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

As at 17 June 2015

A. Background

In responding to Governing Council Resolution 24/10, UN-Habitat provides 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 the post-2015 development agenda including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Since 2012 UN-Habitat has participated in the work of the United Nations System Task Team (UNTT) on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and its Working Group on Indicators. It also participated heavily in the UN System Technical Support Team (TST) in support of the Open Working Group on the SDGs. Most recently, UN-Habitat has actively responded to technical requests from the UN Statistical Division in support of the Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and Interagency Expert Group (IAEG) on SDGs.

Throughout this time UN-Habitat has also worked directly with Member States 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. Moreover, UN-Habitat has been supporting 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 July 2014, after more than a year of discussion and negotiation, the Open Working Group (OWG) adopted a proposal for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets. It recommends 17 goals and 169 targets as well as a chapeau text. The proposed SDG 11 ‘Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable’ includes seven outcome targets and three targets related to means of implementation. In September 2014, the General Assembly agreed that the agenda laid out by the Open Working Group would be the main basis for the post-2015 intergovernmental process.

In April the 25th Session of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat adopted resolution HS/25/L.9 on the ‘Contribution of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme to the post-2015 development agenda in order to promote sustainable urban development and human settlements’. This resolution, amongst others, ‘Encourages the Executive Director to continue promoting the role of sustainable urbanization and human settlements as a transformative force for achieving and advancing sustainable development in support of the future post-2015 development agenda’.
B. Update on recent developments

i) Intergovernmental negotiations

Since January 2015, Member States have been meeting in monthly intergovernmental negotiation (IGN) sessions to discuss the recommendations of the OWG and draft an outcome document for the UN Summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda. In parallel, the UN Statistical Commission, in its 46th session in March, endorsed the formation of an ‘Interagency and Expert Group’ (IAEG-SDG). In the IAEG-SDG, national statistical offices will play a leading role with UN agencies supporting and assisting as observers. A new High Level Group (HLG) will also provide strategic leadership for the SDG implementation process.

Since the last update to the CPR there have been three additional sessions of intergovernmental negotiations (IGN), each led as before by Co-Facilitators H.E. Mr. Macharia Kamau, Permanent Representative of Kenya and H.E. Mr. David Donoghue, Permanent Representative of Ireland.

The third IGN session (23-27 March) focused on (1) a proposed timeline and roadmap for the UN Statistical Commission to create an indicator framework for the SDGs, (2) country experiences in implementing sustainable development and (3) arrangements for the April IGN session. Much of the attention was on the Co-Facilitators’ proposed revisions to 19 targets (now 21; see Annex 1 of this document). While some Member States urging no revisions for fear of upsetting the delicate political balance achieved in the OWG, others favoured the consideration of possible limited revisions.

The fourth IGN session (20-24 April) convened as a joint meeting with the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD3) process; it focused on (1) proposals for the creation of a technology facilitation mechanism, (2) the relationship between the FfD and post-2015 processes and (3) follow-up and review on FfD and means of implementation (MOI). Member States discussed how they thought the two processes should relate to one another, with some saying the FfD3 process should comprise the MOI section of the post-2015 development agenda and others viewing them as distinct outcomes.

The fifth IGN session (18-22 May) focused on (1) follow-up and review of the post-2015 development agenda, what this actually entails at the national, regional and global scales and the role of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development, (2) goals, targets and indicators (3) themes for the interactive dialogues during the Post-2015 Summit in September. Though there was continued disagreement about whether targets should be revised on technical lines, Member States adopted the six themes for the interactive dialogues (see https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/7231Letter_themes_membership%20FIN AL.pdf). The topic of sustainable cities and human settlements appears explicitly under the description of the fourth dialogue on ‘protecting our planet and combatting climate change’.

On 2 June the Co-Facilitators released the zero draft of the outcome document, which includes the full recommendations of the OWG along with the possible technical revisions to 21 targets (see https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/7261Post-2015%20Summit%20%20%20%20June%20%202015.pdf). For ease of communication of the post-2015 development agenda the zero draft provides several possible re-framings. First, it highlights the five overarching aims of people, prosperity, planet, peace and partnerships. Second, it summarizes the agenda in just nine
priorities, one of which is to ‘promote safe and inclusive cities and human settlements.’ Third, it
details these priorities in a series of descriptive paragraphs, number 26 of which reads as follows:

‘We recognize that sustainable urban development and management are crucial to the quality of
life of our people. We will work with local authorities and communities to renew and plan our
cities so as to foster community cohesion and personal security and to stimulate innovation and
employment. We will reduce the negative impacts of urban activities, including through the safe
management and use of chemicals, the reduction and recycling of waste and more efficient use of
water and energy. And we will work to minimize the impact of cities on the global climate
system.’

