Resolution 24/5: Pursuing sustainable development through national urban policies

The Governing Council,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 63/221 of 19 December 2008, by which, in paragraph 3, the Assembly invited Governments to encourage the principles and practice of sustainable urbanization and strengthen the role and contribution of their respective local authorities in applying those principles and practice,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 65/165 of 20 December 2010, by which the General Assembly supported the dissemination and implementation of the international guidelines on decentralization and access to basic services for all adopted by the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme in its resolutions 21/3 of 20 April 2007 and 22/8 of 3 April 2009,

Recalling Governing Council resolution 23/17 of 15 April 2011, by which the Council encouraged Governments and Habitat Agenda partners seriously to consider the need to increase urban density through intensification of land use, as part of improved urban planning, so as to promote development patterns that allow housing for all, increased job opportunities and reduced urban sprawl, as well as to reduce infrastructure investment costs, the ecological footprint of urban centres and demand for transport and energy use, and to overcome a growing social divide, spatial fragmentation and the resulting inefficient land-use patterns,

Recognizing paragraph 226 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20 to 22 June 2012, entitled “The future we want”, on the adoption of the global ten-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns, including its programme on sustainable buildings and construction, and the need for a supportive urban infrastructure for sustainable lifestyles,

Taking note of the Nairobi Declaration of the African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development, adopted at its fourth session on 23 March 2012, by which African ministers responsible for housing and urban development committed themselves to, inter alia, strengthening and developing transformative national urban policies and adopting strategies for realizing smarter and more sustainable urban development through the reconfiguration of space, infrastructure and flows in new urban development and retrofitting existing cities, resulting in compact, mixed-use, high-density development that is walkable, bicycle-friendly and transit-oriented,

Considering the Executive Director’s progress report to the Governing Council at its twenty-fourth session on the coordinated implementation of the guidelines on access to basic services for all and the guidelines on decentralization and strengthening of local authorities and its recommendation to develop complementary guidelines on urban and territorial planning so as to facilitate implementation of the existing guidelines by providing a reference document for intersectoral and multilevel planning,

Recalling the objective of focus area two, urban planning and design, of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme strategic plan for 2014–2019, namely, to improve policies, plans and designs for more compact, socially inclusive, better integrated and connected cities that foster sustainable urban development and are resilient to climate change, at the city, regional and national levels,

1. Encourages Governments to initiate processes to review, strengthen and develop national urban policies where appropriate as a key strategy for national social and economic development, to

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5 HSP/GC/24/2/Add.8.
maximize the national and local benefits of urbanization, while mitigating potential adverse externalities, and as a coordination mechanism among different sectors and ministries;

2. Requests the Executive Director in consultation with the Committee of Permanent Representatives to develop a general guiding framework for the development, where appropriate, of national urban policies, based on international good experiences, to further support member States when developing and improving their urban policies;

3. Invites member States to facilitate participatory processes and wide stakeholder participation, including local authorities and their associations, when developing, revising and implementing national urban policies, where appropriate, in particular through national urban forums also as a means for the preparation of the third United Nations conference on housing and sustainable urban development (Habitat III);

4. Encourages Governments and Habitat Agenda partners to use planned city extension methodologies to guide the sustainable development of cities experiencing rapid urban growth, to prevent slum proliferation, enhance access to basic urban services, support inclusive housing, enhance job opportunities and create a safe and healthy living environment;

5. Invites the Executive Director to establish strategic partnerships towards strengthening the contribution of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme to the implementation of the ten-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns adopted at the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, including its programme on sustainable buildings and construction, and also to consider how to promote a supportive urban infrastructure for sustainable lifestyles through national spatial frameworks, including urban-rural linkages;

6. Invites the international community and financial institutions to contribute adequate financial resources to the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation to enable the United Nations Human Settlements Programme to assist developing countries and countries with economies in transition in mobilizing public investment and private capital to achieve sustainable urban development through the implementation of national urban policies and planned city extensions;

7. Requests the Executive Director to report to the Governing Council at its twenty-fifth session on progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

8th plenary meeting
19 April 2013