59TH REGULAR SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES TO UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME

2 December 2015

Item 4:
Executive Director’s Briefing to the CPR
59th Regular Meeting of the CPR

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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: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; Urban October; Climate Change; CPR Working Group on Work programme and Budget; Habitat III preparations; Umoja; and my recent missions.

2. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

During the UN Summit for Sustainable Development, held in New York from 25 to 27 September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly formally adopted a new universal global agenda for development titled Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, along with a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets. As you know already, Sustainable Development Goal 11, “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”, which has 10 targets (including 3 means of implementation targets), is fully within the mandate of UN-Habitat. These 10 targets address both the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and new 21st century issues. This is a result of the seeds planted at the Rio+20 Conference and nurtured over the past three years. Well-planned urbanization is now recognized as an important tool for sustainable development.

The Agenda also contains other SDGs directly relevant to UN-Habitat’s work, including: Goal 6, “Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”; Goal 9, “Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation”; Goal 12, “Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns”; and Goal 13, “Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts”.

As you may recall, the General Assembly requested the Secretary General, in consultation with Member States, to prepare a report, for consideration at the 70th session of the General Assembly in preparation for the 2016 meeting of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), outlining, among other issues, a coherent, efficient and inclusive global follow-up and review system, as well as proposed organizational arrangements for state-led reviews.

During the UN Summit for Sustainable Development, I had the opportunity of addressing the General Assembly. I welcomed the progress that had been made since the adoption of the MDGs and the increasing recognition of the vital role of urbanization in achieving sustainable development. I expressed UN-Habitat’s gratitude that this role had been reflected strongly in Goal 11. I also participated in the high-level dialogue on sustainable economic growth, where I emphasized that for urbanization to function as a source of growth, it needed to be supported by finance ministers through National Urban Policies and by greater budget allocations to local governments.
In the margins of the Summit, UN-Habitat organized several side events, including a Presidential Roundtable on the African Urban Agenda (on 24 September), and others on safer cities, sustainable transport, water, sanitation and hygiene and public space and the Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme. All of these events highlighted UN-Habitat’s expertise as relevant to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

In parallel with the UN Summit, UN-Habitat gave introductory remarks and delivered those of the UN Secretary-General at an event titled “Cities Deliver Sustainable Development: Global Urban Leaders Endorse and Operationalize the SDGs”, hosted by the New School University and organized by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) on 24 September. The event, featuring the Governor of the US State of California and Mayors of New York, Banda Aceh, Belo Horizonte, Copenhagen, Dakar, Johannesburg and Kingston, as well as the Minister of Housing and Urban Development of the Government of Ecuador, sought to develop partnerships for the implementation of the SDGs.

UN-Habitat also gave a keynote address and one of the final reports at an event titled “Sustainable Urban Development in the 21st Century: A Multi-Stakeholder Approach to Making the Transformation Happen”. The event, hosted by the Communitas Coalition in New York on 28 September, brought together the many stakeholders that had been instrumental to the Urban SDG Campaign as well as those comprising the World Urban Campaign. With further collaboration from the Ford Foundation, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) of Germany, the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments, Cities Alliance and the UN-Sustainable Development Solutions Network, this meeting deliberated on some of the financing, partnerships and governance models that would be required to implement the 2030 Agenda.

As you may further recall, Governments will have the primary responsibility for follow-up and review of progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, at the national, regional and global levels over the next fifteen years. The HLPF, under the auspices of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, will oversee follow-up and review at the global level. In connection with this, UN-Habitat has been participating in the elaboration of SDG indicators, including in the “Second Meeting of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators” held from 26 to 28 October 2015 in Bangkok, Thailand. Seven indicators for 6 targets of Goal 11 proposed by UN-Habitat were approved. UN-Habitat was also recognized as the leading UN agency responsible for the global monitoring and related training on these indicators.

Looking ahead, UN-Habitat intends, and has already started, to strengthen its partnership mechanisms within and outside the UN system. This is in line with the emphasis placed in the 2030 Agenda on the need for UN “…system-wide strategic planning, implementation and reporting in order to ensure coherent and integrated support to implementation of the new Agenda by the UN development system”.

3. Climate Change and COP-21

UN-Habitat is actively engaged in preparations for the 21st Conference of Parties (COP-21) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), scheduled for 30 November – 11 December 2015 in Paris. It is also involved in a number of multi-stakeholder initiatives and has continued to deepen its work on climate change as a cross-cutting issue in
its work programme. There have also been important developments with respect to accreditation to climate funds.

