Agenda Item 2:

Draft Minutes of the Thirty-Sixth Regular Session of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, which was held on 5 March 2010 (HSP/CPR/37/2).
Draft minutes of the thirty-sixth regular meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, held on 5 March 2010

Opening of the meeting

1. The meeting was opened at 9.50 a.m. on Friday, 5 March 2010 by the Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, Mr. Macharia Kamau, Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).

2. The meeting was attended by 68 participants from 41 countries and 1 observer mission.

3. At the invitation of the Chair, the Committee observed a minute of silence to pay tribute to the memory of the victims of and those affected by the recent earthquakes in Chile and Haiti.

4. The Chair welcomed the following new permanent representatives to the Committee: Mr. Ambrosio Lukoki (Angola); Mr. Agio Loizou (Cyprus); Mr. Zainol Rahim Zainuddin (Malaysia); Mr. Masroor A. Junejo (Pakistan); Ms. Ann Dismorr (Sweden); Mr. Joseph Murphy (United States of America); and bade farewell to Mr. Vassos Chamberlen (Cyprus); Mr. A. K. M. Shamsuddin (Bangladesh); and Mr. James Stewart (United States) who had departed or would shortly be departing the Nairobi duty station, thanking them for their contribution to the Committee’s work, which had greatly assisted it in discharging its mandate.

Item 1: Adoption of the agenda

5. The Committee adopted the agenda on the basis of the provisional agenda set forth in documents HSP/CPR/36/1 and Add.1.

Item 2: Adoption of the draft minutes of the thirty-fifth regular meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

6. The Committee approved and adopted the draft minutes of its thirty-fifth regular meeting, held on 7 December 2009, as contained in document HSP/CPR/36/2.
Item 3: Quarterly report on UN-Habitat country activities

7. Introducing the item, Ms. Anna Tibaijuka, Executive Director of UN-Habitat, presented the quarterly report on UN-Habitat country activities set out in document HSP/CPR/36/3. Emphasizing that the projects described therein were linked to the enhanced normative operational framework action plan under the medium-term strategic and institutional plan, she provided an overview of the report and highlighted a number of key projects in Africa, Asia and Europe.

8. In the ensuing discussion, many representatives thanked the Executive Director and the secretariat for their hard work and welcomed progress in the implementation of the medium-term strategic and institutional plan, in particular regarding the experimental reimbursable seeding operations. Most of the representatives who spoke expressed their appreciation for the quality of the report.

9. One representative said that the report was particularly useful as it provided a good overview of how donors were contributing to country-level activities. He suggested, however, that there was room for improvement; of particular importance was prior assessment of the genuine need for a given project and the design of projects, including consideration of whether a project could be implemented on schedule, whether methods to be employed were cost-effective and whether alternative methods might maximize funding use. He cautioned that failure to plan adequately could pose problems.

Acknowledging the drawbacks of donor budget procedures that often required hurried submission of project reports by UN-Habitat, he emphasized the importance of the secretariat and donors working together to assure access to increased funding.

10. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, reiterated the importance of planning activities to improve quality and consistency within UN-Habitat. He stressed the need for the organization to cooperate actively with stakeholders in the field and pointed to the importance of regional balance in the development of projects and improving communications on activities to enhance the organization’s visibility.

11. Several representatives suggested that a more in-depth analysis of the report would be useful, including, one said, to ensure that Committee members were more aware of activities being undertaken in their countries and regions; to enable activities to be improved and to ensure adequate follow-up of project outcomes and more effective participation by stakeholders in all countries. He sought clarification of four major projects recently completed in Afghanistan.

12. The representative of Pakistan expressed his sincere appreciation to UN-Habitat and other partners for the assistance provided to his country, highlighting that provided in the wake of an earthquake in October 2005.