The sixth IGN session (22-25 June) will focus on the outcome document itself. The
intergovernmental negotiations are expected to conclude with sessions on 20-24 July and 27-31
July 2015.

ii) Indicators framework for the post-2015 development agenda

In the report of its 24th session in March, the UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) presented an
initial assessment of proposed, provisional indicators by Member States’ National Statistical
Offices (NSOs). 70 NSOs had responded to the invitation to rate the relative feasibility, suitability
and relevance of a compilation of SDG indicators that had been formulated by UN agencies in
February (see https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/6754Technical%20report%20of%20the
%20UNSC%20Bureau%2028final%29.pdf). UN agencies then had the opportunity to counter-
respond with a revised list of priority indicators (first priority proposed indicator list available here:
https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B8n3WhOaTbGVZ3JIbUQ4QlFWYjQ/view). An excerpt from this
document, zooming in on SDG-11, can be found in Annex 2.

Another outcome of the UNSC’s 24th session was the establishment of the Interagency Expert
Group on SDGs (IAEG-SDG), which met for the first time on 1-2 June. Its 27 Member States (see
http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/2015/05/14/iaeg-sdg-membership/) were represented unevenly, with
some sending NSOs from capital and others sending New York-based Missions. Consequently,
discussions were rather polarized around the substance of the indicator proposals on the one hand
and a reconfirmation of the mandate and deliverables of the IAEG on the other. The Co-Chairs
proposed that work proceed via two workstreams; one on the overall framework of the SDG
indicators and the other on interlinkages between them. Over the next few months the IAEG will
interact electronically; first to decide on the proposed workstreams then to begin to draft a first
proposal of recommended indicators for discussion in its second and final in-person meeting in
October. The final recommendations of the IAEG will go to the UNSC in December.

On 3 June UN-Habitat spoke at a technical seminar in support of the UN IAEG-SDGs,
organized by the ‘Communitas Coalition for Sustainable Cities and Regions in the new UN
Development Agenda’. The seminar brought together a number of scholars and practitioners who
are advancing the use of geospatial technology, particularly applied to the monitoring of urban
trends. UN-Habitat detailed its proposal to use geo-spatial data for indicators on land use efficiency
and access to public space, and highlighted some of its experience collecting and analyzing this
type of data.
iii) Third International Conference on Financing for Development

Preparatory work continues for the outcome document of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which will be held from 13-16 July 2015 in Addis Ababa (see http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/ffd3/). On 10 April UN-Habitat responded to the Co-Chairs’ 16 March draft with a series of concrete suggestions for highlighting the need for sound municipal finance systems and urbanization as a source of endogenous development.

More specifically, UN-Habitat suggested that the draft outcome document reflects the following elements:

- the importance of urbanization as a source of endogenous development and resource mobilization to finance the development of a continuum of sustainable human settlements;
- the role of sound municipal finance systems in supporting sustainable urban development with particular focus on local revenue generation and application of innovative financing mechanisms including land based financing solutions to implement urgently needed urban development and city extension plans;
- the need to empower local authorities in developing and implementing effective financing instruments, and the need to align devolved functions and responsibilities of local authorities with commensurate level of national transfers and/or authority or capacity to generate additional income through taxes as well as non tax mechanisms;
- the need for national governments to create the legal and institutional framework to enhance the ability of cities to access capital markets, while ensuring borrowing by sub national government entities does not create financial excesses and macro economic risks;
- the need for appropriate legal and institutional frameworks to support public private partnerships that are fair and transparent and promote sustainable development goals.

The second drafting session for this outcome document was held 13-17 April and a revised outcome was released 7 May, followed by three sets of additional consultations. The third and final drafting session is taking place from 15-19 June. Meanwhile, UN-Habitat is teaming up with UCLG and other organizations to prepare a side event at the Addis Ababa Conference.

On 5 June, immediately following the European Development Days, UN-Habitat organized a policy dialogue at its Brussels Office, focusing on ‘Financing Urban Development’ as a way to further highlight the important role of urbanization and municipal finance systems for financing development.

iv) Other relevant activities and processes

The Dialogue on the Special Theme of the 25th session of the Governing Council, namely, “The contribution of UN-Habitat to the post-2015 development agenda: promoting sustainable urban development and human settlements”, took place on 21 April. The keynote address highlighted both the achievement of having secured the urban SDG as well as the challenge of having to implement it. The first session discussed the role of UN-Habitat in finalizing, monitoring and implementing the post-2015 development agenda. And the final two sessions addressed, respectively, strategies, challenges and approaches to urban-rural linkages and priorities in operationalizing urban-rural linkages.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Advisory Committee of Local Authorities (UNACLA), the Advisory Group on Gender Issues (AGGI) and the World Urban Campaign (WUC) included an
agenda item on the role of sustainable urbanization in the post-2015 development agenda as part of their deliberations around the time of the 25th session of the Governing Council.

