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Item 4:

Executive Director’s Briefing to the CPR
60th Regular Meeting of the CPR 23

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1. Introduction

There have been a number of important developments since the last meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR). In this briefing, I would like to focus on the following issues:

- Outcomes from the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) in Paris;
- Outcomes of the CPR informal Working Group on Work Programme and Budget;
- Update on Umoja;
- Habitat III preparations;
- The First Arab Ministerial Forum on Housing and Urban Development, and;
- Recent missions

2. Outcomes from the 21st Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP21)

On 12 December 2015, representatives of 195 countries unanimously agreed to a new climate accord. Observers generally consider that it "exceeded expectations" and was "ambitious".

The Agreement aims to hold the increase in the global average temperature to "well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels", with an aspiration of limiting increases to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Other goals relate to building capacity to adapt to climate change, and providing for sufficient financial flows. The COP-21 decision includes a reference to a "floor of USD 100 billion per year" from developed countries to developing countries to support climate action.

The Agreement is open for signature on 22 April 2016, for a period of one year. It will enter into force in 2020, upon ratification by at least 55 Parties representing at least 55 per cent of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Under the strong leadership of the host country (France) and City of Paris, COP21 also gave unprecedented visibility to cities and regions, elevating their role in combating climate change and delivering transformative action. The COP-21 decision references "cities and subnational authorities" as one type of "Non-Party stakeholder" and provides for a "work plan" on "capacity-building" for the period of 2016-2020, which includes a focus on "fostering global, regional, national and subnational cooperation", and "identifying opportunities to strengthen capacity at the national, regional and subnational levels".

I represented UN-Habitat at a meeting of major networks of cities (UCLG, ICLEI, C40) at Paris City Hall, which produced local-level 'commitments' to the Paris Agreement, including actions to reduce emissions and build climate resilience. The outcome document also invited participants to "prepare [for] the Habitat III Conference".

The Compact of Mayors (on whose Management Committee UN-Habitat is represented) was amply showcased, with 434 city leaders announcing their intentions to comply with the Compact. The Summit also served as a venue for the launch of the State of City Climate Finance Report, the flagship report of the Cities Climate Finance Leadership Alliance (on whose Steering Committee UN-Habitat is represented).
The Lima-Paris Action Agenda (LPAA) provided a means for the engagement of non-Party actors in collective climate action, with 'cities and regions' featuring as one of the main "action areas". "Cities and Sub-nationals Day", held on 8 December, provided for a number of related announcements. I represented UN-Habitat at this high-level event, with a focus on strengthening climate resilience in cities.

The Paris Action Statement on Local and Regional Climate Action, released by the LPAA on 8 December, with UN-Habitat’s endorsement, provides for work on four objectives by 2020: (1) increase scale and the number of cities and regions with climate action mitigation and adaptation plans; (2) build climate resilience in cities and regions; (3) scale up financing for local and regional investments, and; (4) reinforce ‘vertical integration’ dialogue on climate action between levels of government. Habitat III is also referenced in the outcome document.

UN-Habitat also endorsed a commitment under the LPAA to build the resilience of informal settlements in 500 cities by 2020, which was presented as a joint deliverable of our Agency in our capacity as the Chair of the Cities Alliance Joint Work Programme on Resilient Cities.

UN-Habitat was also recognized as a strategic partner in the Secretary-General’s Anticipate, Absorb, Reshape (A2R) initiative. A2R is a multi-stakeholder effort involving UN Agencies, governments, private sector, regional initiatives on resilience, civil society organizations and research institutions, which aims to strengthen climate resilience in the period up to 2020 (when the Paris Agreement will come into force), particularly for the most vulnerable countries and people.

Near the end of the Cities and Sub-nationals day, I joined the heads and senior representatives of several other UN agencies (e.g. UNIDO, UNICEF, WHO, UNDP, UNEP), along with the World Bank, for the announcement by Assistant Secretary-General Janos Pasztor of the intent to establish a Sub-national Climate Action Hub, to promote increased collaboration within the UN system on sub-national climate action and relevant Sustainable Development Goals.

UN-Habitat’s delegation, which included staff from five Branches, led and participated in a number of other side events, both in the official ‘blue zone’ and the stakeholder ‘green zone’, as well as related conferences and meetings held on the fringes of the main event.

