

## Summary of discussions of the briefing by the Executive Director on the preparations for the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda

Wednesday, 12 January 2022 14.30 to 16.30 EAT – hybrid format

### **1. Briefing by the Executive Direction on the preparation for the high-level meeting on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda**

Under this item, the Executive Director provided a briefing on the preparations for the high-level meeting on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (HLM) that will take place on 28 April 2022 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

#### **The briefing by the Executive Director highlighted the following:**

- i. The Executive Director noted that while the HLM is about the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, a core mandate of UN-Habitat, the meeting will be convened by the President of the General Assembly of the United Nations. It is anticipated that the level of representation will be from Heads of State and Government, Ministers and representatives. It being understood that the level of representation is the prerogative of the member State.
- ii. The Executive Director recalled that prior to the briefing, the Secretariat shared three documents on this matter which included:
  - The progress report on the preparation for the HLM;
  - The letter of the President of the General Assembly establishing the Advisory Committee on Sustainable Urbanization;
  - The summary of the first working level meeting of the Advisory Committee on Sustainable Urbanization convened by the President of the General Assembly;
- iii. The Executive Director further informed that the President of the General Assembly agreed that the pre-session document for the HLM be the Secretary-General's Quadrennial Report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (the Quadrennial Report). The Executive Director further took the opportunity to recall that at the last session of the Executive Board held on 15 and 16 November 2021, the Secretariat encouraged all Member States to submit their national reports on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. The Executive Director indicated that UN-Habitat is working closely with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and with the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management to ensure that the Quadrennial Report is released in the 6 official languages of the United Nations by the end of February 2022.
- iv. The Executive Director updated that the office of the President of the General Assembly will communicate in a sequenced manner with Member States regarding the HLM in the next three months:

- a. In February 2022, the President of the General Assembly will circulate a “non-paper” concept and notional agenda of the HLM based on the finding of the draft Quadrennial Report in order to raise awareness and garner the support of Member States.
  - b. By the end of February 2022/ early March 2022, the office of the President of the General Assembly shall distribute the drafts of the HLM concept note and provisional Agenda based on the findings of the officially released Quadrennial Report.
  - c. As soon as possible prior to the HLM in April 2022, the final versions of the HLM concept note and provisional agenda shall be availed to Member States.
- v. The Executive Director indicated that the Advisory Committee on Sustainable Urbanization has been established by the President of the General Assembly to assist him in convening the HLM. It comprises of diverse constituents of the New Urban Agenda as well as Member States including seven Permanent Representatives and UN-Habitat’s partner organizations. The Executive Director took this opportunity to extend her gratitude to the Governments of Malaysia, Canada, Kenya, Jamaica, South Africa, Lebanon, Slovakia, Ecuador and Botswana, as President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), for their participation in the Advisory Committee on Sustainable Urbanization. She further encouraged Member States to reach out to the members of the Advisory Committee on Sustainable Urbanization to share their views and provide support to the preparation for the HLM through their Permanent Missions in New York.
- vi. The Executive Director further indicated that the first meeting of the Advisory Committee on Sustainable Urbanization which was held on 2 December 2021, demonstrates the commitment of the President of the General Assembly to elevate the New Urban Agenda throughout the 76<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly not only during the HLM but also as part of the Global Forum on Migration and Development as well as the Summit on Biodiversity.
- vii. The Executive Director updated that upon invitation of the President of the General Assembly, she took part in an informal briefing of the General Assembly convened by the President of the General Assembly to discuss the HLM. She noted that Member States were well represented at that meeting and garnered significant interest from the attendees. In addition, the Executive Director had a series of meetings with the United Nations Secretariat in New York, UNDP, Global Communications, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, General Assembly and Conference Management, and the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and noted the full support of the UN system for the HLM, as urged by the Secretary-General. The Executive Director also met with the President of the General Assembly and the President of ECOSOC.
- viii. Furthermore, the Executive Director recalled Resolution A/RES/75/229 in which the General Assembly encouraged Member States to utilise the regional forums on sustainable development to provide regional input to the HLM. She indicated that UN-Habitat’s regional representatives have been working closely with Member States and the respective Regional Economic Commissions to make this happen. The process by which Member States prepare inputs for the HLM will help to elevate urban issues in the regions as well

as foster cooperation among regional networks of cities, association of professionals and Member States. The Executive Director encouraged all Member States to play an active role in the Regional Forums for Sustainable Urbanization and reiterated the full engagement of UN-Habitat's regional representatives to work on this with Member States.

