stand-alone goal on “empowering inclusive, productive and resilient cities”, plus three targets. SDSN’s Thematic Group on Sustainable Cities, supported by UN-Habitat, UCLG, Cities Alliance, ICLEI, and Metropolis prepared a paper titled “Why the World Needs an Urban Sustainable Development Goal” in September 2013. SDSN also launched the #UrbanSDG campaign, which has attracted more than 200 local, national and international signatories.

The Communitas Coalition for Sustainable Cities and Regions is promoting the adoption of an urban goal and has developed component targets related to the economic, social, environmental, spatial and cultural dimensions of sustainable development.

At the Seventh Session of the Open Working Group (OWG-7) held during the period 6-10 January 2014, which focused on sustainable cities and human settlements and sustainable transport, among other topics, the Executive Director of UN-Habitat opened the session with a keynote address. During the first two days, member states interacted with keynote speakers and panelists on the role of sustainable cities in an SDG framework. There was significant support by Member States for the inclusion of urbanization in the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals. The Co-Chairs, in their summary at the end of the Session, observed that “The inclusion of an urbanization-related goal in the SDGs was supported by many.”

UN-Habitat developed a “Question and Answer” document on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements in the SDGs to clarify some of the questions that came up in the OWG-7 debate, including: “What would an urban SDG mean for rural areas? How might an urban SDG ensure the delivery of universal public services? How might a universal urban SDG accommodate national and local contexts? What kind of signal would Member States send to cities with an urban SDG?”
C. Update on recent developments: February-June 2014

At the regional level, the 22nd session of the African Union Summit saw the urban agenda included in the African Common Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Discussions on the same also featured prominently on the agenda of AMCHUD on 25-28 February 2014.

Within the framework of the World Urban Campaign, an event entitled “The City We Need” was held in New York on 4 March, with a session dedicated to “The City in the Post-2015 Development Agenda and beyond”.

On 26 March, the Chair of the UN Statistical Commission transmitted a compendium of 29 statistical notes as input to the SDGs. They provide information on the measurement aspects of the issues discussed by the Open Working Group during its first eight sessions. UN-Habitat prepared one of these notes, focusing on sustainable cities and human settlements.

At the Tenth Session of the Open Working Group (OWG-10) the topic of sustainable cities and human settlements was discussed on 3 April. During this session, an increasing number of Open Working Group members – including two large regional blocs – expressed support for a stand-alone goal on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements and proposed concrete targets, which were included in the working document prepared by the co-chairs in preparation for OWG-11.

On 3 April the Swedish mission to the UN in New York hosted a luncheon to discuss the role of Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements in the Post-2015 Development Agenda, with more than 20 member states attending including several members of the Group of Friends for Sustainable Cities. Speakers included several Ambassadors, the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, Jeffrey Sachs of Colombia University and the Project Director of Communitas Coalition. With regard to measurement, the SDSN launched an indicator report with a section on Sustainable Cities on 4 April 2014 in New York. A webinar on “Why the World Needs an Urban SDG” was hosted by Municipal Art Society on 5 May.

The Post-2015 Development Agenda was very prominent in the debates and events at the 7th session of the World Urban Forum in Medellin. Key events included a Special Session on the Post-2015 Development Agenda on 9 April, with speakers representing the Governments of Colombia and Germany as well as representatives from Communitas and SDSN. Also, two networking events were fully dedicated to this topic, organized by the Governments of Brazil as well as by the Communitas Coalition. Post-2015 was also part of the agenda of the World Urban Campaign meeting. The Medellin Declaration on “Equity as a foundation of sustainable urban development”, in its section on “Contributing to the future”, the topic of Sustainable Urbanization in the Post-2015 Development Agenda is addressed as follows: “The framework of the Post-2015 Development Agenda is an opportunity to reaffirm the universal relevance of well planned and managed cities as real drivers for change. Towards this end, the participants at the World Urban Forum reaffirm the need to include key aspects of sustainable cities and human settlements in the Post-2015 Development Agenda, in order to harness the transformational power of cities to achieve and advance sustainable development.”

In their Working Document of 17 April 2014, the co-chairs of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals narrowed down the number of focus areas. They retained "Sustainable cities and human settlements" as standalone Focus Area 10, one of the 16 focus areas. They also suggested eight targets for consideration.
**The 11th Session of the OWG** took place on 5-9 May 2014. OWG members commented on all focus areas and targets. The Co-Chairs concluded that working document remains generally supported, but some clear amendments needed to take place. Some focus areas that required more work than others: equality; climate change; means of implementation; and peaceful and inclusive societies, rule of law and capable institutions. There was broad endorsement for FA-10 on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements. However, some members suggested to move certain targets under Infrastructure. Statements by OWG members revealed, amongst others, that there was a need to ensure a better balance of urban-rural in the formulation of FA-10 and that there was no common understanding of “ecological footprint of cities”.

