Activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme

Report of the Executive Director

Introduction

1. The present report summarizes the activities undertaken by UN-Habitat in response to the resolutions adopted by the Governing Council at its twenty-second session. It is complemented by other reports that provide more detailed and additional information on activities undertaken in response to specific resolutions. The subjects covered by these reports are:

(a) Review of the governance structure of UN-Habitat (HSP/GC/23/5/Add.1);
(b) Fifth session of the World Urban Forum (HSP/GC/23/5/Add.2 and (HSP/GC/23/5/Add.3);
(c) Third United Nations conference on housing and sustainable urban development (HSP/GC/23/2/Add.4);
(d) Coordinated implementation of the guidelines on access to basic services for all and the guidelines on decentralisation and strengthening of local authorities (HSP/ GC/23/2/Add.5);
(e) Joint progress report of the executive directors of UNEP and UN-Habitat: joint activities in the area of urban environment (HSP/GC/23/2/Add.6); and
(f) Cooperation with agencies and organizations within the UN system, intergovernmental organizations outside the UN system, NGOs and other Habitat Partners in the implementation of the MTSIP (HSP/GC/23/2/Add.7).

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I. UN-Habitat activities in response to the resolutions adopted by the Governing Council at its twenty-first session

A. Resolution 22/1: Third session of the United Nations conference on housing and sustainable urban development

Following its adoption by the Governing Council, resolution 22/1, together with other resolutions adopted by the Governing Council at its twenty-second session, was submitted to the Economic and Social Council and to the General Assembly. The Secretary-General, in his report presented to the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly titled, “Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)”, requested the General Assembly to consider convening in 2016 a United Nations conference on housing and sustainable urban development (Habitat III).

The objective of the conference would be to undertake a comprehensive critical review and assessment of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium and relevant internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs; identify major constraints hindering implementation of the Agenda; address new challenges and opportunities that have emerged since the Habitat II Conference, including climate change as well as urban safety and security; agree on a new development agenda capable of responding to the new challenges and the new role of cities; address ways of strengthening the institutional framework for sustainable urban development and housing; as well as evaluate and redefine the governance structure of UN-HABITAT and its relationship with strategic development partners, as part of the new agenda for housing and sustainable urban development.

In response, the General Assembly, through its resolution 64/207, took note of the recommendation made by the Governing Council in its resolution 22/1. Having considered the question of convening in 2016 a third United Nations conference on housing and sustainable urban development (Habitat III), the General Assembly further requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report on this question, in collaboration with the Governing Council of UN-Habitat, for consideration by the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. In follow-up to this request, UN-Habitat has prepared a draft report for consideration by the Governing Council, which is contained in document HSP/GC/23/2/Add.4. The final draft of this report, as approved by the Governing Council at its twenty-third session, will be the Governing Council’s input to the Secretary-General’s report requested in General Assembly resolution 64/207.

B. Resolution 22/2: Affordable housing finance

UN-Habitat’s operational work on affordable housing finance was implemented through two programmes: the Experimental Reimbursable Seeding Operations (ERSO) Programme and the Slum Upgrading Facility Pilot (SUF) Programme. These programmes use a catalytic investment approach in order to integrate market-based solutions with community-led efforts and government inputs as the most effective way to address the scale of inadequate housing, water and sanitation.

Significant progress was made through the ERSO programme. Five ERSO loans were disbursed in five countries in 2010 (Tanzania, Uganda, Nicaragua, Nepal and Palestine), with a total loan value of US$2,750,000. It was planned that funds leveraged through this seed funding would reach over US$500 million and that this initial round of lending would support the creation and upgrading of over 30,000 affordable and social housing units in five countries. A sixth project for the remaining loan funds of USD 250,000 is under development.

