The First Session of the UN-Habitat Assembly

📅 27-31 May 2019
📍 Nairobi, Kenya

### Background

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) will hold its first ever Assembly from 27 to 31 May 2019 in Nairobi, Kenya.

The UN-Habitat Assembly will adopt global norms and policies that will guide how cities and communities are planned, managed and governed. It will also determine the strategic priorities for accelerating implementation of the New Urban Agenda to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals for the next six years, through UN-Habitat’s Strategic Plan (2020-2025). The Assembly is a great opportunity for all actors in the urbanization arena, including national and local governments, business, civil society and others to engage in a vibrant and dynamic week of interaction.

The theme of the UN-Habitat Assembly is “Innovation for a Better Quality of Life in Cities and Communities – Accelerated Implementation of the New Urban Agenda towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals”. Many other important activities will take place during the week of the UN-Habitat Assembly, including an interactive strategic dialogue on the theme, a global stakeholders meeting, a partnership and pledging session, a private sector dialogue, various side events organized by partners and an innovation expo.

The UN-Habitat Assembly replaces the Governing Council, as decided by the General Assembly in its resolution of 20th December 2018 on Strengthening UN-Habitat. The UN-Habitat Assembly will be the highest-level decision-making body focused on sustainable urbanization and human settlements.

The Assembly is universal, with all 193 United Nations Member States, and is expected to make decisions and adopt resolutions that will frame the global urbanization agenda, look at major trends, develop norms and standards related to sustainable urbanization and human settlements and provide strategic guidance to UN-Habitat in its work. Many other important activities will take place during the week of the UN-Habitat Assembly, including an interactive strategic dialogue, a global stakeholders meeting, a pledging session, a private sector dialogue, various side events organized by partners and an innovation expo.

### Principles

1. The preparation of the UN-Habitat Assembly will be guided by the following principles:
2. Inclusivity and consensus-based decision making among the Member States;
3. Innovative organization to encourage full and dynamic participation, learning and partnerships;
4. High level participation is essential to raise the profile of sustainable urbanization and human settlements and UN-Habitat as a focal point agency in the United Nations system;
5. Stakeholder participation and contribution is valuable to the success of the Assembly;
6. Strong commitment to Gender Equality and inclusivity in all deliberations.
Overall Objective

The objective of this first session of the UN-Habitat Assembly is to frame prevalent and emerging challenges of urbanization (urban poverty, marginalization, unemployment, climate change, humanitarian crises, etc.) in the context of an increasingly urbanizing world and propose innovative solutions, including best practices, to leverage the opportunities of sustainable urban development so as to leave no one and no place behind.

To accelerate the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the first session of the UN-Habitat Assembly provides significant opportunities to form strategic alliances to advance the sustainable urbanization and human settlements agenda while mobilising strong political and financial support for UN-Habitat’s strategic plan and its role as a centre of excellence and global leader in this field. The UN-Habitat Assembly will determine global norms and policies on the theme of the Assembly, to be outlined in the Nairobi Ministerial Declaration. It will also be a place to find innovative solutions on how cities and communities are planned, designed, managed and governed to ensure a good quality of life for all, in line with the New Urban Agenda and SDG 11.

Expected Outcomes

1. Innovative solutions and best practices to urgently and successfully leverage the opportunities of sustainable urban development, including non-traditional financing mechanisms for development of cities and regions.

2. Strong normative and policy outcomes on the theme of the Assembly: “Innovation for a better quality of life in cities and communities” and a Nairobi Ministerial declaration outlining commitments to action.

3. Strategic alliances among national and local government, business, civil society and international institutions harnessed to scale up innovative solutions in sustainable urbanization and human settlements.

4. Business and stakeholder commitments to accelerating progress in implementation of the New Urban Agenda to achieve SDGs through innovation and strategic partnerships.

5. Strong political and sustainable financial commitments to sustainable urbanization and UN-Habitat as a focal point and centre of excellence in this field.

6. A foundation for strong oversight of UN-Habitat’s work is established through the UN-Habitat Assembly and the Executive Board and a strong framework for the conduct of the UN-Habitat Assembly and its subsidiary bodies for the period 2019-2023.

Legislative Deliverables

The following legislative outputs/deliverables are expected:

1. Adoption of rules of procedure for the UN-Habitat Assembly and the Executive Board.

2. Election of the 36 Member Executive Board and its Bureau.

3. Adoption of UN-Habitat’s Strategic Plan 2020-2025

4. Adoption of the Work Programme and Budget by the Executive Board at its first meeting

5. Adoption of key resolutions.

6. Interactive Strategic Dialogue on the theme of UN-Habitat Assembly.

7. A Nairobi Ministerial Declaration on the theme of the Assembly with concrete commitments to action.

Proposed Non-Legislative Deliverables

1. First Global Stakeholders Forum: Saturday and Sunday, 25-26 May 2019

   The Forum promotes a strategic stakeholders’ collaborative approach in preparation for the UN-Habitat Assembly by consolidating views of stakeholders, including business sector, based on the theme and the sub-theme of the Assembly. The Forum will result in stakeholders’ outcome documents to be shared at the Assembly and in agreement on enhanced stakeholder engagement and partnership with UN-Habitat.

2. Global Strategic Private Sector Dialogue Series: Sunday, 26 May 2019

   The one-day event will bring together high-level participants from business, local and national governments
to discuss “Innovating for Cities and Communities: How Industry and Investors are addressing the Sustainable Development Goals”. The dialogue will focus on the “true value of urbanization” and demonstrates the advantages of sustainable urban growth and development, and the proactive role to be played by the private sector. The Dialogue will result in consensus on a framework for private sector collaboration with UN-Habitat and other stakeholders (including launch of the UN-Habitat Business Network), in accelerating implementation of the New Urban Agenda to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Specific actions will be identified to: enhance investments and financing; scale-up innovative practices; strengthen joint advocacy; and address global norms and standards in specific areas. The perspectives of private sector on the theme of the UN-Habitat Assembly and their commitments will be shared at the Assembly.

