

UN HABITAT

FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

**61ST REGULAR MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVES TO UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS
PROGRAMME
15 JUNE 2016**

**Item 3: Executive Director's Briefing to the
Committee of Permanent Representatives**

HSP/CPR/61/3

Agenda Item 3: Executive Director’s Briefing to the CPR

1. Introduction

There have been a number of important developments since the last meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR). In this briefing, I would like to focus on the following issues:

- Habitat III preparations;
- UN Chief Executives Board Joint Statement to Habitat III
- Update on Umoja; and
- Recent missions.

2. Habitat III

The last Habitat III regional meeting took place in Toluca, Mexico, from 18 to 20 April 2016. It was the last one of a series of Habitat III regional and thematic meetings which have been taking place worldwide since September 2015: Tel Aviv, Montreal, Cuenca, Jakarta, Abu Dhabi, Abuja, Mexico City, Prague, Barcelona, Pretoria and the last one in Toluca. More details on these activities and other substantively notable milestones are described below.

2.1. Thematic meeting on Informal Settlements in Pretoria, South Africa, on the 7th and 8th April.

This meeting explored approaches and strategies in the inter-related areas of land tenure security and housing, livelihoods, safety, and governance. Planning and policy interventions aimed at improving the living conditions of informal settlements dwellers face key challenges, such as tenure security, land availability, provision of infrastructure, services, and socio-economic facilities, availability of appropriate construction materials and building technologies, poverty, high unemployment, and vulnerability. This culminated in a [declaration](#) on informal settlements as a contribution to the New Urban Agenda.

2.2. Thematic meeting on Public spaces in Barcelona, Spain, on the 4th and 5th April.

The meeting on Public Spaces in Barcelona was an opportunity for discussions and inputs from global leaders and stakeholders in the field of urban development. In the [declaration](#), public spaces are recognized as critical for environmental sustainability. It promotes the use of public transportation, biking, and walking, to reduce pollution levels in cities. Inclusive design and management strategies can be adopted to ensure human development, building peaceful and democratic societies and promoting cultural diversity, all of which help shape the New Urban Agenda for a sustainable urban future.

2.3. Open-ended Informal Consultative Meetings, New York, USA, from 25th to 29th April.

Aligned with the vision of the preparatory process and in order for the Conference to be carried out in an inclusive, efficient, effective, and improved manner, the General Assembly, in its resolution [A/70/210](#), decided to organize five days of open-ended informal consultative meetings before the submission of the draft outcome in order to provide an opportunity for feedback on the conclusions of the Habitat III Policy Units and the Regional and Thematic meetings. The meeting participants included over 60 Policy Unit experts and representatives from co-lead organizations.

2.4. Publication of the Zero Draft of the New Urban Agenda on 6th May 2016.

The concerted efforts of the Habitat III Bureau, together with contributions in the form of declarations from both regional and thematic meetings, culminated in a “zero draft” of the New Urban Agenda. The

Habitat III zero draft was submitted on 6 May 2016 by the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee, and was discussed at the session of the informal intergovernmental negotiations and informal hearings with local authorities associations in May 2016. It will be discussed again by civil society organizations in June and July 2016, as decided by the General Assembly resolution [A/70/210](#).

2.5. Urban Breakfasts Series, New York, USA, on 31 March 2016, 21 April 2016 and 19 May 2016; Geneva, Switzerland, on 9 May 2016.

A series of monthly Urban Breakfasts are held by the Habitat III Secretariat in collaboration with various esteemed partners all over the world. The main goal of the Urban Breakfasts is to create a platform for knowledge-sharing and to encourage an informal discussion on the challenges of sustainable urban development as well as key priorities to take into account in the New Urban Agenda. The Urban Breakfasts series in New York (Urban Thursday Breakfast) are organized in collaboration with the Ford Foundation and are held every third Thursday of the month. The Urban Thursday Breakfast introduces and discusses the regional perspectives of urban development with the participation of key speakers from national governments, local authorities, academia, civil society, UN agencies and other stakeholders. Urban Thursday Breakfasts (New York) have discussed: urban development of Small Island States (March 2016), challenges of sustainable urban development in Europe (April 2016), and urban development in North America (May 2016). The Urban Breakfast series around the world concentrates on other cross-cutting topics related to urban development, as well. For example, a Breakfast in Geneva (9 May 2016) focused on humanitarian aid and human rights in the New Urban Agenda.