The SUF Pilot Programme established Local Finance Facilities in Ghana, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Tanzania. Grant agreements totalling over US$6.5 million were concluded under the SUF programme and these efforts have attracted government commitments of approximately US$1.4 million. Eight projects were implemented and have attracted commercial lending of over US$500,000. Technical assistance, focusing on strengthening business and financial capacity, has been continuously provided to Local Financial Facilities, NGO networks and local authorities by UN-Habitat.
The ERSO Programme went through an independent external evaluation as it reached the end of a four-year experimental period, pursuant to UN-Habitat Governing Council resolution 21/10, adopted at its 21st session in 2007. The SUF Pilot Programme also ended at the end of December 2010, and went through a similar independent evaluation. The results of both evaluations, including lessons learnt on approaches to affordable housing finance, will assist the Governing Council to determine UN-Habitat’s future work in this area.

UN-Habitat’s normative work in the area of affordable housing focused on various dimensions of affordability, including: informal settlements and finance; community-based finance approaches to affordable housing; social housing and related finance models; housing cooperative approaches; and social investment funds. Two publications were produced: Guide to Preparing a Housing Finance Strategy, and Guide to Municipal Finance, both of which are tools for Governments and Municipalities.

Recognizing the role of economic development in solving affordable housing problems, UN-Habitat strengthened its efforts in promoting the economic development of towns and cities. In particular, it produced a report on housing as a strategy for poverty reduction, titled Housing as a Strategy for Poverty Reduction in Ghana, and launched the Global Urban Economic Dialogue in order to generate debate and solutions on pressing urban economic development and housing issues.

The first was the Global Dialogue on Better Cities Better Economies, held at the Shanghai World Expo 2010, which generated 5,210 media articles. UN-HABITAT, in partnership with UNESCAP and an Indian Housing Finance Institution, facilitated the establishment of the Asia Pacific Housing Finance Network. Further, UN-Habitat, in partnership with the African Union of Housing Finance, launched its first training programme on affordable housing mechanisms and practices for senior bankers and finance practitioners.

C. Resolution 22/3: Cities and climate change

The 22nd session of the Governing Council mandated UN-HABITAT in resolution 22/3 to specifically work on Cities and Climate Change. In response to the resolution, UN-Habitat developed a Climate Change Strategy 2010-2013, which highlights the importance of implementation and action across the agency. As part of this strategy, UN-Habitat has launched the Cities and Climate Change Initiative. The initiative aims to promote dialogue between national and local levels, to raise awareness on the vulnerability of the urban poor to climate change, and to develop local government capacity to respond to climate change challenges.

The official launch of the initiative took place in March 2009 in Oslo. The initiative started off with four pilot cities: Esmeraldas in Ecuador, Kampala in Uganda, Maputo in Mozambique and Sorsogon in the Philippines. These cities carried out assessments of hazards, vulnerabilities and adaptive capacity. They developed action plans for enhancing climate resilience, which are now in the process of implementation. An additional five African cities in Burkina Faso, Rwanda, Senegal and Namibia, joined the initiative at the African Local Government Climate Roadmap Summit in South Africa in 2009. Cities in nine Asian countries, including four Small Island Developing States in the Pacific, joined the initiative in 2010.

UN-Habitat now has formal observer status at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and attended its 31st session, where the outlines of the 5th Assessment Report were approved, including a provision for new chapters on urban issues and human settlements in the adaptation and mitigation working groups.

Also at the global level, UN-Habitat and ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability worked together on many issues and events, including the “Resilient Cities Congress” held in Bonn, Germany, and on the “Local Government Climate Sessions” held during the fifteenth session of the Conference of Parties of UNFCCC in December 2009. UN-Habitat has also partnered with ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability to prepare a capacity-building tool on cities and carbon finance, and with the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) to prepare a tool on developing local climate change plans.

UN-Habitat also joined forces with the World Bank, UNEP and the Cities Alliance in order to achieve a more coordinated and focused response to climate change issues facing cities, particularly in developing countries. The collaborating agencies released a common standard for measuring city greenhouse gases.
for public comment at the fifth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF) in Rio de Janeiro in March 2010.

