Background Note:
The New Urban Agenda Platform including an Update on the Reporting Guidelines

CPR Subcommittee Meeting, 15 April 2018

1. UN-Habitat’s Mandate in preparing the New Urban Agenda Platform and Reporting Guidelines

1.1 This Background Note describes two key deliverables being prepared by UN-Habitat in direct support of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (NUA) and urban-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the reporting of these efforts: (1) the New Urban Agenda Platform, as a global, innovative and interactive repository of information on the progress being made in implementation, and (2) Guidelines for Voluntary Reporting by the Member States on progress made toward implementing the NUA, which will serve as a core component and objective of the Platform.

1.2 The 2030 Agenda adopted by the Member States in 2015, including SDG 11 on Sustainable Cities and Communities and the prominence of urbanization in several other SDGs, demonstrates the increasing recognition of sustainable urbanization as a key global transformative force. The New Urban Agenda adopted one year later at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), reaffirmed the global commitment to sustainable urban development and provides an action-oriented roadmap to guide sustainable urban development globally to 2036. Effective implementation and reporting of the commitments made at these milestone events require an enabling environment and a wide range of approaches.

1.3 UN-Habitat has as a mandate to prepare the New Urban Agenda Reporting Guidelines in response to Resolution (RES/71/256. NUA) adopted by the General Assembly on 23 December 2016, which endorsed the NUA adopted at Habitat III. UN-Habitat is committed to providing support for the reporting mechanism, including guidelines on reporting. The Reporting Guidelines will facilitate the preparation of national reports on the progress of the implementation of this Agenda. A draft of the Reporting Guidelines is found in Annex 2.

Structured around the New Urban Agenda, the Reporting Guidelines are aligned with the core themes of the Transformative Commitments and Means of Implementation. The Guidelines distill, codify, and simplify the depth and breadth of the NUA into accessible and measurable objectives.

1.4 The New Urban Agenda Platform will serve to systematize the reporting on progress made on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and SDG11 at the global, regional, country and local levels. The above Reporting Guidelines form a core component under the reporting function of the Platform, described in further detail below. The Platform will be designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative inputs from national, local and regional governments, the UN system, as well as other key stakeholders. The Platform will be designed to harmonize and streamline other platforms, databases, and networks. While UN-Habitat leads the coordination of the Platform, it is expected that the Platform will be a pivotal contribution to the knowledge pillar of the UN system-wide approach to sustainable urban...
development, and as such be co-created and led by multiple partners. The Platform is expected to be launched at the 10th Session of the World Urban Forum in Abu Dhabi, UAE in February 2020.

1.5 The Reporting Guidelines and the New Urban Agenda Platform will provide the necessary system required for the future preparations of the UN Secretary General’s Quadrennial Report on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda. The first Quadrennial Report was prepared in 2018 in close consultation with UN regional economic and social commissions, over twenty UN agencies, and other development and research partners. It is expected that by the time of the preparation of the 2022 Quadrennial Report, the Guidelines and Platform will facilitate a robust, comprehensive and collaborative structure for reporting.

1.6 The New Urban Agenda encourages UN-Habitat and others to generate evidence-based and practical guidance for implementation and the urban dimension of the [SDGs], in close collaboration with the Member States, local and regional governments, and other relevant stakeholders. To respond to these responsibilities, UN-Habitat has undertaken several actions, understanding that this work cannot be done in isolation, without the leadership of the Member States, the active participation of partners, UN sister agencies and a plethora of development actors.

1.7 The Reporting Guidelines and Platform are core mandates of UN-Habitat’s work, led by the Research and Capacity Development Branch. The Best Practices Unit is driving the design and launch of the Platform, and the Flagship Reports Unit leads the development of the Reporting Guidelines. In parallel, the Global Urban Observatory Unit is coordinating efforts for expanding the coverage of the existing urban indicators to cover both SDGs and NUA targets. The Capacity Development Unit will be leading efforts to strengthen capacities of national and local governments and empowers institutions and individuals with knowledge, skills and cutting-edge approaches to successfully implement the NUA and SDG11. An internal Technical Task Team has been established in April 2019 to draw on expertise across the Agency in the development of both deliverables. Mechanisms for external consultation and engagement are in place initiated by this Sub-Committee meeting for discussion by the CPR. It is expected that a larger consultative meeting will be held during the UN-Habitat Assembly in May 2019, followed by a schedule of regular consultations in the lead up to the launch of the Guidelines and Platform.

2. Opportunities in advancing the work of the Platform

Environmental Analysis

2.1 UN DESA has developed a global platform\(^1\) on the reporting of all SDGs, that serves as a worldwide registry of voluntary commitments and multi-stakeholder partnerships, facilitating global engagement and sharing knowledge of all stakeholders for providing periodic updates on their progress in support of the implementation of the SDGs. Consultations have been made with UNDESA on the need for specific efforts to generate reporting on the different SDGs, whereby UN-Habitat will through the Guidelines and NUA Platform directly support SDG 11 and the NUA as an accelerator of this Goal. There is currently no

\(^{1}\) For more information on UN DESA SDGs Platform; please visit: [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs)
uniformity on where, when and how information and progress on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda are captured at the global level. Building on – and working with - the considerable experience and expertise gained from UN DESA SDGs Platform, and the requirements of the Reporting Guidelines, will inform the development of the New Urban Agenda Platform.