I intend to lead a sizeable UN-Habitat delegation to COP-21. Most events at the COP-21 venue are being scheduled according to the ‘action area’ theme days established by the Lima-Paris Action Agenda (LPAA). Events at the COP-21 venue, either being led by UN-Habitat or in which UN-Habitat plans to participate, include the following:

- Cities Alliance – Resilient Cities Joint Work Programme;
- Medellin Collaboration on Urban Resilience;
- A number of transportation related event(s);
- 9th Focal Point Forum of Nairobi Work Programme;
- Launch of 2nd Assessment Report on Cities and Climate Change – Urban Climate Change Research Network;
- Launch of Global Alliance on Buildings (UNEP-led);
- Compact of Mayors;
- Cities Climate Finance Leadership Alliance;
- Cities Take Climate Action – Cities Alliance at COP-21;
- Urban-Low Emissions Development Strategy (EC/UN-Habitat/ICLEI);
- One UN solutions for cities and climate change;
- Launch of Benchmark Guidelines for City Climate Action Planning; and
- Financing low carbon and climate resilient urban projects – Cities Alliance at COP-21.

Generous support for engagement at COP-21, for which UN-Habitat is very grateful, has been provided by, among other sources: the Government of Norway (for the Cities and Climate Change Initiative); the European Commission (for Promoting Low Emission Urban Development Strategies in Emerging Economies); and Cities Alliance (for Joint Work Programmes on Habitat-III and Resilient Cities).

UN-Habitat staff will also be involved in a number of side meetings that will take place in Paris at the time of COP-21, including the following:

- Conference on Water, Megacities and Global Change;
- Climate Summit for Local Leaders;
- UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Advisory Group on Sustainable Transport;
- World Council – United Cities and Local Governments; and
- Sustainable Innovations Forum.

As you may recall, UN-Habitat was active and indeed instrumental in the launching of several multi-stakeholder initiatives related to cities and climate change at the UN Climate Summit held in New York on 23 September 2014 and has continued participating in these initiatives. As a ‘founding partner’ of the Compact of Mayors initiative, UN-Habitat continues, along with three leading city networks (UCLG, C40 and ICLEI) and the UN SG’s Office and the Bloomberg team, to be a member of the Management Committee of the Compact. As of August 2015, 135 cities had announced their intentions to comply with the provisions of the Compact, with more such announcements expected. The UN Secretary-General’s Office continues to lead the Cities Climate Finance Leadership Alliance initiative. UN-Habitat is one of about ten Steering Committee members. At the same time UN-Habitat is advising on the development of an inaugural ‘State of City Climate Finance’ report, including recommendations, whose launching is scheduled for COP-21.
In February 2015, UN-Habitat joined the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC). Since then, it has participated in several meetings of the CCAC, including the Deputy Executive Director’s participation in a high-level meeting held in Geneva during May 2015. UN-Habitat has also participated in the development of a new Urban Health Initiative under the CCAC.

As I have already indicated, one major output that UN-Habitat plans to launch at COP-21 is titled “Benchmark Guidelines for City Climate Action Planning”. These Guidelines, which are currently being finalized, have been developed over a year-long period, through a robust multi-stakeholder process involving more than 100 stakeholders and experts that started in December 2014.

We have continued to strengthen work on climate change as one of the four cross-cutting issues in UN-Habitat’s work. In follow-up to the approval by the UN-Habitat Board of the Programme’s Climate Change Strategy (2014-2019) earlier this year, I launched, in September 2015, an internal system of ‘marking’ project documents from the perspective of the four cross-cutting issues, including climate change. The Marker System is used as part of the project review and approval process, which is centered on the deliberations of the Project Advisory Group.

Finally, with respect to climate funds, on 11 August 2015, UN-Habitat was notified by the Adaptation Fund Board Secretariat that it had been accredited as a Multi-lateral Implementing Entity to the Adaptation Fund. A UN-Habitat observer attended the meeting of the Board held in Bonn, Germany, from 7 to 8 October 2015. UN-Habitat’s application to the Global Environment Facility is still pending and a possible application for accreditation to the Green Climate Fund is currently under active consideration.

5. CPR Working Group on Work Programme and Budget: Update

Since the last meeting of the CPR held in mid-September 2015, the CPR Working Group on Work Programme and Budget has held its third and fourth informal meetings. The third informal meeting was held on 14 October 2015. That meeting discussed two agenda items:

- UN-Habitat accountability framework; and
- UN-Habitat enterprise risk management.

The fourth and latest informal meeting was held on 5 November 2015 and it focused on the following two agenda items:

- Resource mobilization; and
- UN-Habitat’s advocacy, outreach and communication strategy.

These informal meetings have continued to be a learning process and I believe we are making good progress and in the right direction. I am happy that the meetings, which have been well-attended, have focused on issues of importance to both member States and the UN-Habitat Secretariat. They have provided an opportunity for the Programme to explain a number of its key policies as well as implementation progress, and for it to hear the views and guidance of member States. I very much appreciate the informal, yet focused, nature of the meetings. Because of this, we have been able to engage in frank, open and constructive discussions. I would like to thank the Chair, members of the Working Group and all other members of the CPR for all the hard work that has gone into the meetings held so far. I pledge my full
personal support and the support of UN-Habitat in general to future meetings of the Working Group.