UN-Habitat is partnering with ISDR on the Disaster Risk Reduction component of climate change through the “Making Cities Resilient” campaign, which is already working with 150 cities worldwide. UN-Habitat has also started collaborative implementation with the private sector. Arcadis, a Netherlands-based infrastructure and environment firm, is providing pro bono work in support of UN-HABITAT, including in the area of cities and climate change.

A major report published in early 2011 is UN-Habitat’s Global Report on Human Settlements 2011, titled “Cities and Climate Change”. The report, whose launching was timed to coincide with the twenty-third session of the Governing Council, proposes specific policy recommendations on city level actions for mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions and for adaptation to climate change.

UN-Habitat and UNEP jointly hosted the annual meeting of the Inter-Agency Committee (IAC) of the United Nations Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD) in September 2009 in Nairobi. The meeting was preceded by a one-day symposium on the theme of Climate Change Education and Sustainable Cities.

Mainstreaming of climate change in the focus areas of the MTSIP was also initiated, specifically in Focus Area 3, “Adequate access to land and housing”, and Focus Area 4, “Environmentally sustainable basic infrastructure and services”.

In partnership with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, UN-Habitat developed and launched a guide on Supporting Local Action for Biodiversity: The Role of National Governments, which contains recommendations on how national and local governments can contribute to local-level biodiversity management while addressing climate change concerns.

D. Resolution 22/4: Strengthening the development of urban young people

In response to Governing Council resolution 22/4, UN-Habitat focused on strengthening the institutional management and operations of the Opportunities Fund for Youth-led Development (Urban Youth Fund). Regional offices were engaged in processing applications to the Urban Youth Fund. The Fund has been strengthened through the recruitment of additional staff. Further, the management of the Fund has being strengthened through the involvement of the Habitat Programme Managers (HPMs) in the promotion of the Urban Youth Fund in their regions, the vetting of potential fund recipients and the monitoring of the projects. The efficiency of fund administration has been greatly helped by the establishment of an on-line database and portal for processing of applications to the Urban Youth Fund. The portal is accessible in English, French and Spanish.

UN-HABITAT has made progress in harnessing experiences from the Urban Youth Fund through the launching of an on-line Global Youth Help Desk (GYHD). The purpose of the GYHD is to engage youth, youth-led agencies, researchers and policy makers in the exchange of experience and good practices in youth-led development.

A parallel activity to the GYHD is the Urban Youth Research Network. It was established to facilitate and strengthen the linkage between the youth-related normative work of UN-Habitat and academic research. A key component of the research agenda is a pioneering comprehensive literature review of research on youth-led development conducted by internationally prominent research partners, including the Norwegian University of Science and Technology; the Children, Youth and Environment Centre, University of Colorado (USA); E-Social Sciences (India); and the International Centre for Sustainable Cities (Canada). One research publication has so far been completed, World Urban Forum Dialogue Series: Youth in Cities.

With funding from the Government of Norway, the Youth Programme has been able to mainstream youth into the work of a number of UN-Habitat’s branches, sections and units, especially the following: the Urban Environmental and Planning Branch; the Gender Mainstreaming Unit; the Shelter Branch, including the Global Land Tool Network; and the Water, Sanitation and Infrastructure Branch. The Safer Cities Programme also mainstreams youth issues in its work, as demonstrated by the launch of the “Youth for a Safer Africa” initiative on the margins of the FIFA World Cup in South Africa in July 2010. The Training and Capacity Building Branch is supporting mainstreaming efforts by developing
training materials to enhance youth engagement in urban governance and development. It is also developing an E-learning Reference Group which will assist in determining the scope and topics of courses relevant to youth. In addition, a policy brief to feed into the Global Urban Campaign as well as a draft strategic framework for mainstreaming youth have been developed.

The World Urban Youth Assembly is now an integral part of WUF. During WUF 5 in March 2010, over 500 youth from all over the world participated in a two day Youth Assembly. Within the main body of the WUF, a Youth and Sports Roundtable and a meeting of the Youth Research Network were held. Budgets for future youth assemblies will be an integral part of the WUF budget.

Youth development issues have been substantially reflected in the 2010/2011 issue of the State of the World’s Cities report, in the form of a supplement titled State of the World Youth Report 2010-2011: Leveling the Playing Field, which was launched during WUF 5 in March 2010. The Global Report on Human Settlements 2011: Cities and Climate Change, has also integrated youth issues in its chapters.

The operations of the Urban Youth Fund were evaluated as part of the overall evaluation of the Youth Empowerment Programme. The results are reported in document HSP/GC/23/5/Add.4.

E. Resolution 22/5: Governance of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme

Pursuant to Governing Council resolution 22/5, Phase I of the governance review of UN-Habitat focused on preparation of the review’s terms of reference (ToR). The ToR were drawn up by a joint Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR)/UN-Habitat Secretariat group in June 2009. In line with the ToR, a hierarchical organizational structure for the review was established. This comprised an Open-ended Contact Group, a regionally balanced Implementation Team, and seven Assessment Teams, with equal representation of the CPR and the Secretariat. Both the Implementation Team and Assessment Team commenced work in September 2009.

Phase II, which commenced in January 2010, focused on improvement of UN-Habitat’s governance in Nairobi, i.e., on actions that could be implemented by the Secretariat, with the approval of the CPR, but without reference to the UN headquarters in New York. Following a visioning workshop, research by the seven Assessment Teams and a series of meetings of the Implementation Team, a list of 29 “quick wins” was proposed. The list was approved by the CPR on 15 September 2010.

Phase III commenced with a workshop of the Implementation Team in early November 2010. It focused on improvement of UN-Habitat’s governance within the wider UN system, especially its governance relationship with the General Assembly, the UN Secretariat, the Economic and Social Council, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Committee on Programme Coordination. A further list of proposed medium-term and long-term wins was presented to and approved by the CPR at its meeting of 16 December 2010. The details of the outcome of all phases of the review, including Phases III and IV, are contained in document HSP/GC/23/2/Add.1.

F. Resolution 22/6: Habitat awards

The inaugural Rafik Hariri Award was presented at the 5th Session of the World Urban Forum (WUF 5), Rio de Janeiro, March 2010. The award went to the Prime Minister of Turkey, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, for statesmanship, leadership and good governance, including urban renewal work during his tenure as mayor of Istanbul. The first Rafik Hariri Memorial Lecture was also delivered at WUF5.

The second round of the Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa UN-Habitat Award was presented at WUF5. It went to the Bento Rubião Foundation from Rio de Janeiro, for its extensive and outstanding land and housing programme for people living in Rio de Janeiro’s slums, the favelas.

The Best Practices and Local Leadership Programme (BLP), which also acts as the Steering Committee of the Dubai International Award for Best Practices to Improve the Living Environment, organised an exhibition at WUF 5. Titled, Urban Best Practices: 25 Success Stories, this exhibition was a collaborative activity, supported by all BLP partners and coordinated by UN-HABITAT’s Best
Practices and Local Leadership Programme, Best Practices Hub Vienna and Fundacion Habitat Colombia. The Building and Social Housing Foundation contributed practices from its World Habitat Awards.

The Dubai International Award finalized its eighth cycle, for the year 2010, with the jury selecting 12 winners out of 480 applications. Winners in the eighth cycle were from: Angola, Kenya, Lebanon, Mongolia, Austria, Bulgaria, Spain, Brazil, Argentina, El Salvador and Mexico.

G. Resolution 22/7: Work programme and budget of UN-Habitat for the biennium 2010-2011

In line with Governing Council resolution 22/7, the biennial results-based strategic framework for 2012-2013 was prepared in a participatory manner and in close consultation with the Committee of Permanent Representatives. It is also fully aligned with the MTSIP. The log-frame elements, consisting of the subprogramme objectives, expected accomplishments, indicators of achievement and sub-expected accomplishments, were derived from the refined MTSIP results framework, and the focus area strategy papers also informed the strategy sections of the document. The whole document also incorporates lessons learnt from the biennial programme performance report and the World Urban Forum.

The proposed biennial work programme and budget document for 2012-2013 is built on the strategic framework for 2012-2013, in line with General Assembly resolution 58/269 of 2003. It was also prepared in close consultation with the CPR, is fully aligned with the MTSIP and has a strong results focus. A robust results chain clearly shows the linkage between outputs, sub-expected accomplishments and expected accomplishments, and how they all lead to significant contributions to the subprogramme objectives.

In spite of the global financial crisis, UN-Habitat has continued to make significant progress in achieving its resource mobilization targets. The preliminary income figures for the first year of the biennium were as follows: non-earmarked resources amounted to US$25.4 million, representing 89 per cent of the annual target of US$28.5 million; and earmarked resources amounted to US$162.4 million, exceeding the annual target of US$126 million. The top ten donors contributed 71 per cent of the total voluntary contributions. The increase in non-earmarked contributions was 7 per cent, against an annual target of 8.5 per cent, and the increase in earmarked contributions was 29 per cent.

To support the implementation of the MTSIP focus area priorities as reflected in the work programme and taking into account the funding available, an allocation of US$32.2 million was made for the first year of the biennium. To date, 100 per cent of the non-earmarked resources have been allocated to MTSIP focus area priorities, while 95 per cent of the earmarked resources have been allocated to MTSIP focus area priorities, in line with current donor agreements. A new internal mechanism for allocation of non-earmarked funding that is more transparent and results-oriented is now in place. Performance reports were, and continue to be, presented to the Committee of Permanent Representatives on a quarterly basis.

The organization continued its efforts to improve sustainability and predictability of funding through a number of mechanisms, including increased long term partnerships with key donors, expansion and consolidation of the donor base and development of improved systems to support resource mobilization efforts. All of these mechanisms are key features of UN-Habitat’s resource mobilization strategy.

H. Resolution 22/8: Guidelines on access to basic services

Resolution 22/8, adopted by the Governing Council on 3 April 2009, approved the Guidelines on access to basic services for all, and acknowledged their coherence and complementarity with the international guidelines on decentralisation and the strengthening of local authorities adopted through resolution 21/3 of 20 April 2007. In progress report HSP/GC/23/2/Add.5, the Executive Director highlights the major actions undertaken by UN-Habitat in collaboration with interested partners to follow up on these two resolutions.
The ultimate objective of the guidelines on decentralisation is to promote the strengthening of local authorities and to advocate for their empowerment in the provision of basic services. This is based on the recognition of the local dimension of basic services.

However, despite the fact that the process of development of both sets of guidelines was inclusive, participatory, and based on the documentation of good practices, more work remains to be done to adapt them effectively to regional, national and local contexts, and to transform them into a useful tool to improve legislative, regulatory and operational frameworks.

UN-Habitat has therefore developed a comprehensive programme document highlighting three major components of its strategy for the integrated adaptation of both sets of guidelines to national and local situations: (i) policy development and advocacy at the regional and national levels; (ii) training and capacity development at regional, national and local levels; and (iii) monitoring and reporting.

Against this background, efforts in mobilisation of partners have been intensified through a series of consultative dialogues in a number of countries, including Jamaica, Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Ecuador, Burkina Faso and Vietnam. At a special session devoted to the operationalisation of both sets of Guidelines held at WUF 5 in March 2010, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, participants from several countries, including Burundi, Chad, Cameroon, China, Eritrea, France, Madagascar, Morocco, Norway, Poland, Tanzania and Brazil exchanged ideas and experiences on opportunities and challenges. This facilitated the formulation of concrete recommendations on further steps to be taken.