As a follow up to WUF-7, several members of the World Urban Campaign and the Habitat Professionals Forum have enhanced their advocacy with their constituencies with regard to the importance of Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements in the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

On 14 May, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network 9th Thematic Group of Sustainable Cities organized a panel event and expert roundtable on Sustainable Urbanization in China.

On 22 May, IFAD organized, with support of UN-Habitat, a discussion with member states missions in New York on how to best reflect the rural-urban continuum in the Post 2015 Development Agenda.

On 1 June, the Chair of the World Cities Summit Mayors Forum, held in Singapore, sent a letter to the OWG co-chairs, with 112 Mayors and senior local government leaders from all regions expressing support for a standalone Sustainable Development Goal on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements.

On 2 June the Co-Chairs of the OWG on SDGs issued a “zero draft”, entitled “Introduction and Proposed Goals and Targets on Sustainable Development for the Post2015 Development Agenda”. This document includes a chapeau and a list of 17 proposed Sustainable Development Goals to be attained by 2030 (see Annex 1). The document also proposes 212 targets distributed over the goals, reflecting the various additional proposals for targets made during OWG-11 session by the Member States. The proposed goal 11 on “Build inclusive, safe and sustainable cities and human settlements” has 9 targets (see Annex 2). A thoroughly revised goal 17 on “Strengthen and enhance the means of implementation and global partnership for sustainable development” has 46 targets.

On 10 June, the co-chairs circulated a document to show how several issues have been mainstreamed in the zero draft, including Youth, Persons with Disabilities, Migrants, LDCs, Indigenous Peoples, Gender Equality, Human Rights, Family, Culture, Disaster Preparedness and Resilience Building, Climate, Children and Infrastructure.

**D. Next Steps**

The co-chairs of OWG have recently started an informal negotiation process with the aim to reduce the number of goals and targets. They have requested the UN Technical Support Team to explore how the targets under each focus area could be prioritized and refined to enhance the transformative power and measurability of the goals and targets. UN-Habitat, UNEP and UNESCO are co-leading this exercise for FA-11 in consultation with 17 other UN agencies. The final sessions of the OWG will be preceded by informal sessions to promote conversation between co-chairs and delegations.
UN-Habitat, together with UNDP and the “Global Taskforce of local and regional governments for the post 2015 development agenda and Habitat III” is organizing a consultation on "Localizing the Post-2015 Development Agenda". Responding to the call of the UNDG and together with member states, the consultations will discuss the local dimensions of the future global development framework. This dialogue will also explore the important role of cities in advancing progress on national and global agendas. The consultation will be global at worldwewant2015.org with focus on the following countries: Armenia, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, El Salvador, Ecuador, Ghana, Jamaica, Malawi, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Uruguay and Yemen.

The Open Working Group is expected to prepare its final report by 18 July to be submitted to the General Assembly in September 2014. This will be one of three reports, the others being the report of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing (ICESDF) and the summary of meetings organized by the President of the General Assembly. After the debate in the General Assembly in September 2014, inter-governmental negotiations on the Post 2015 Development Agenda are expected to be concluded by September 2015.
Annex 1: List of Proposed Sustainable Development Goals to be attained by 2030

1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
2. End hunger, achieve food security and adequate nutrition for all, and promote sustainable agriculture
3. Attain healthy life for all at all ages
4. Provide equitable and inclusive quality education and life-long learning opportunities for all
5. Attain gender equality, empower women and girls everywhere
6. Secure water and sanitation for all for a sustainable world
7. Ensure access to affordable, sustainable, and reliable modern energy services for all
8. Promote strong, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and decent work for all
9. Promote sustainable industrialization
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
11. Build inclusive, safe and sustainable cities and human settlements
12. Promote sustainable consumption and production patterns
13. Promote actions at all levels to address climate change
14. Attain conservation and sustainable use of marine resources, oceans and seas
15. Protect and restore terrestrial ecosystems and halt all biodiversity loss
16. Achieve peaceful and inclusive societies, rule of law, effective and capable institutions
17. Strengthen and enhance the means of implementation and global partnership for sustainable development


11.1 by 2030, ensure universal access to adequate and affordable housing and basic services for all, and eliminate slum-like conditions everywhere
11.2 by 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport for all, expand public transport and improve road safety
11.3 enhance capacities for integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management for all, particularly developing countries
11.4 strengthen positive economic and social links between cities and peri-urban and rural areas
11.5 by 2030, reduce the environmental impacts of cities and improve the quality of environment in cities
11.6 by 2020, increase by x% the number of human settlements adopting and implementing policies and plans towards resilience and adaptation to climate change and natural disasters
11.7 enhance social cohesion and personal security, and ensure universal access to inclusive and safe public spaces
11.8 by 2030 ensure that all cities are accessible and offer opportunities to persons with disabilities
11.9 protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage