Draft outline of the
UN-HABITAT strategic planning to address human settlements in crisis
Governing Council Resolution HSP/GC/20/17*

I  THE ROLE OF UN-HABITAT IN HUMANITARIAN SECTOR AS DEFINED THROUGH
MANDATORY DOCUMENTATION OR BY THE UN FORMAL BODIES

- UN-HABITAT is mandated through the Habitat Agenda to take the lead in disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness, and post-disaster rehabilitation capabilities in human settlements¹. The Habitat Agenda clearly outlines the link between human settlements development and vulnerability to disasters. Also the need for coordination and close partnerships with national and local governments, as well as civil society is emphasised. These steering principles underpin all normative and operational activities of UN-HABITAT in addressing human settlements in crisis.

- The GC resolution 19/9 of 9 May 2003 decided that one of the special themes of the twentieth session of the Governing Council shall be “Post-conflict, natural and human-made disasters assessment and reconstruction”, supported by its resolution 19/7 of the same date recommending UN-HABITAT to devote specific attention to human settlements needs in the reconstruction of countries and territories affected by armed conflicts or by other human-made or natural disasters.

- In April 2004 UN-HABITAT was invited to bring to the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA)² its perspectives and support to humanitarian and emergency relief within the context of shelter and human settlements. UN-HABITAT is currently seeking full membership within the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, which remains under review with USG/ERC.

- GA Resolution 59/239 of 22 December 2004 on the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and the strengthening of UN-HABITAT further requested UN-HABITAT to continue to support the efforts of countries affected by natural disasters and complex emergencies, to develop prevention, rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes, and to ensure a more effective transition from relief to development.

- Within the continuum of above resolutions and benefiting from discussions at the second session of the World Urban Forum in September 2004, UN-HABITAT developed its own conceptual framework entitled Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction. The development of the framework culminated during the 20th session of UN-HABITAT Governing Council in April this year with an endorsement of the Resolution GC/20/17 of on post-conflict, natural and human-made disaster assessment and reconstruction.

- Through this resolution the Governing Council took note of the UN-HABITAT’s guiding principles for sustainable relief and reconstruction and requested the Executive Director to mainstream prospects for risk reduction and limiting the after-effects of disasters, to further elaborate the guiding principles and to develop a strategic policy for the role of UN-HABITAT in addressing the sustainable human settlements aspects of human-made and natural disaster management.

*The document represents the status of informal consultations between the Secretariat and CPR Members as of 21 November 2005.

¹ The Habitat Agenda, paragraphs 40. (l); 43. (z); 170. – 176. ; 208. (d), (e) ; 228. (c).
² The Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA) is one the four Committees created by the Secretary-General to enhance overall coordination within the UN. Convened monthly by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs (USG/ERC), and composed by executives at the highest level, ECHA acts as an internal forum to share perspectives on humanitarian crisis and issues and, on the basis of these discussions, inform and advise the Secretary-General.
II  THE ROLE OF UN-HABITAT IN OPERATIONAL SET-UP ADDRESSING HUMAN SETTLEMENTS IN CRISIS

- UN-HABITAT has responded to humanitarian and crisis situations for over two decades by supporting governments, local authorities and civil society in strengthening their capacity to recover from a variety of human-made and natural disasters in the human settlements sector. Understanding the discontinuity within the international aid community between the short term imperative of humanitarianism, and longer term reconstruction and development priorities, UN-HABITAT have engaged and offered its perspectives on bridging this divide by linking humanitarianism with medium-long term programming.

- UN-HABITAT has developed a series of methodologies and principles for implementation of sustainable relief in human settlements in crisis. The strategy for UN-HABITAT’s emergency interventions seek not to be build status quo in most places, but to leverage investment in the emergency phases into the longer term gains.

Key areas and activities:

- The five key areas of UN-HABITAT’s emergency interventions are;
  1. Emergency rehabilitation of shelter (emergency and transition shelter)
  2. Environment Remediation (Water, solid/liquid waste, decontamination and purification, rubble recycling, etc)
  3. Rehabilitation of basic infrastructure (transport, water, schools, hospitals/clinics, government facilities, etc.)
  4. Land-use planning (IDP settlements, planning, land and property rights, etc.)
  5. Immediate economic recovery and restoration of livelihoods (employment creation, skills development, sustainable livelihoods, etc.)

- The emergency interventions combine the technical expertise and on-the-ground know-how of UN-HABITAT personnel through the following activities;
  1. Damage and needs assessments;
  2. Immediate technical assistance to affected communities, local authorities and support agencies (see above: reconstruction techniques; self-help-housing; support to land, housing and property rights; infrastructure rehabilitation; site preparation; livelihoods)
  3. Field level coordination in the human settlements sector (with reference to IASC clusters of Emergency Shelter and Early Recovery);
  4. Project identification and formulation for short, medium and long-term interventions;
  5. Development of integrated shelter recovery programmes and strategies promoting the principles of sustainable recovery;
  6. Selected implementation and visible delivery of priority projects/pilot activities (see below).