Following up on these recommendations, UN-Habitat and the French Government organised a partners meeting during 27-28 October 2010 to initiate the selection of pilot countries in order to pave the way for country-level activities. In this connection, UN-Habitat has finalised a comprehensive handbook, at the request of partners, whose aim is to guide the coordinated implementation of the Guidelines in interested developing countries.

I. Resolution 22/9: South-South Cooperation in human settlements

In response to Governing Council resolution 22/9, and in line with the “One UN” approach, UN-Habitat strengthened its cooperation with UNDP offices and other sister agencies, including UN Regional Commissions and the World Bank. By managing the UN Pavilion at EXPO 2010 in Shanghai, UN-Habitat had the opportunity to collaborate with many agencies in seminars and other events promoting South-South cooperation.

UN-Habitat participated in the sixteenth session of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation held in February 2010. The committee is the governing body of the Special Unit on South-South Cooperation (SSC), which is responsible for promoting and reviewing world wide progress in South-South Cooperation. It also ensures co-ordination of South-South cooperation activities of the United Nations.

Through its various technical cooperation projects and programmes, UN-Habitat awarded a number of contracts to developing country institutions, enterprises and NGOs to work in neighbouring countries.

UN-Habitat continued to support the organization of regional ministerial bodies. The Asia and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development (APMCHUD) met in Solo, Indonesia, in June 2010; the Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of Housing and Urbanization in Latin America and the Caribbean (MINURVI) met in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in September 2010; and the African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development (AMCHUD) met in Bamako, Mali, in November 2010.

UN-Habitat also strengthened its network of Regional offices, creating a new sub-office in Bangkok, Thailand, and a Regional Office for the Arab States in Cairo, Egypt.

Several partners supported the work of UN-Habitat aimed at facilitating South-South cooperation at sub-regional, regional and inter-regional levels. The most significant work in this respect included: the Lake Victoria and Mekong Delta initiatives (sub-regional); preparation of the regional state of cities reports funded by the Government of Norway (regional); and the European Commission-ACP-UN-Habitat Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme (inter-regional).
Study tours were organized in all developing regions and sub-regions in order to facilitate the exchange of experience and cross-fertilization. For instance, in October 2010, a group of African mayors visited China in order to familiarize themselves with the Chinese methods of urban management.

UN-Habitat’s cooperation with the UNDP Special Unit for South-South cooperation was expanded through the organization of several joint meetings, including: a joint Workshop on “How Creative Economies can Lead to a Culture of Peace”, from 17 to 18 June 2010 at the UN Headquarters in New York; a Culture of Peace Economic Initiative/UN-Habitat World Urban Campaign joint meeting in Istanbul, Turkey, on 8 October 2010; and the Global South-South Creative Week at the Shanghai Expo in October 2010.

UN-Habitat participated in the preparation and deliberations of the high-level UN Conference on South-South cooperation held in Nairobi from 1 to 3 December 2009. Its delegation was headed by the Executive Director.

During the fifth session of WUF 5, UN-Habitat organized a special dialogue on South-South cooperation in human settlements, chaired by the Brazilian Minister of Cities.

J. Resolution 22/10: World Urban Forum

In follow-up to Governing Council resolution 22/10, UN-Habitat engaged an independent consultant to conduct a review of previous sessions of the World Urban Forum held between 2002 and 2008. The scope of the exercise was set out by criteria outlined in the resolution. The consultant’s final report containing key recommendations was presented to the Committee of Permanent Representatives in September 2009. Subsequently, the Committee requested a ‘Management Response’ which was presented to its Working Group on the World Urban Forum. Recommendations from this review are already informing the improved planning, management and organization of the Forum.

The fifth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF 5), held in Rio de Janeiro from 22 to 26 March 2010, attracted a total of 13,795 participants from 150 countries, making it one of the largest United Nations meetings held in Brazil since the Earth Summit (UNCED) in 1992. The Forum attracted a rich and varied group of Habitat Agenda Partners from a growing number of countries – rising steadily from 100 in the third session, to 145 in the fourth and 150 in the fifth session.