6. Update on 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 I have been specific about many of the challenges related to the roll out of such an important system. It is not just about rolling out a new computer system. It is about updating the UN's financial system to modern practices. It is also about a process of business transformation, as the General Assembly has previously said. And I am happy to say that the UN Secretariat, Cluster 4, went live 9 November. They were greatly helped by the path taken by the Nairobi entities, with the lessons learned and identified here picked up in New York.

We have addressed a number of major challenges, and can say that we are making progress. We have managed to clear most of the outstanding payments in cooperation with our partners at UNON. We have managed to make important progress on Business Intelligence and reporting. We can now prepare donor reports and other priority reports, much to our great relief. Our staff make great efforts to address major systemic issues, without additional budget or help.

We took the unusual step of bringing most of our financial and project management colleagues from the field for a few weeks, so they could do on-the-job training. Many of the problems with Umoja were a simple matter of not understanding the system in its complexity and new processes. This training has had a strong impact, and I hope on most issues, we can now accelerate our work.

Excellencies, I've warned that Umoja would affect our delivery of our programme. There is not much that we can do about that for the last few months, but I and my team have concentrated our efforts to getting through this transition period as quickly and as easily as possible.

There are some challenges that we must overcome still. We have discovered that the combination of Umoja processes, IPSAS on some parts of accounts, and the old 'UNSAS' on other parts of our accounts, related to our project work, has created difficulties with our working capital. This makes it difficult for us to maintain the flow of projects and payments while we wait for donor contributions to arrive. We are working with the Controller to find a solution to this problem. In the meantime, I would ask you to communicate with your capitals and inform them that this is a problem affecting the entire secretariat, but particularly project based organisations like ourselves and UNODC. We continue to work with the Secretariat on this and other issues, and expect to gradually make further process over the next six months.

In the meantime, we expect to press ahead with the process of business transformation related to Umoja in the coming months. I will be pleased to update you on this in the new year.

8. Missions

From 9 to 10 October 2015, I attended the **2015 Annual Meetings of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in Lima, Peru**. Along with senior leaders and government
officials, I participated in a high-level panel discussion on how to support cities in becoming more sustainable. The World Bank and UN-Habitat issued a joint statement on Sustainable Urban Development towards COP21, Habitat III and the implementation of the SDGs, in which we committed ourselves to a stronger partnership towards Habitat III and encouraged national and local governments and all other stakeholders to be involved in the formulation of the New Urban Agenda.

In Lima, I also had the opportunity to meet with some Ministers of Finance and International Cooperation, including those from Egypt, Indonesia and South Africa. In these meetings, we explored how UN-Habitat could partner in the implementation of the World Bank’s support to urban development in those countries. As stated in the Resource Mobilization Strategy, UN-Habitat is actively working towards more joint programmes with the Development Banks.

From 15 to 19 October 2015, I visited Beijing and Shanghai. During the visit, I met with Honourable Minister Chen Zhenggao of the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development to discuss our bilateral relationship with the Government of China. We agreed on the need to significantly expand and strengthen our relationship in a more substantive and relevant manner. During my visit, I also held meetings with the China Centre for Urbanization Development, the key think tank of the Chinese Government on urbanization issues. I also attended a national forum on urbanization, co-convened by the Chinese Academies of Sciences, Social Sciences and Engineering and attended by the most senior academics in the country.

While in China I also visited Shanghai to further our relationship with the Municipality of Shanghai for the annual celebration of World Cities Day. In my meeting with the Mayor of Shanghai, I was awarded an honorary citizenship of the city. I also visited Tongji University, where I received an honorary professorship and discussed our future collaboration with this important academic institution. In addition, I had the opportunity to meet with senior officials of the planning department of Shanghai, who expressed their interest in seeking UN-Habitat’s support in developing the next strategic plan for the city.

From 21 to 22 October 2015, I visited Jakarta, Indonesia, to attend the Habitat III Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting. This was the first of four regional meetings that will take place in the Habitat III preparatory process before the publication of the zero draft of the Habitat III outcome document. The meeting agreed on a declaration titled “The Jakarta Declaration for Habitat III – Sustainable Urbanization to accelerate development”. I am very pleased with the outcome of the Jakarta meeting, which marks a shift in the recognition of urbanization as a tool for sustainable development, in all its three dimensions, from the Asia-Pacific perspective. I would like to thank the Government of Indonesia for its commitment in hosting the Habitat III Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting, and also two other key meetings, i.e. the Asia-Pacific Urban Youth Assembly and the Asia-Pacific Urban Forum, held back-to-back.

The third meeting of the Preparatory Committee will be held in Surabaya, Indonesia, and will be very important for the process towards Quito. I look forward to continue working with the Indonesian Government and all member States, as well as stakeholders, to prepare for a successful meeting next year in July.