13. Another representative commended the Executive Director and her staff on their endeavour to provide a snapshot of country-level activities as requested by the Committee, which would enable colleagues in capitals better to understand the difference that UN-Habitat was making on the ground. The report demonstrated that the organization’s activities were having a positive effect. He commended, in particular, the partnerships with other stakeholders to deliver the Habitat Agenda at the country level in accordance with the medium-term strategic and institutional plan. He was grateful that the plan, including its focus areas, featured heavily throughout the report and that its implementation was on track. Pointing to areas that were more scant in detail, he said that all parts of future similar reports should contain a similar level of detail.

14. The representative of Spain said that, the Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community having entered into force on 1 December 2009, the European Union would replace the European Community in its rights and obligations, including with regard to its status within the United Nations. Spain would retain the presidency of the European Union until such time as the transition period had been concluded and, in the framework of UN-Habitat, would be in charge of coordinating the activities of European Union member States and negotiating on their behalf during the first quarter of 2010.

15. Responding to comments made, the Executive Director thanked members for their kind remarks. She said that the secretariat did discuss technical cooperation projects with their sponsoring agencies. Traditionally, more intensive interaction with the Committee had been absent, in part due to the diffuse nature of UN-Habitat operations; the organization’s regional activities were managed by its regional directors rather than from headquarters in Nairobi. Evaluation reports and detailed progress reports provided to various donors were available, however. While expressing agreement with comments regarding the need to improve planning activities, she stressed that time constraints did not always allow
for that. She suggested that more detailed discussion on UN-Habitat Afghanistan operations, which focused on stabilizing the country and reconstruction, might be possible, particularly given their considerable size. The secretariat would endeavour to achieve balance in reporting, possibly through some level of standardization. The organization’s best efforts to achieve regional balance in its activities notwithstanding, financing remained a key constraint and she would seek the guidance of member States in that regard.

**Item 4: Progress reports**

(a) **Preparations for the fifth session of the World Urban Forum**

16. The Executive Director provided a final update to the Committee on preparations for the fifth session of the Forum. She stressed the importance of high-level participation to move the Habitat Agenda forward globally and highlighted that the World Urban Campaign would be launched at the Forum.

17. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Brazil thanked the UN-Habitat staff for their efficiency and dedication to ensuring the success of the fifth session of the Forum, the Executive Director for her energy and wisdom and all the countries engaged in preparations for the session. She announced that two special sessions would be held on Tuesday, 23 March 2010, one on Haiti and the other on energy efficiency and sustainable building. She encouraged the participation of member States.

18. Several representatives commended the efforts of the Government of Brazil and the secretariat in preparing for the session. One expressed her gratitude to Habitat Agenda partners sponsoring participation at the session and encouraged participants to take full advantage of the opportunities afforded by the Forum, including for cooperation and investment. Another representative recognized the efforts by the Government of Norway to sponsor the participation of young people and women in the session and urged other countries to do likewise.

19. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, stressed the importance of the session’s outcome enhancing the visibility of UN-Habitat and understanding of its activities.

20. Another representative requested any background documentation for the session to be made available online in a timely manner to enable participants to prepare themselves adequately for discussions.

21. The representative of the Russian Federation said that his Government was considering providing funding for Russian interpretation at the session.

22. One representative, underscoring the importance of high-level participation, said that the Deputy Prime Minister of his country would attend the session.

23. The Executive Director expressed her gratitude to the Permanent Representative of Brazil for her support, kindness and hard work. She drew attention to problems associated with the issuing of visas to participants, which was proving costly as a result of the travel required to gain access to Brazilian missions around the world. Turning to the matter of pre-session documentation, she explained that a concept note on the dialogues was available in English on the Forum’s website. With the support of the host Government, English, French, Spanish and Portuguese interpretation would be provided at the session, although not in all the meetings; she urged member States to provide further support to ensure adequate interpretation at the session. She welcomed the initiative by the Government of Brazil to hold a special session on Haiti and added that UN-Habitat staff members present in Haiti were assuming an increasingly important role in the country’s reconstruction and rehabilitation.

24. The representative of Brazil underscored that, although visas to visit Brazil could not be issued upon arrival, there were over 190 Brazilian consular posts worldwide. She suggested that, in those countries or regions in which the postal service was unreliable, one person might be made responsible for visa applications for a number of participants.