3. Outcomes of the CPR informal Working Group on Work Programme and Budget

The first informal CPR Working Group on the Work Programme and Budget was held on 11 February with good attendance from several CPR members and UN-Habitat staff. The meeting agenda included an update on the Agency’s financial status, discussion of UN-Habitat’s Country Programme Document Guidelines and Integrated Regional Strategy, and progress on resource mobilization activities.

On the financial status, we reviewed the expected overall deficit for 2015, as well as expected reserves at the end of 2015, which are estimated at $20 million (well above the $10 million obligatory reserves). Our overhead income is now larger than non-earmarked core income, with UN-Habitat now the smallest programme in terms of UN regular budget. Overall, UN-Habitat made good progress in increasing total voluntary contributions, with an increase of about 17% from 2012 to USD $171 million in 2015. Whole earmarked contributions increased by 24% from 2012 to 2015, alongside a sharp decline in core contributions from US$10.9 to US$ 2.5 million. This is an area that has been identified as a major risk for the United Nations system as a whole. UN-Habitat is participating in a UN-wide working group established in 2015 to manage this risk.

In spite of these challenges, UN-Habitat has continued to make progress in evolving towards a more strategic, fit-for-purpose, programme. As part of our transformative efforts, we have re-focused resources on aligning our normative expertise and a growing technical cooperation portfolio, and preparing to deliver on the goals of the 2030 Agenda, Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and Paris Climate
Change Agreement, and the expected adoption of a New Urban Agenda (NUA) at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in October 2016.

In this regard, I highlighted our goal of managing a $1 billion portfolio of global investments in sustainable urban development. The intersection between the 2030 Agenda and outcomes from Habitat III provide clear opportunities to improve the Agency’s budget situation and strengthen our role within the UN system. On 15 December 2015, Member States observed this opportunity through GA resolution 70/473, which, inter alia, aims to ensure Habitat III produces a forward-looking, action-oriented outcome document to “support sustainable development and the implementation of a New Urban Agenda”.

The informal Working Group provided a further opportunity to review UN-Habitat’s vision of a NUA, where urbanization is a tool for sustainable development, fostering economic growth and prosperity, inclusiveness, and equity. The entry point for the NUA at country level lies in National Urban Policies. At sub-national level, the NUA combines a set of normative advisory services with technical solutions to build local governments’ capacity to sustainably absorb urban expansion through improved rules and regulations, urban plans and design, and municipal finance. The application of planned city extensions and planned city in-fills provide a further path towards sustainable urban development and growth.

Working Group participants raised important questions about the role of UN-Habitat in delivering the 2030 Agenda, specifically Goal 11, and the alignment to other global agreements, including the Paris Climate Change Agreement and the expected outcomes from Habitat III. I asked members to appeal to their capitals to increase support to UN-Habitat so we can secure our role in supporting Member States in the delivery of these Agendas and Agreements, and realize synergies with Habitat III.

In this regard, we also presented an update on our resource mobilization activities and plans. We provided a specific emphasis on activities dedicated to expanding the donor base, re-engage with past donors, and enhancing the level of contributions and number of donors to the Foundation and Technical Cooperation Funds. We also highlighted the significant increase recorded in the contributions from emerging donor countries and other non-traditional countries, and the UN system. Together, these provided 55% of the total funding of UN-Habitat in 2014.

We also presented our new guidelines/template for Habitat Country Programmes and Integrated Regional Strategies, using the completed Regional Strategy for Africa as an example of the new approach in practice, which aligns to the Agency’s transition to a matrix structure. The goals of these guidelines are to articulate the key challenges in urban development in countries where UN-Habitat is present, and allow for exchange of experiences at the regional level (advocacy); provide an overview of national urban policies and governance challenges (planning and management); highlight the needs and priorities in the housing sector (pro-poor land and housing, and finance); promote basic service delivery and urban environmental improvements (environmentally sound basic infrastructure and services); mobilize public, private and non-governmental partners; and feed into the UN’s goal for “Delivering as One”. To date, two regional strategies have been completed (Africa and Arab States). The remaining regional strategies are scheduled for completion in early 2016.

4. Umoja

Since my last report on the progress around Umoja, I can report to you that we have continued to make progress in difficult circumstances. You will recall that it is now imperative for the business transformation of the organisation to gather momentum and continue.