2.2 There is a need to particularly enhance the visibility on progress being made on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. This requires a clear virtual space for reporting by the Member States, which is easily navigated and guided by the Reporting Guidelines. It also requires a uniform, decentralized storage of key data and documentation including reports, lessons learned, best practices, case studies, and an effective search-engine for tailor-made information searches. Most importantly, incentives need to be put in place for the sharing of progress in implementation, through a systematic and attractive location for reporting and sharing.

**Realizing the potential of the New Urban Agenda Platform and Reporting Guidelines**

2.3 The explicit and strengthened New Urban Agenda and SDG 11 follow-up processes through a centralized, online Platform is expected to provide the following benefits:

- New Urban Agenda Reporting Guidelines will be integrated into the Platform enabling the Member States to report their progress, as envisioned in the New Urban Agenda.
- Provide an interactive mechanism to visualize data from progress and demonstrate the impact of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and SDG 11.
- Improved management of key reports, records, documents, and shared assets through a common and centralized repository across UN-HABITAT and the UN system at large.
- Streamlined information/knowledge-sharing between UN agencies in addressing sustainable urban development. Uniform centralized reporting to increase collaboration across Country, Regional and Global Levels when developing reports on the progress or thematic areas.
- Implementation of knowledge management through a centralized tracking of progress for quality assurance in reporting by the Member States and key partners.
- Provide linkages within the global urban indicators database and the NUA and SDGs targets and implementation efforts that may lead to better attribution of results.

3. **New Urban Agenda Platform Core Offerings**

3.1 The New Urban Agenda Platform will be a centralized, online reporting and knowledge repository that enables easy access to information on the progress and follow up on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and SDG 11. The Platform will be rooted in an understanding of audience needs and seeks to respond to them in innovative ways with tools that accelerate learning and networking. The building blocks of the Platform will be mapped across the audiences (based on audience segmentation), then better tailor the channel approach to the user profiles, engagement, and channel access. Detailed on the core offerings is informing registration mechanism for users and profiles including a walled garden for the Member States and open group accessible by key stakeholders and partners.
Annex 1 illustrates with conceptual aspects of the Platform, and a screenshot of a mock landing page for the Platform user to navigate their access on the Platform. The proposed content areas of the Platform are not suggestive of the final structure or navigation of the Platform. The Platform information architecture, wireframe structure, navigation, visual design, interactivity, functionality, and overall experience of the Platform are under development.

3.2 The following four main features are proposed to constitute the New Urban Agenda Platform.

a) New Urban Agenda Reporting Guidelines
b) Knowledge and Learning
c) Engagement and Participation
d) Advocacy and Communications

a) New Urban Agenda Reporting Guidelines

3.3 The New Urban Agenda Reporting Guidelines serve the first and foremost objective of enabling Member States’ voluntary reporting and will be the priority to develop and activate on the Platform. The Platform will provide the virtual space for the Member States to access the Guidelines and to report on: a) overall status of implementation; b) recent achievements; c) challenges faced in implementation; d) proposed next steps; e) effective means of implementation and enabling frameworks; f) and mechanisms, tools, and methodologies being developed to monitor and report implementation (for further details see Annex 2). A complementary set of webinars, workshops, capacity-building, and technical support will facilitate Member States use of the Guidelines and the Platform for reporting, sharing knowledge, and best practices. The Platform will also incorporate, to the extent possible, the inputs of multilateral organizations and processes where appropriate, civil society, the private sector, and academia.

b) Knowledge and Learning

3.8 The Knowledge and Learning feature is proposed to be a core component and will provide space for sharing knowledge, expertise and progress updates among different actors that are engaged in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and SDG11 targets. The feature capitalizes on the longstanding collective experience and knowledge of the United Nations and other organizations in supporting and will host an urban best practices database, building on UN-Habitat global leadership in the management of urban best practices. UN-Habitat’s existing Best Practices Database constitutes over 5,500 best practices generated over the last twenty years through the Dubai International Award. These best practices will be migrated to the new Platform repository, which will also host other streams of best practices, including urban practices generated by the Shanghai Manual, UNDESA Good Practices on the SDGs, and the Dubai Expo Best Practices Programme. The feature will provide advanced search functions to encourage the sharing and uptake of best practices and policies by the Member States and other partners.