(b) **Preparations for the Shanghai World Expo (Shanghai, China: 1 May–31 October 2010)**

25. Introducing the item, the Executive Director presented a progress report on preparations for the Shanghai World Expo as contained in document HSP/CPR/36/4(b).

26. Mr. Lars Reutersward, Director, Global Division, and coordinator of the United Nations exhibition and pavilion at the Shanghai World Expo, stressed that UN-Habitat was the lead agency for United Nations participation at the Expo. He highlighted the Expo’s history, praising the generosity of
the Government of China as the host nation and for designing and building the 3,000 m² United Nations pavilion, the interior decor and features of which would be ready in the near future. He drew attention to the permanent exhibition, set to display how the United Nations and all its agencies embodied the Expo’s theme and invited members to attend its inauguration by the Executive Director on 1 May 2010.

27. The representative of China welcomed the comments made. He said that the United Nations pavilion would be the highlight of the Expo, demonstrating what had been achieved globally in terms of urban construction and improvement. Progress at the site was on target, with security, safety, transport and tourist reception facilities being organized. Some 192 countries and many organizations had registered to participate and the Expo was expected to strengthen communications and cooperation between China and the rest of the world. He encouraged active participation over the coming months.

Item 5: Quarterly report on the financial status of UN-Habitat

28. The Executive Director presented the quarterly report on the financial status of UN-Habitat as set out in document HSP/CPR/36/5, thanking donors for their remarkable support over the biennium 2008–2009. Total voluntary contributions were higher than ever, the impact of the global economic crisis notwithstanding, reflecting donors’ genuine commitment to and confidence in UN-Habitat. She reiterated the seven-fold increase in general-purpose contributions over the past decade and the notable increase in special-purpose contributions. Progress had also been made towards improving the balance between non-earmarked and earmarked contributions, resulting in a more coherent and focused approach in implementation. Making special mention of the Governments of Norway, Spain, Sweden and the United States for the substantial increases in their donations, she expressed her gratitude to all those countries that had paid their contributions, adding that those that had failed to do so had placed the organization in a difficult position. She thanked those Governments and organizations that had supported post-conflict and post-disaster reconstruction and poverty alleviation efforts and those that had contributed to other areas, thereby assisting UN-Habitat in its efforts to ensure the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. She thanked the Governments of Brazil and France for their financial support and the European Community for its pledge regarding the fifth session of the World Urban Forum, adding that the Government of Norway had recently contributed a further $47,000. Recalling the annual general purpose income target for the current biennium, she called upon all member States to pay their outstanding contributions and be generous in their support.

29. Several representatives thanked the Executive Director for her report. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, emphasized the importance of ensuring that UN-Habitat broadened its donor base and strengthened trust between donors through the implementation of the medium-term strategic and institutional plan.

30. One representative, expressing regret that his country had not paid its contributions as scheduled, stated the hope that the situation had been rectified since the preparation of the report. He sought clarification on additional funding required for 2010 after the withdrawal of a key donor to the organization. He asked how the resource mobilization strategy was working, what impact the changes in contributions would have on the work programme and how activities were likely to be reprioritized.

31. The Executive Director confirmed that the recent credit crisis had caused one donor to reorganize its priorities and withdraw its contribution to UN-Habitat while another had indicated that it might halve its funding. She and the Deputy Executive Director were continuing to discuss the implications for the medium-term strategic and institutional plan. The Resource Mobilization Unit was continuing its work and the Deputy Executive Director would consult donors further during the fifth session of the World Urban Forum. There was no immediate danger to UN-Habitat core staff; she had ensured the creation of a working reserve of $30 million to cushion the agency from the volatility of working on an indicative budget and as part of the $45 million of statutory reserve. She explained the importance of understanding the nature of UN-Habitat funding. She thanked the donors that had managed to remain constant, making particular reference to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States.