Implementation strategy:

- Time is a critical factor in any post-disaster scenario. In order to facilitate the above interventions, it will be necessary to establish a physical presence at field locations as soon as possible through rapid deployment of surge missions. The DMP Surge Facility was established in 2003 and since then UN-HABITAT has strengthened its response capacity through development of a roster of experts and streamlining some of the administrative procedures. Currently UN-HABITAT is able to field experts within 72 hours.

- During the emergency interventions, the Agency capacities will be applied within the context of subject areas of the two campaigns and will typically comprise support on mandated issues
addressing land, tenure, governance, risk and vulnerability reduction, and protection of vulnerable populations - through promoting shelter for all, improving governance, reducing poverty and improving living environment. The principles of the UN-HABITAT’s Global Campaigns on Secure Tenure and Urban Governance provide the methodological framework for undertaking priority activities in the five key areas of the Agency’s emergency interventions.

- UN-HABITAT will use this operational experience to generate lessons learnt and normative products, such as tools for vulnerability reduction, preparedness and mitigation, land and property rights, mainstreaming disaster management, among others, to be recycled into future disaster response both within the organization, and in support of other agencies operations

- To maintain credibility and visibility in its role as substantive support agency and technical advisor, UN-HABITAT continues to participate in the physical implementation of selected priority rehabilitation projects (delivery of shelter rehabilitation kits, rehabilitation of essential infrastructure, for example). It is essential to draw on practical experiences, extracting lessons with a view to continuous learning both internally as well as in support of sister agencies and other humanitarian actors.

III INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Global Level

- Close involvement in ECHA and IASC together with the respective GA and GC resolutions are important milestones for the Agency. Increased inter-agency collaboration has raised agency’s credibility and public profile in global disaster management fora, but also broadens UN-HABITAT’s mandated portfolio both operationally and institutionally.

- The human settlements component is integral to both to humanitarian assistance and long-term development, and there is a clear message from the other agencies for UN-HABITAT to take stronger responsibility in strengthening the response to shelter, land and property challenges in all disaster situations, as part of agency’s comparative advantages.

- In the past months, UN-HABITAT have been increasingly drawn into IASC clusters within the context of the Humanitarian Response Review. UN-HABITAT has participated in the two working groups, namely Early Recovery and Emergency Shelter, and has further conveyed our interest and commitment to sharing our sustainable shelter perspectives and capacity in the clusters of Camp Management and Protection. The final roles and responsibilities of various agencies within the IASC clusters will be confirmed in principal’s meeting in December 2005. This will entail division of tasks with other support agencies contributing to the human settlements and shelter sector, namely UN-HABITAT, UNHCR, IOM and IFRC³. The outcome of the principles meeting is an important milestone in UN-HABITAT’s strategy development process, defining the expectations laid by the global humanitarian community on the agency’s delivery and contribution in humanitarian interventions.

- UN-HABITAT continues to facilitate partnerships on disaster management and supporting the establishment of a dialogue between UN agencies, the donor community, NGOs and the private sector. A Memoranda of Understanding have been signed with International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN-ISDR), United Nations High Commission for Refugees and UN Volunteers – all in an effort to support collaborative approach to disaster management and sustainable recovery.

- In particular, UN-HABITAT has continued its close collaboration with ISDR through substantive participation in the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction, and in the drafting of the

³ The IASC cluster and sub-cluster leads will be designated in December 2005.
National Level

- The Governing Council is the key vehicle for UN-HABITAT to interact with the national governments in normative and political context.

- Operationally, the entry point for UN-HABITAT’s interventions on the ground is the United Nations Country Team. The UNCT encompasses all organizations of the United Nations system dealing with operational activities for recovery and development, regardless of their formal presence in the country. The UNCT aims to bring together the different UN agencies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of operational activities at the country level. Working closely with national governments, the country teams advocate the interests and mandates of the UN drawing on the support and guidance of the entire UN family, particularly important in the post-disaster situations.

- Programme interventions are usually defined, and financial contributions prioritized, through a CAP\(^4\) process, following extensive consultations within the UNCT and with national governments. However, prerequisite for the UNCT and CAP participation is the agency presence in the country, which is further supporting the need to strengthen the rapid deployment capacity of the agency.

- UN-HABITAT’s Regional Offices play a critical role in building relations with the national governments during project coordination and implementation, whereas the role of the DMP/HQ concentrate on support for project formulation and assessment elements of the implementation cycle.

Local Level

- Disasters are first and foremost local events that affect the individual, household, community and their local government. Therefore local government and stakeholders are key partners of UN-HABITAT in addressing, designing and implementing sustainable recovery and disaster risk reduction of human settlements in crisis.

- In planning and implementing the human settlements recovery programmes, partnerships with a number of actors are required. Apart from the local authorities as operational partners, UN-HABITAT is paying special attention in involving local civil society organisations in project implementation process, namely NGOs and CBOs. Donor representatives are also in a pivotal position on the ground level operations, both in terms of resource mobilisation and political support.