Increased interest by national governments, from 14.7 per cent of the total number of participants in the third session to 12.7 per cent in the fourth and 16.63 per cent in the fifth, was a strong indication that governments appreciate the opportunity which the Forum, essentially a partners’ platform, affords them to engage with non-governmental actors in a way they would not otherwise have easily done.

The Forum’s growing stature was evident not only from the large number of participants, but also from the high level of representation, including two heads of State, two vice-presidents, a prime minister, senior ministers and other political leaders. The Brazilian president, senior ministers and other political leaders of the country were also in attendance.

The key outcomes of WUF 5, focusing on urban inequality and the right to the city, are contained in document HSP/GC/23/INF/2. These outcomes informed the decision on the theme of the twenty-third session of the Governing Council and have also been integrated into the ongoing implementation of the 2008-2013 Medium-term Strategic and Institutional Plan (MTSIP).

K. Resolution 22/11: Human settlements development in the occupied Palestinian territory

In response to Governing Council resolution 22/11, and line with the MTSIP, a Habitat Programme Document (2010–2011) for the occupied Palestinian territory was developed and was endorsed by the Palestinian Ministry of Public Works and Housing, as well as by the Ministry of Local Government and the Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development at the end of 2009.

The Habitat Programme Document improved the focus of UN-Habitat’s work, complementing the support programmes of sister agencies and the broader international community. The document’s work...
The programme is aligned with the state building agenda of the Palestinian Authority, as outlined in its Palestinian Reform and Development Plan (2008–2010).

An internationally-recruited Chief Technical Advisor was appointed in April 2010 as part of a renewed effort to strengthen the Special Human Settlements Programme for Palestinian People’s management capacity on the ground. This also allowed the strengthening of UN-Habitat’s networking with Palestinian, Israeli and international stakeholders.

The implementation of a self-help reconstruction project of 100 housing units in the Gaza Strip, funded by the Saudi Campaign of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques for the Relief of the Palestinian People, is hampered by the absence of legitimate building materials in the local market caused by the blockade of the Gaza Strip imposed by Israel. UN-HABITAT is leading the debate on building back better and has made self-help reconstruction the basis for the Reconstruction Guidelines, adopted by all housing actors.

In Hebron, the construction of 100 housing units for poor women and of a technical and vocational training centre, funded by the Saudi Committee for the Palestinian People Relief, are progressing well. UN-Habitat has resumed its support in the area of housing policy, working closely with the Palestinian Ministry of Public Works and Housing, the World Bank and DFID. Technical support is being given to humanitarian actors, with a view to making planning more efficient in dealing with the housing crisis in the Israeli-controlled Area C and East Jerusalem. In addition, a key joint project with UNDP, "Support to immediate and long term strategic spatial planning needs for Palestinian cities, towns and villages", is in the pipeline.

Emergency repairs to housing units of the most vulnerable is taking place in East-Jerusalem, targeting 45 units, with support from the French Government.

Even though resolution GC22/11 calls for renewed support to the Technical Cooperation Trust Fund of the Special Human Settlements Programme for Palestinian People, a total of only US $300,000.00 has been received from one country (the Kingdom of Bahrain).

II. Other major outcomes and achievements

A. Flagship reports

Global Report on Human Settlements 2009

The Global Report on Human Settlements 2009: Planning Sustainable Cities, assessed the effectiveness of current urban planning systems in both developing and developed countries. It recommended the following broad policy directions: (a) Governments should increasingly take on a more central development role in cities; (b) reformed urban planning systems must fully and unequivocally address the current and emerging urban challenges, including climate change, rapid urbanization and poverty, shrinking cities, ageing, multicultural composition of cities, informality and safety; (c) countries should formulate national urban policies in order to address urban challenges and prospects more systematically; and (d) capacity to enforce urban planning regulations, which is seriously lacking in many developing countries, should be given very high priority and should be developed on the basis of realistic standards.