32. Ms. Inge Björk-Klevby, Deputy Executive Director of UN-Habitat, drew attention to a breakfast meeting to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on 24 March 2010, which would provide an opportunity to discuss issues with development partners. She had devoted much attention to improving cooperation with the European Union. She had visited the European Parliament, where a parliamentary committee on urban issues had been created in February 2010 to contribute to increased understanding of the urban agenda in the European Union.
Item 6: Other matters

(a) World Water Day

33. Mr. Bert Diphoorn, Chief, Water, Sanitation and Infrastructure Branch of UN-Habitat, explained that the global celebration of World Water Day would be held in Nairobi on 22 March 2010 and would be hosted jointly by the Government of Kenya, the United Nations Secretary-General’s Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation, the United Nations Environment Programme and UN-Habitat. The theme for 2010 was “Water quality”, with particular attention paid to the issue of wastewater. He encouraged members to attend the important event. In closing, he noted that the theme for the following year’s event would be “Water and urbanization”, with UN-Habitat as lead agency.

(b) Schedule of meetings

34. The Chair drew attention to the schedule of meetings of the Committee for the remainder of 2010 as set out in document HSP/CPR/36/6(a). The Committee approved the schedule.

(c) Governance review process

35. Mr. Daniel Chuburu, co-chair of the implementation team on the UN-Habitat governance review process and Permanent Representative of Argentina, gave an update on progress since the Committee’s previous meeting in December 2009 as contained in document HSP/CPR/36/6(b). The implementation team had met four times in 2010 and the seven assessment teams had also met regularly. Each team would assess their particular area for accountability, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness, conducting their research through a mixture of interviews, e-mail surveys and meetings until June 2010, when a report would be submitted to the Committee. The report would concentrate on what were termed “quick-wins” that could be implemented prior to the twenty-third session of the Governing Council. He sought the cooperation and participation of members and assured total confidentiality.

36. One representative urged members to take part with enthusiasm in the surveys and interviews to be carried out by the implementation and assessment teams; their detailed involvement would help to make the governance review a success. He stressed that the review was a positive example of a joint effort by the secretariat and the Committee. He commended all those involved.

(d) Peer review on the implementation of the medium-term strategic and institutional plan

37. Mr. Bruno Garcia-Dobarco, vice-chair of the peer review on the implementation of the medium-term strategic and institutional plan and Deputy Permanent Representative of Spain, provided an overview of progress to date as set out in document HSP/CPR36/6(c). Two meetings had been held to date; the first draft of the group’s report and timelines for completion of the exercise had been finalized.

(e) Working group on the work programme and budget on the proposed strategic framework for 2012–2013

38. Mr. Ketan Shukla, chair of the working group on the work programme and budget on the proposed strategic framework for 2012–2013 and Deputy Permanent Representative of India, provided an update on the working group’s progress as contained in document HSP/CPR/36/6(d). The group had met three times since November 2009. The proposed strategic framework document had been introduced, discussed and revised, before being submitted to the United Nations Comptroller’s office by 31 December 2009. In February, another working group meeting had been held to brief the Committee on the status of the strategic framework following its review by the Programme Planning and Budget Division in New York.

(f) Condolences

39. Many representatives expressed their sincere condolences to the Governments and people of Chile and Haiti in the wake of the earthquakes that had devastated those countries. Many also expressed their condolences to the Government and people of Uganda, where mudslides had claimed the lives of a number of citizens. Several representatives drew attention to the particular mandate and mission of UN-Habitat in the wake of natural disasters and humanitarian crises. The representatives of Chile and Uganda expressed thanks for the condolences offered.
(g) Rafik Hariri UN-Habitat Memorial Award

40. The representative of Turkey said that Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Prime Minister of her country, had been awarded the Rafik Hariri UN-Habitat Memorial Award, which had been announced on 1 March 2010. She expressed her gratitude to the Rafik Hariri Foundation and the secretariat for the selection and recognition of his works.

Item 7: Closure of the meeting

41. The Chair declared the meeting closed at 12.15 p.m. on Friday, 5 March 2010.