3. Partnership and pledging Conference: Wednesday, 29 May 2019

The conference will frame the challenges of urbanization (e.g. urban poverty, marginalization, climate change, unemployment, etc.) in the context of an increasingly urbanizing world and the urgency of collective actions.

The conference will articulate the role of UN-Habitat as a worthy and reliable partner in providing integrated and innovative solutions in the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda.

Ultimately the conference will lead to identification of sustainable funding resources for UN-Habitat with high-level participation from the Governments and other relevant partners. Concrete pledges to support implementation of UN-Habitat’s Strategic Plan 2020-2025 are expected.

4. One UN Meeting (time slot to be confirmed)

The One-UN meeting will be attended by over 20 United Nations agencies and seeks to enhance the United Nations system-wide approach to sustainable urbanization and Human Settlements as well as UN-Habitat’s contribution to the United Nations reform. The United Nations collaborative implementation framework that covers the areas of knowledge/data; operations and policy, partnerships and financing will also be addressed.

5. A reception for the Tenth Session of the World Urban Forum (WUF10) (time slot to be confirmed)

The reception is to be hosted by the United Arab Emirates, the host country of WUF10, and the city of Abu Dhabi to promote the WUF10 to be held in February 2020, and to also provide a network building partnership within the participating Governments, local governments and relevant partners.

6. A Mayors’ Forum

This Forum will bring together Cities, Policy Makers and Business to dialogue on innovations in accelerating implementation of the New Urban Agenda to achieve the SDGs at the local level. The forum is expected to play a key role in:

• Getting mayors from the Global South to aspire to great heights and mayors from the Global North to get inspired, through best practices that address cities’ issues and leverage opportunities.
• Engaging and bridging the communication gap between mayors/local governments, national governments, the UN and the Private sector.

Organization of the UN-Habitat Assembly: 27-31 May 2019

The proposed programme overview is attached. It will be further elaborated by the Sub-committee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives. On-going discussions are considering the following option:

• 27 – 28 May: ceremonial opening; establishing the rules of procedure for the UN-Habitat Assembly and Executive Board; election of the Executive Board; negotiation and endorsement of resolutions;
• 29 May: High-level segment focused on the theme of the Assembly in a dynamic and interactive strategic dialogue;
• 31 May: Closing.
**Innovation for better lives**

1. **Partner Events at the Assembly**

   **1. External Side Events**

   The call for side events is on the website. These should be relevant to the overall theme of the first session of the UN-Habitat Assembly, youth and gender as well as take into consideration regional balance, and, furthermore, should be reflect the Strategic Plan’s Domains of Change. The closing date is 8 April 2019. (https://unhabitat.org/habitatassembly-side-events/).

   **2. Exhibition – Urban Solutions Expo**

   The Urban Solutions Expo promoting innovative and sustainable solutions to the challenges facing cities and communities will take place in support of the Assembly theme. A call for Expression of Interest to exhibit at the Expo was sent with the Exhibition Guidelines, to stakeholders with the deadline of 19 April 2019 (https://unhabitat.org/habitatassembly-exhibitions/).

   The applications will be reviewed based on thematic relevance, regional, youth and gender representation, visual interests, innovation and other logistical and safety considerations. The Expo will feature an Urban Tech and Innovation Tent showcasing frontier technologies and cutting-edge initiatives, exhibition booths and networking and informal discussion spaces.

   **Preparation for the UN-Habitat Assembly**

   **1. Budget and Resource Mobilisation**

   To ensure the first UN-Habitat Assembly is successful, it is important to have wide representation and effective participation of all Member States, including the 47 Least Developed Countries, in this universal meeting.

   Since the United Nations General Assembly did not accept a Programme Budget Implication (PBI) to fund the new governing structure of UN-Habitat, additional voluntary funding is required to enable representatives from low income countries to attend as well as essential interpretation, translation, security, and other essential meetings facilitation to allow all delegates to participate effectively in all the sessions of the UN-Habitat Assembly and the Executive Board.

   In this context, UN-Habitat has prepared an appeal letter signed by its Executive Director to the Member States to support the mobilisation of the additional minimal amount required for successful and inclusive UN-Habitat Assembly and Executive Board sessions.

   **2. High level Participation Mobilisation**

   UN-Habitat aims to have Heads of State and Ministers, and to ensure geographic and gender-balanced participation of line Ministers and stakeholders. To this end, UN-Habitat counts on the support of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to mobilise high level participation in the Assembly.

   **3. Contacts**

   Additional information on the UN-Habitat Assembly may be obtained from the Governing Council Secretariat. Please contact: UNHabitat-GCSecretariat@un.org or Chris. Mensah@un.org

   **4. Useful Website links**

   General information for participants is now available on the UN-Habitat Assembly website at https://unhabitat.org/habitatassembly/

   Registration for the UN-Habitat Assembly is open online at https://unhabitat.org/habitatassembly-registration/

   The documentations for the UN-Habitat Assembly and the Executive Board are available at https://unhabitat.org/habitatassembly-pre-session-documents

   Exhibition: An Urban Solutions Expo (Deadline for application is 19 April 2019): https://unhabitat.org/habitatassembly-exhibitions/

   Side events (Deadline for application is 8th April 2019): https://unhabitat.org/habitatassembly-side-events/