- ix. The Executive Director informed that the outcome of the HLM and format will be determined by Member States and will address aspects of the New Urban Agenda in relation to events since the Habitat III Conference but could also include aspects related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate emergency, the Decade of Action, and Our Common Agenda.
- x. The Executive Director noted five emerging elements that may be considered by Member States if they so decide in considering outcomes of the HLM, as follows:
  - a) **The Decade of Action** - commitment of Member States to elevate the New Urban Agenda as a road map for accelerating the Paris Agreement and Decade of Action for Sustainable Development;
  - b) **Cities and Pandemics** - recognition of the role of cities in the COVID-19's response and contributing to spearheading the implementation of a healthy, just and sustainable national recovery;
  - c) **New Social Contract** – the alignment of the New Urban Agenda with Our Common Agenda on the future of multilateralism with the integration of health, housing, incomes, employment, education, and digital access.
  - d) **Climate Action** - strengthening of local government contributions to nationally determined commitments on climate mitigation and adaptation with strategic focus on green infrastructure and resilience of the urban poor.
  - e) **Peace and Security** - call for a global action plan on inclusive urban planning in countries in post-conflict and disaster situations, strengthening social cohesion through the provision of durable solutions.
- xi. The Executive Director concluded by inviting Member States to review the list of activities and events planned for 2022. She noted that UN-Habitat is committed to align the HLM strategically with other events prior to and after the HLM so as to enable Member States and partners accelerate the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and strengthen UN-Habitat's ability to carry out its mandate.
- xii. The Secretariat further highlighted the active role of the President of ECOSOC in the preparations towards the HLM, as a member of the Advisory Committee on Sustainable Urbanization. The Secretariat noted that the President of ECOSOC in consultation with his Bureau is expected to contribute to the review of the Quadrennial Report, particularly looking at the universal thematic issue of inequality and how the UN system supports Member States to implement the New Urban Agenda.

## 2. Discussions

**Following the briefing by the Executive Director, the discussions highlighted the following:**

- i. Some Member States enquired from the Secretariat on what is expected from Nairobi-based Permanent and Observer Missions in the preparations of and participation in the HLM and further requested more details on the activities being undertaken to engage Nairobi-based Permanent and Observer Missions in this respect;
- ii. Some Member States invited the Secretariat to provide more details on the meaning of “high-level meeting”, seeking clarification on the expected level of participation, Presidential or Ministerial. They further enquired on the timeline for receiving the invitations, should the invitations be extended to the highest level;
- iii. One Member State noted that the level of participation to the HLM should be at the discretion of Member States, emphasising that the participation of Head of States to a one-day meeting was unlikely;
- iv. One Member State requested the Secretariat to convey the comments and questions raised by New-York based Permanent and Observer Missions during the informal briefing of the General Assembly convened by the President of the General Assembly in November 2021;
- v. Some Member States reiterated their support to working closely with UN-Habitat to achieve its mandate as the assessment of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda is important;
- vi. One Member State asked whether the national reports on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda which will be submitted in the coming weeks will feed into the draft Quadrennial Report, considering that the Secretariat is already preparing the draft Report. That Member State further suggested that the discussions on the draft concept note on the HLM should also benefit from the Regional Forums for Sustainable Urbanization.
- vii. One Member State objected to the consideration of a negotiated outcome by the HLM and rather suggested the production of a Chair’s summary. That Member State requested to know if side-events may be organized in the margins of the HLM and enquired on the time management during the HLM, noting that the HLM is expected to be held for one day only as agreed upon by the General Assembly. That Member State invited the Secretariat to provide more clarity on the format and concept of the HLM.
- viii. One Member State expressed preference for the HLM to be convened in-person and further suggested that the outcome of the HLM be included in the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) Ministerial Declaration to create further momentum before the second session of the UN-Habitat Assembly to be held in June 2023.