The report also suggested that, in order to integrate the green and brown agendas in cities, urban local authorities should implement a comprehensive set of green policies and strategies encompassing urban design, energy, infrastructure, transport, waste and slum prevention. The report further suggested that strategic spatial plans linked to accessibility and public transport as well as other types of infrastructure should be used to promote more compact forms of urban expansion.


The State of the World’s Cities 2010/2011: Cities for All — Bridging the Urban Divide was launched at WUF 5 in March 2010. The report highlights the unprecedented challenges associated with urbanization that confront the world’s cities today, including marginalization and various forms of social and political exclusion. The report noted that between 2000 and 2010, 227 million people in the developing
world had been lifted out of slum conditions. Collectively, Governments have exceeded the Millennium Development Goals target on slums by at least 2.2 times. However, this achievement is highly skewed towards the more advanced developing countries, while poorer countries have not done as well. In the course of the same period, the number of slum dwellers increased by 6 million every year. Based on these trends, it is expected that the world’s slum population will reach 889 million by 2020, if no serious and concerted corrective action is taken.

The report identifies five policy steps for integrating the poor and marginalized into mainstream urban life. These are: (a) assessing the past and measuring progress; (b) establishing new, more effective governance institutions, or strengthening existing ones as needed; (c) building new linkages and alliances among various tiers of government; (d) developing a sustained, comprehensive vision to promote inclusiveness; and (e) ensuring an equitable redistribution of opportunities.

B. World Urban Campaign

A highlight of WUF 5 was the launch of the World Urban Campaign, designed to elevate to a new level the drive by UN-Habitat and its partners for better, smarter, greener and more equitable cities. It was launched by the Executive Director of UN-Habitat during WUF 5 in March 2010. The campaign is based on one of the fundamental objectives of the MTSIP: that of forging effective partnerships between and with the public, private and civil society sectors to enable UN-Habitat to fulfil a truly catalytic role.

In the months preceding the launch of the World Urban Campaign, a steering committee of major partners and groups was established on the basis of shared ownership and common vision and mission. More than 50 partners representing global and thematic networks of cities, professionals, civil society and the private sector committed themselves to a free exchange of knowledge, expertise and experience in support of sustainable urbanization. In addition, five United Nations organizations (the International Labour Organization, the World Health Organization, the Universal Postal Union, the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and the International Telecommunication Union) are playing an active role in the Campaign by associating their respective campaigns with the World Urban Campaign.

Representatives of national and local governments, grass-roots organizations, professionals, trade unions, the media, the business community and women signed a compact in support of the World Urban Campaign so as to work together as one in elevating sustainable urbanization in public policy as well as in public and private investment. A key activity of the World Urban Campaign is its 100 Cities Initiative, which builds on the concept of best practices but focuses on the sharing, exchange and transfer of lessons learned from experience.

C. Shanghai World Exposition 2010

The Shanghai World Exposition 2010 proved to be an effective global advocacy mechanism for promoting the sustainable urbanization agenda. The theme of the Exposition, held in Shanghai, China, was Better City, Better Life. It opened on 1 May 2010 and closed on 31 October 2010. UN-Habitat coordinated the participation of all United Nations agencies, programmes and funds in a 3,000 square metre UN pavilion. The theme of the UN pavilion was One Earth, One UN. The World Urban Campaign also organized an inaugural lecture series at the Shanghai Exposition.

Both the entire Exposition and the United Nations pavilion were dedicated to ideas, experiences, innovations, tools, technologies, know-how and forms of expression that portray a positive vision of an urbanizing world, which is also one of the key objectives of the World Urban Campaign.

With about 70 million people visiting the Exposition, and 3 million visiting the UN pavilion, this was a huge opportunity for highlighting the Habitat Agenda, especially the positive aspects of sustainable urban development.