2.6. Habitat III Urban Walks, New York, USA, 15 May 2016 and 18 May 2016.

The Habitat III Urban Walks is an initiative launched by the Habitat III Secretariat in May 2016. The Habitat III Urban Walks are organized in collaboration with local partners with the goal of sharing the best practices of urban design and governance in New York City as well as showcasing how the New Urban Agenda can be translated to real life in cities. The Habitat III Urban Walks aim to initiate a discussion on urban planning and the challenges of sustainable urban development while demonstrating the successful planning tools to the attention of the audience. The Urban Walks are designed to attract various audiences, including local authorities, representatives of Member States, high-level officials, stakeholders and other interested parties. The first Urban Walk (15 May 2016) was organized in collaboration with Community Access, and focused on the topic of ‘Housing and Public Spaces: Historic New York City Neighborhood in Transition’, while demonstrating the achievements made in the Lower East Side, Manhattan. The Urban Walk on 18 May in collaboration with Huairou Commission introduced the topic of ‘Participatory Planning within Pressures of Inequality’ in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

2.7. Informal Hearings with Local Authorities Associations, New York, 16-17 May 2016.

Conforming to the decision of the General Assembly in its resolution A/70/210, the Informal Hearings with Local Authorities Associations were convened on 16 and 17 May 2016 with the participation of more than 130 local authorities’ representatives and over 30 elected mayors. This was the first time in the history of the United Nations when the consultative process recognizes and treats the sub-national governments as a specific consistency, providing a platform for a dialogue between national, regional and local government.

2.8. Informal Intergovernmental Meetings, New York, USA, from 18 to 20 May 2016.

The Informal Intergovernmental Meetings in New York were aligned with the General Assembly resolution A/70/210. The main objective of the first Informal Intergovernmental negotiations on the zero draft was to invite member states to provide general comments and views on the zero draft, receive

initial reactions and comments on other chapters of the draft as well as discuss the next steps, such as the modalities of the next informal intergovernmental negotiations taking place in June and July.

More information about the inter-sessional process, including all presentations and statements, can be found on the Habitat 3 website (https://www.habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/intersessional_process)

3. UN Chief Executives Board Joint Statement to Habitat III

At its first regular session for 2016 held in Vienna held on 27 and 28 April, the UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination endorsed a Joint Statement to Habitat III. Through this statement, the UN system has adopted ten guiding principles and ten key levers for transformative change towards sustainable urbanization. This statement constitutes the UN System's collective commitment to promote sustainable urbanization, through its programming, resources and expertise, and through engagement with its governing bodies.

The CEB also approved a paper on "Urbanization and Sustainable Development: A UN System Input to A New Urban Agenda", which included a proposal to use the World Urban Campaign as a multi-stakeholder platform for contributing to the implementation of that. UN-Habitat has led preparations of this paper and the CEB joint statement through a Working Group of the CEB High-Level Committee of Programmes, involving more than 20 UN agencies.

4. Update on Umoja

The UN-Secretariat as a whole continues to grapple with the challenges associated with the implementation of Umoja. Some signs of progress are apparent. Travel claims are now dealt with automatically in cases where no deviation occurs, resulting in a substantial improvement in processing times. Payments to vendors are working reasonably well. UN-Habitat has won the right to delegate authority on consultant appointments to regional offices, which should help considerably in reducing processing times. In cases where there are no quick solutions, UN-Habitat is working with other UN entities to provide project services.