We recently received a mission of senior managers from New York, namely Ms. Betting Tucci Bartsiotas, ASG Controller, Stephen Cutts, ASG Central Support Services, and Mr. Ernesto Baca, ASG Enterprise Resource Planning (Umoja). They were able to see the difficulties we face first hand and all acknowledged that UN-Habitat, UNEP and UNON have been the leaders in multiple areas of solving problems linked to the implementation of Umoja. We are taking part in a Post Implementation Review steered by Mr. Takasu, USG Department of Management. In addition, Mr Cutts has established a Travel
Working Group to help take into consideration our operations. The Travel Working Group has already made several helpful recommendations. Furthermore, a four-week action plan was developed with the Controller to deal with the most pressing issues facing the Nairobi-based agencies.

Excellencies, I've warned before that Umoja would affect the delivery of our programme. Unfortunately we are still facing several problems, perhaps the most significant of which is our inability to extract financial reports from the Business Intelligence (BI) module of Umoja. This is resulting in difficulties for agencies to provide accurate reports to our CPR and stakeholders. As you know, the three Nairobi-based entities have been working in a common team during the deployment of Umoja. Building on this, a new unit in UNON, Business Analytics and Reporting Unit, has been created to facilitate BI coordination and ensure that UNHQ contributes solutions to these on-going challenges. The Nairobi-based agencies also continue to work closely together to address common process and system inefficiencies.

Despite these challenges, we have started work on the business transformation of the Agency by analysing our processes vis-a-vis our administration through UNON and UNHQ. Through the aforementioned working groups we are preparing proposals on various changes to the process and the structure of the organisation in order to further enhance efficiency in project delivery.

5. Habitat III

The preparatory process for Habitat III is ongoing through regional and thematic meetings, and other activities. Since my last update, the Africa Regional Meeting was held in Abuja, Nigeria, from 24-26 February. The meeting was well attended by Ministers and many stakeholders from across the African continent, who adopted the Abuja Declaration on “Africa’s Priorities for the New Urban Agenda”. The Abuja Declaration is available on the Habitat III website.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Government of Nigeria for their generosity and support in hosting this important regional meeting. A special mention is due to H.E. Mr. Babatunde Fashola, Federal Minister of Power, Works and Housing, for his invaluable support.

I would also like to express my appreciation for the support provided to the Habitat III process by the Government of the United Arab Emirates, which hosted a thematic meeting on “Sustainable Energy and Cities” in Abu Dhabi on 20 January, jointly with the International Renewable Energy Agency and MASDAR. At the meeting, I emphasized the very important role that Local Authorities can play in generating renewable energy. The Abu Dhabi Declaration provides strong recommendations for how to integrate sustainable energy in the New Urban Agenda.

Since our last meeting, the members of the policy units have put in an extraordinary amount of time and effort in preparing the policy papers. They have been meeting both virtually and physically to prepare documents that will be a valuable source of inputs from the global experts in their respective fields. I would also like to thank the United Nations Economic Commissions from various regions for working with the regional offices of UN-Habitat in preparing the regional reports. As we prepare all the inputs for Member States to consider, I would urge that all the national reports still under preparation are submitted, as these will provide valuable perspectives for the negotiating process.

In December, the General Assembly approved resolution 70/743, which resolved all pending organizational issues, including the procedures for accreditation and participation of civil society organizations, local governments, NGOs and other stakeholders in the Habitat III Conference. An inclusive and transparent process is in place to enable wide participation of stakeholders in Habitat III.

I am also pleased to inform you of the launch of the Urban Thursday Breakfasts in New York. This is a method of informal consultation to reflect on relevant aspects for the New Urban Agenda, which has been very well attended. A similar process is scheduled for Nairobi to further facilitate the informal exchange of knowledge and information. Your support for this initiative would encourage greater dialogue and understanding of the challenges and opportunities of urbanization.
6. The first Arab Ministerial Forum on Housing and Urban Development in Cairo, Egypt from 20-22 December 2015.

The first Arab Ministerial Forum on Housing and Urban Development was held in Cairo, Egypt from 20-22 December 2015, convened by the Government of Egypt, the League of Arab States and UN-Habitat. The conference was held under the theme “Arab Urbanization – Present Challenges and Future Prospects”.