- ix. One Member State suggested that should there be side-events to the HLM, such side-events should promote the eleventh session of the World Urban Forum (WUF 11) to be held in June 2022.

**In light of the views expressed by Member States, the Secretariat responded as follows:**

- i. The Secretariat encouraged all Member States to submit their national report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda because the reports will feed into the Regional Forums on Sustainable Development, the meeting of ECOSOC, and the HLM ;
- ii. With respect to the level of participation, the Secretariat encouraged Member States to participate in the HLM effectively in order to support the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. The Secretariat recalled that official communications and invitations for the HLM will come from the President of the General Assembly's office as he is the convener of the HLM.
- iii. The Secretariat noted that the modalities and format of the HLM are still under discussion between the President of the General Assembly and Member States.
- iv. The Secretariat further indicated that the President of the General Assembly will decide what type of outcome is the most appropriate for the HLM, noting that the General Assembly must pronounce itself on the matter of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. The Secretariat also noted that during the informal briefing of the General Assembly convened by the President of the General Assembly on 30 November 2021, the Executive Director presented several options with respect to the outcome document, as follows:
  - a) HLM could consider a negotiated document. There were, however, a few Member States who opposed that idea considering the limited time available for negotiations during a one-day meeting;
  - b) HLM could consider an outcome in the form of a statement document emanating from the President of the General Assembly;
  - c) HLM could consider an action plan document which will address what are the action plans to implement the New Urban Agenda as well as the resource mobilization to finance its implementation towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- v. The Secretariat further updated on additional issues which were raised by Member States during the informal briefing of the General Assembly held on 30 November 2021 as follows:
  - a) HLM should address the connection between urbanization and climate change and what this means for future cities.
  - b) HLM is appropriate to promote the New Urban Agenda and how it shall fit into the World Urban Forum 11.

- c) In light of the relevance of UN-Habitat's mandate with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic, the HLM should be an opportunity to rethink the function of cities and their link to social contracts.
  - d) HLM is an opportunity to highlight the challenges of housing, transport and mobility in terms of green recovery and green infrastructure and urban governance programmes.
  - e) HLM is necessary to serve as a booster for acceleration of sustainable development as the New Urban Agenda is omitted from all major UN resolutions
- vi. The Secretariat noted that the President of the General Assembly is looking into the possibility of convening an in-person HLM and will continue to monitor the situation with respect to the current COVID-19 which remains unpredictable. The organization of side-events will depend upon the global situation with respect to COVID-19. As soon as information is available, it would be communicated in a timely manner to Member States. The Secretariat further informed that for now there is no legislative decision mandating a change in the dates or the duration of the HLM.
- vii. The Secretariat further informed that the Executive Director has provided a draft of the Quadrennial Report to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. The draft report follows the structure of the New Urban Agenda by looking at what Member States have implemented over the past four years with the mechanisms that were promoted in the New Urban Agenda to achieve social equity, environmental protection, and economic prosperity.
- viii. The Secretariat also noted that, so far, it has received 23 national reports which provide the core data of the draft Quadrennial Report. The Secretariat also noted that the data for the Quadrennial Report has also been collected through an outreach to all UN agencies as part of the UN systemwide strategy on sustainable urban development, including also the Regional Economic Commissions. The Secretariat further encouraged Member States that have not yet done so to submit their national reports and indicated that these submissions will feed into preparatory process including the Regional Forums for Sustainable Development, the special meeting of ECOSOC, and the HLM.
- ix. The Secretariat reiterated that once the Quadrennial Report has been issued, the President of the General Assembly will develop a concept paper and the agenda for the HLM, based on the findings and trends recommended in the Quadrennial Report.
- x. The Secretariat recalled Resolution A/RES/75/224 mandating the HLM to encourage Member States to utilize the Regional Forums for Sustainable Development to discuss the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and to provide original input through the Regional Economic Commissions to the HLM. The Regional Economic Commissions are represented at the Advisory Committee on Sustainable Urbanization.
- xi. The Secretariat further emphasized that the outcome of the HLM shall carry forward in accelerating the sustainable urban development agenda in other UN events such as the World Urban Forum, other meetings of the 76<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly, the deliberations of the Second Committee of the General Assembly, the 27<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP27), and the second session of the UN-Habitat Assembly in June 2023.