There are a number of challenges which continue to be serious, on which UN-Habitat is engaging with the Department of Management in New York. UN-Habitat has still not received access rights to the HANA database, necessary to prepare reports. It has been a huge challenge to prepare the financial statement for 2016, even by the revised deadline of 31 May. We have been working very closely with UNON in this respect. Design issues inherent in Umoja continue to severely retard our work, leading to many frustrations with our partners. UN-Habitat continues to work closely with Nairobi entities and New York to attempt to overcome these challenges.

5. Missions

On 28 and 29 March, I visited Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, to attend the first Saudi Urban Forum, where I was joined by the Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs, H.E. Eng. Abdullatif Ben Abdulmalik Al-Ashaikh. The forum gathered an impressive number of urban stakeholders from Saudi Arabia and experts from around the globe to discuss the future of urban development in the country.

During my visit, I was also invited by the Ministry of Municipalities, led by Deputy Minister for Town Planning, Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Sheik, to review the Future Saudi Cities Programme, which has been under implementation for two years following the request made by the Ministry for UN-Habitat to support the urban development process in the country. Following this meeting, our team is currently engaged in a mid-term review of the programme, which will take stock of the first two years of our collaboration and realign the objectives and activities in light of lessons learnt and emerging challenges.

On 11 and 12 May, I travelled to Rabat, Morocco to attend the African Ministerial Forum on Housing

and Urban Development (AMFHUD), organized by the Government of Morocco in collaboration with UN-Habitat. Seventeen Ministers and twenty-six delegations attended this Forum, which addressed "*Urban Policies and Sustainable Development*" and provide a strong message of support by the African Ministers for the new urban agenda, through their adoption of the Rabat Declaration.

During my visit, I also had the opportunity to meet with several senior officials of the Moroccan government to discuss our continued partnership with Morocco, and to sign a Host Country Agreement which facilitates UN-Habitat's activities in the country for the next five years. I would like to thank the Government of Morocco, particularly H.E. Mr. Nabil Benabdallah, Minister of Housing and Urbanism, for the continued strong engagement with UN-Habitat.

On 23 and 24 May, I participated in the first-ever World Humanitarian Summit, held in Istanbul upon the invitation of the UN Secretary-General. At the Summit, UN-Habitat and 65 other organizations launched the Global Alliance on Urban Crises which aims to better support local authorities and communities facing or recovering from crises. UN-Habitat will seek to improve management of urban displacement as a humanitarian, development and human rights concern with a focus on the three-pronged approach (urban rules and regulations, urban planning and design, urban economy and municipal finance). During the Summit, I was also invited by the Mayor of Istanbul, Hon. Kadir Topbas, to attend events with Mayors present to discuss experiences by cities in responding to migration.

At the invitation of the Netherlands Presidency of the Council of the European Union, I was in Amsterdam on 30 May, to attend the Informal Meeting of EU Ministers Responsible for Urban Matters. At this meeting, the Ministers agree to establish the 'Pact of Amsterdam' for the EU Urban Agenda, which constitutes a very strong recognition in the role that urban areas play in pursuing the EU's development objectives and in solving many challenges across the EU. In a timely manner, it also recognizes the need for a deeper dialogue with Local Authorities. I took the opportunity of my participation in Amsterdam to encourage the European countries to bring their important urban experiences to Habitat III. I am grateful to the Government of the Netherlands for their leadership in preparing the EU Urban Agenda.

In April, the Deputy Executive Director visited Mozambique and Angola where she met with many senior government officials to further deepen the relationship we have with these two countries which are both long-standing partners of UN-Habitat. We are now in the processing of preparing full-fledged revised Habitat Country Programme Documents strengthen our support and cooperation in the next five years.

On 20 and 21 April, UN-Habitat convened an Expert Group Meeting, with the attendance of the DED, on *Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD): UN-Habitat Gender-Responsive Engagement in Post-Conflict Contexts*. The Meeting focused on the refinement of methodologies employed by UN-Habitat in three issue areas: housing & livelihoods, safety & security and spatial planning, in relation to gender equality in urban post-conflict contexts, and resulted in a communique of key messages and recommendations towards the World Humanitarian Summit and Habitat III.