In response to the UNSC, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) released a draft of its report ‘Indicators and a Monitoring Framework for the Sustainable Development Goals: launching a data revolution for the SDGs’ in March with a final version following on 15 May. The report proposes six global indicators for SDG-11 as well as a number of complementary national indicators. Meanwhile, along with more than 10 other international organizations, UN-Habitat continued to actively participate in SDSN’s thematic group on Cities and its associated Urban SDG Campaign. The Campaign held its 3rd global meeting in Gothenburg on 8-10 June, when its members discussed the results of a field testing exercise to assess the relevance and suitability of selected indicators for SDG-17 and agreed to recommendations to the zero draft of the outcome document for the post-2015 development agenda.

UN-Habitat also continued to engage in contributing to debates on other relevant proposed goals and targets of the proposed post-2015 development agenda. These include, amongst others, highlighting the importance of sustainable urbanization and human settlements related to land, water and gender.

C. Calendar of upcoming events

- 26 June – 8 July 2015: Meeting of the High Level Political Forum
- 20-24 July and 27-31 July 2015: Meeting of the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda
- 22 July 2015: Prosperity, People, and Planet in the Cities: Special Symposium of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences and the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network on Cities and the Sustainable Development Agenda, Vatican City
- July 2015 (TBC): Formulation of first draft proposal for indicator framework by IAEG-SDGs
- 25-27 September 2015: United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, including plenary meetings and interactive dialogues
- October 2015 (TBC): Second and final meeting of the IAEG-SDGs
- December 2015: Formulation of the second draft proposal for an indicator framework by IAEG-SDGs for submission as parliamentary document to UN Statistics Commission
- March 2016: Expected agreement on an indicator set for the SDGs at the 47th session of the Statistical Commission
- Continuous towards October 2016: Consideration of the linkages between the post-2015 development agenda and the Habitat III preparatory process.
Annex 1: Excerpt from proposed target revisions (as in the Zero draft of the outcome document for the UN Summit to adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda)

There were two justifications for proposed target revisions, the first of which -- specificity, i.e. substituting variables with numerical values -- applies to both proposed revisions under Goal 11.

**Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable**

**Target 11.5**
By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and decrease by [x] per cent the economic losses relative to gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations

(As proposed by the Co-Facilitators during the Intergovernmental Negotiations and now offered for consideration in the zero draft:)

*By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths, the number of affected people and the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including through humanitarian assistance.*

**Target 11.b**
By 2020, increase by [x] per cent the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, develop and implement, in line with the forthcoming Hyogo Framework, holistic disaster risk management at all levels.

(As proposed by the Co-Facilitators during the Intergovernmental Negotiations and now offered for consideration in the zero draft:)

*By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels.*
Annex 2: Excerpt from proposed first priority indicator list proposed by UN organizations (in response to National Statistical Offices’ initial assessment of proposed indicators)

Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

**Target 11.1** By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums  
*Priority Indicator: Percentage of urban population living in slums*

**Target 11.2** By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons  
*Priority Indicator: Proportion of the population that has a public transit stop within 0.5 km*

**Target 11.3** By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries  
*Priority Indicator: Efficient land use*

**Target 11.4** Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage  
*Priority Indicator: Share of national (or municipal) budget which is dedicated to preservation, protection and conservation of national cultural natural heritage including World Heritage sites*

**Target 11.5** By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and decrease by [x] per cent the economic losses relative to gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations  
*Priority Indicator: Number of people affected by hazardous events by age and sex (including deaths, missing people, injured, relocated or evacuated due to disasters per 100,000)*

**Target 11.6:** By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management  
*Priority Indicator: Percentage of urban solid waste regularly collected and well managed (disaggregated by type of waste)*

**Target 11.7** By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities  
*Priority Indicator: The average share of the built-up areas of cities in open space in public ownership and use.*

**Target 11.a** Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning  
*Priority Indicator: Cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants that implement urban and regional development plans integrating population projections and resource needs*

**Target 11.b** By 2020, increase by [x] per cent the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation
and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, develop and implement, in line with the forthcoming Hyogo Framework, holistic disaster risk management at all levels

*Priority Indicator: Percentage of cities implementing risk reduction and resilience policies that include vulnerable and marginalized groups.*

**Target 11.c** Support least developed countries, including through financial and technical assistance, in building sustainable and resilient buildings utilizing local materials

*Priority Indicator: Percentage of financial support that is allocated to the construction and retrofitting of sustainable, resilient and resource-efficient buildings.*