- In a post-disaster situation, solutions to ensure timely and sustainable recovery are interwoven in such a manner that activities cannot be implemented in isolation. Within the international community, UN-HABITAT’s key partners in project formulation and implementation are UNDP, UNCHR, OCHA, etc, each agency contributing in the areas of their comparative advantage.

IV  FINANCIAL ASPECTS

Core Funding

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\(^4\) The Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) is a programming process through which national, regional and international relief organisations mobilise and respond to complex emergencies, giving a framework for a strategic humanitarian planning process in a given country of region.
UN-HABITAT’s capacity to respond to natural and complex emergencies is largely depending on the availability of financial resources for functional; pre- and post-emergency interventions, scrutiny and evaluation of current and past international emergency aid practice, development of new approaches to relief activities, and disaster vulnerability reduction. Apart from funds required for operational activities, development of normative tools and products together with the participation in the international humanitarian fora requires also budgetary allocations.

Resolution GC/20/17 clearly calls for mobilisation of necessary financial resources to implement the strategic policy and invites Governments in a position to do so to contribute generously to support activities in emergencies and post-disaster situations. Unfortunately, donor support for operationalising agency’s policy framework for a smooth transition from relief to recovery is acutely under-funded. To guarantee a timely and credible response to humanitarian and transition needs, a strategic and dedicated outreach and fund-raising programme needs to be developed and implemented.

Several proposals have been developed outlining options for further developing and resourcing UN-HABITAT’s humanitarian programme. UN-HABITAT needs to indicate to the international community that the agency is committed to increased capacity, visibility and delivery based on increasing its resources through core, bi/multi-lateral funding and access to predictable and consistent E-CERF\(^5\) funding.

Also, creation of a financial facility for humanitarian activities has been proposed, yet requires further discussion. Establishment of a donor funded replenishable reserve fund for emergency response activities would enable participation in humanitarian funding appeals processes (which require full presence within UN Country Team response planning and Consolidated and/or Flash Appeal formulation); direct access to resources earmarked for humanitarian activities; and project formulation and targeted fund-raising for immediate and transition based activities.

Surge Facility

The DMP Surge Facility was established in order to reaffirm UN-HABITAT’s commitment for provision of surge capacity to support on sudden-onset disasters alongside sister agencies during the emergency phase. This applies to participation in emergency missions, when travel and deployment is required within 24 to 48 hours emergency onset\(^6\).

While the Agency has built up its operational capacities for rapid deployment, insufficient financial resources remain the main constraint to maintain the established practice. For example, it is estimated that DMP has participated or facilitated close to 30 advisory missions to post-crisis countries in a last couple of years, with a total estimated budget of USD 300,000 (travel, consultant

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\(^5\) The Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF) was established by the Secretary-General in accordance with UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182 of December 1991. It is a revolving fund with a target level of $50m, funded by voluntary donor contributions and used to make advances to operational organisations and entities of the UN in an effort to bridge the gap between needs and available funding. Spending authority rests with the Emergency Relief Coordinator. The CERF is characterised by rapid disbursement and light administration, so that funds are usually received within a 4-5 days of application. It has been recommended to expand the CERF into a grant-making ‘E-CERF’ of $500m providing funds to UN agencies through two to three windows, probably in addition to the existing loan facility of $50m:
- Rapid response (40-50% of fund)
- Equity (30-40%)
- Standby capacity (10-20% if E-CERF fully funded)

\(^6\) The current Surge Facility includes the delegated authority to the Chief, DPCSS, to approve emergency travel for him and his staff for UNDAC missions at short notice, especially at weekends.
fees, DSA only). However, the recent missions to assist the recovery process in Pakistan have largely exhausted the current financial reserve for surge deployment.

- Once the discussions on the financial facility will continue, it is proposed that the Surge Facility to be expanded to meet the ad hoc needs in all humanitarian crises where shelter/human settlement factors are pertinent. The funds for the Surge Facility will be replenished from the financial facility, once established.

**Operations Financing**

- UN-HABITAT operational activities are largely funded by various bilateral or multilateral resources, where the funds are directly supporting identified, and jointly agreed, activities on the ground.
- These financial resources are usually carefully earmarked for specific outputs, and do not include allocations for HQ activities in terms of normative production, nor can these funds be extended for disbursements for rapid deployment of surge and project formulation missions.

**V The Way Forward**

- UN-HABITAT has recently initiated discussions about institutional changes to support better the agency’s engagement to address the needs of human settlements in crisis. A 1-3-5 year plan has been developed for a robust expansion of the Disaster Management Programme, it becoming a dedicated Branch in the organisation specifically addressing the needs of human settlements in crisis. The expansion plan includes indicative budget requirement, organogram and activity schedule. If approved, this strategic plan would significantly enhance UN-HABITAT’s capacity in the humanitarian field, drawing its resources through core funding, bi-lateral and eventually through E-CERF.