3.9 The Platform will contain a repository of documents, publications, guides, reports, search tools and other relevant materials including infographics, brochures amongst others, all downloadable with links to the sources. The Platform will provide a space to progressively assess the needs for and develop online learning tools related to the different key components of the New Urban Agenda. The features will be developed incrementally, with the migration and initial running of the best practices database
expected to be completed by February 2020. The complimentary global urban indicators database managed by the Global Urban Observatory team will host over 140 urban related indicators that will be linked to the BP platform, allowing for easy mechanisms to examine inputs and outputs in the short-term and impacts and outcomes in the long-term for the same city/urban spaces.

c) Engagement and Participation

3.10 One of the most exciting aspects of the Platform will be activating an engaged community of practice. This will be rooted in an understanding of different user interests and will seek to respond to them in innovative ways with tools that accelerate networking globally. This feature will serve to connect the users by fostering an international community encouraging collective action, supported through a range of virtual network programming offerings such as online convenings, and a secure e-forum through which users can stay connected and exchange ideas and advice. This feature will be developed incrementally starting with User Profiles and the ability to contact one another via the system as the Platform expands to offer interaction and collaboration opportunities.

d) Advocacy and Communications

3.15 The Platform will increase the visibility and audience for the key messages of the New Urban Agenda and SDG 11. It will support accelerated access to information on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and SDG 11 including through mobile technology and social media. It will provide users with key communications materials through interactive and social networking service lines. A one-stop, online resource tailor-made to support knowledge exchange, will spotlight initiatives, best practices, and materials and include factsheets, videos, podcasts, case studies, thematic articles, newsletters, and learning tools. Digital channels such as social media outlets will broadcast compelling content on key issues and interventions to keep users engaged and informed. A rapid expansion of our engagement presents a significant opportunity for coalition building and advocacy.

4. Proposed Timeframe, Approach, and Governance

4.1 The development and implementation of the Platform will be gradual and start with selected core components, as indicated above. The first feature providing space for voluntary reporting by the Member States will be a priority, followed by other components. The rollout of the Platform is planned in two phases, with the official launch scheduled for WUF 10 in February 2020, followed by a 12-months pilot phase in 2020 to integrate mechanisms and tools to measure performance including testing, refining, and enhancement regularly. It is expected that under this timeline the Platform will by 2021 be fully effective in preparation for the 2022 Quadrennial Report.

4.2 The Platform will have effective linkages both with ongoing regional and national-level reporting platforms and with other internet-based knowledge platforms, including UN-Habitat's new website. In the 2019 preparation year, the link will be fully established with the UNDESA SDGs Platform. A pilot will be undertaken in 2019 to link the global New Urban Agenda Platform with the regional platform prepared in the Latin America and Caribbean region in collaboration between UN-Habitat and United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (UNECLAC). Similar linkages and complementarities will be sought after that with all other relevant regional platforms. It is important to be aware of linkages and
requirements that would influence the development of the first phase of the online platform. Special attention will be given to accessibility (e.g., low bandwidth website), inclusive web design, and use at country level across internet devices (computer, tablets, mobile phones).

4.3 The development of the Platform and Guidelines will be internally guided at UN-Habitat through a Technical Task Team, constituting representatives from across the Agency, and ensuring close consultation and alignment with the corporate knowledge management, partnership, and UN system-wide strategies. The Sub-Committee dedicated to this topic on 15 April 2019 will be the first formal consultation mechanism with the Member States. The first partners meeting (side-event) at the May UN-Habitat Assembly will solicit feedback and establish partnerships with a broad set of stakeholders before advancing the development of the Platform and for refining the Reporting Guidelines. During September-October 2019, the mechanism will also have been established for UN Inter-Agency consultations throughout the development and pilot-phase.

5. Proposed priority areas moving forward

5.1 The CPR Sub-Committee is invited to provide comments on the Reporting Guidelines in Annex 2, and on the objectives, design features, and approach in developing the New Urban Agenda Platform.

5.2 It should be noted that the SDG 11 and New Urban Agenda and implementation have been ongoing since 2015 and 2016 respectively with progress already underway, as updated in the 2018 Quadrennial Report and now a year further in implementation. The preparation of the Reporting Guidelines and New Urban Agenda Platform are instruments to support also these processes and to systematize further the reporting mechanism. Feedback from the Member States on the most effective way to design, market, and utilize these two deliverables are much needed to ensure their best use.

5.3 The New Urban Agenda Platform is one of several platforms existing, facilitated or delivered by UN-Habitat along with those created by other partners. It will be important to keep an overview of these platforms and dialogue with partners to ensure clear objectives for each, and targeted user groups. The central role of the New Urban Agenda Platform in contributing to delivering UN-Habitat’s Strategic Plan needs to be clearly articulated including its management function in the restructuring of the organization.

5.4 The New Urban Agenda Reporting Guidelines will require the design and implementation of significant and robust support infrastructure. Essential to the success of Member State reporting will be the translation of the Reporting Guidelines into multiple languages; capacity building and technical support to the Member States and their relevant reporting arm components during the data collection, analysis and reporting phases of National Reports; and internal Habitat analysis and data management of report inputs. Financial support needs to be guaranteed for these aspects. The development of the New Urban Agenda Platform will be incremental, and its scope dependant on the degree of funding secured for its second set of components. Financial support also needs to be guaranteed to support the core function of UN-Habitat and maintaining and managing the Platform over the years. UN-Habitat recognizes that 2019 will be a critical year for the New Urban Agenda Platform development and committed to determining the path to its long-term sustainability.