The conference came at a timely moment for the Arab region, which has experienced both significant population growth and an increase in urbanisation rates. At the same time, protracted regional conflicts in the region have accelerated urbanisation through massive urban migration movements. This has increased the risk of spontaneous urbanisation, and added difficulties in managing the cities and also stressed the urban basic services. Despite this difficult and volatile environment, the Arab countries have managed well in promoting sustainable urbanisation, through an unprecedented regional cooperation and Arab fraternity.

I am pleased that AMFHUD agreed on the Cairo Declaration, which gives a strong commitment to implement the New Urban Agenda and to further develop the Forum’s institutional framework with a view to guiding regional, national and local urbanization strategies in the Arab Member States in the coming years.

I would like to thank, in particular, the Government of Egypt for their generosity in hosting this first forum.

7. Missions

On 15 and 16 January, I travelled to Berlin, Germany, to attend the Eighth Global Forum for Food and Agriculture upon the invitation of the Federal Minister for Agriculture, H.E. Mr. Christian Schmidt. The subject of this year’s GFFA was “How to feed our cities?” and I made a call to make food security for urban areas a political priority in the global arena.

During my visit to Berlin, I also took the opportunity to meet with senior officials of the German government, including H.E. Ms. Barbara Hendriks, Federal Minister for Environment, Nature Conservations, Building and Nuclear Safety, Mr. Thomas Silberhorn, State Secretary for Economic Cooperation and Development, and representatives of the Federal Parliament, to discuss preparations for Habitat III and urban challenges facing Europe. I would like to thank the German Government for their commitment and continued support to UN-Habitat in the run-up to Habitat III, and for their support to the preparations of the Conference itself.

From 15-17 February, I visited Yaounde, Cameroon, upon the invitation of the Government to discuss ways to enhance UN-Habitat’s support to Cameroon in their urbanization process. UN-Habitat has recently supported the Government of Cameroon in developing a National Urban Policy, which I launched together with H.E. Mr. Mbwentchou Jean Claude, Minister of Housing and Urban Development, during my visit.

I also had the opportunity to discuss the National Urban Policy and Cameroon’s efforts to implement its recommendations with H.E. Mr. Philemon Yang, Prime Minister of Cameroon, who expressed his wish to work closely with UN-Habitat to implement programmes that build on the transformative capacity of urbanization to generate economic value.

I look forward to continuing our long-standing close relationship with the Government of Cameroon and
would like to express my gratitude for their hospitality and partnership.

During the Habitat III Africa Regional Meeting in Abuja, both I and the Deputy Executive Director have several opportunities to meet with Ministers and other high-level representatives from African countries to discuss UN-Habitat national programmes and how they can be further strengthened. We continue to see an increasing demand from many countries in Africa for UN-Habitat’s support to sustainable urban development.

I paid an official visit to the Republic of Senegal the 3-4 March on the occasion of the first International Habitat Salon (Premier Salon International de l’Habitat) organised under the auspices of H.E President Macky Sall. I participated at the opening ceremony of this international forum together with the Prime Minister of Senegal, H.E Mahammad Boun Abdallah and the Minister of Habitat and Housing, M. Diene Farba. I also met with the President of the Republic, to whom I extended my invitation to the Habitat III conference.

This event contributes to the ongoing strategic debate over African urbanisation, following the adoption of the Abuja declaration the week before, during the Habitat III Africa Regional Meeting in Nigeria. It is also important to mention that Senegal, together with Chad, are members the Habitat III Bureau representing the African continent in the process towards HIII.

This visit was also a good opportunity to discuss with the national authorities over a potential UN-Habitat support in the area of a National Urban Policy for Senegal, as well as technical expertise in establishing a financial model for planned city extensions in Dakar. I visited one such project in person.

Since our last meeting, the Deputy Executive Director has visited Bahrain from 6-9 December to discuss our partnership with the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain, which includes Bahrain’s contribution to the development of the 2030 Agenda; UN-Habitat’s technical cooperation in Bahrain; Bahrain’s contribution to Palestine; and the HRH Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa award. During her visit, she met with HRH the Prince and other government officials to convey UN-Habitat’s gratitude for the continued support and long-term engagement with UN-Habitat, and outline ways to further our collaboration.

The Deputy Executive Director also participated in the meeting of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee for Humanitarian Affairs in Geneva from 9-13 December, where she also held bilateral meetings with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) on cooperation in Middle East Region to advance our cooperation with these partners.