



**Executive Board of the United Nations
Human Settlements Programme
Second session of 2020**

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Item 5 of the provisional agenda*

**Discussion and possible approval of the draft work
programme of the United Nations Human Settlements
Programme and the draft budget of the United Nations
Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation for 2021**

**Response by the United Nations Human Settlements
Programme to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic**

Report of the Executive Director

1. Across the globe, coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is threatening cities and communities, endangering not only public health, but also the economy and the fabric of society. COVID-19 is already having a deep, multidimensional impact and is expected to create the worst economic contraction in decades, with job losses already at an all-time high.
2. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) is responding to a growing volume of requests from both local and national governments to help them to prepare for, respond to and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Building on more than 40 years of urban experience, much of it in humanitarian situations, the organization is focusing on the city-level response to the crisis.
3. UN-Habitat is at the centre of helping cities to prepare for future waves of COVID-19 and equipping them to tackle the lasting social and economic consequences. The organization is particularly concerned about the effect of the pandemic on people living in poverty and communities which may be more vulnerable to the rapid changes and disruptions that the world has seen in recent months.
4. Following the declaration by the World Health Organization in March 2020 of the outbreak of COVID-19 as a global pandemic, UN-Habitat activated its emergency protocols and crisis response mechanisms. The UN-Habitat COVID-19 emergency plan called for urgent and coordinated measures across three pillars: staff safety and security, business continuity and emergency programmatic response and coordination.
5. UN-Habitat intensified efforts to mobilize new resources to deliver its COVID-19 programmatic response plan and increase support to cities and countries. At the same time, it reached out immediately to funding partners to minimize any disruption to its annual workplan by reprogramming resources and channelling energy to contribute to the response within the framework of the business continuity plan.
6. As at September 2020, a total of \$25 million had been mobilized to fund the programmatic response to COVID-19, reflecting 35 per cent of the total of \$72 million which had been identified as necessary to cover the immediate needs of 64 countries. The complete portfolio includes 73 projects, of which 55 are either active or have confirmed start dates before the end of 2020. Another 18 are in an active pipeline and awaiting confirmation of funding pledges. From rapid response to longer-term recovery, UN-Habitat has supported the overall response in more than 250 cities in 37 countries,

* HSP/EB.2020/19.

benefiting 6.8 million people. The organization has identified its work in slums and informal settlements as a key priority in response to COVID-19 and the majority of beneficiaries to date have been residents of slums and informal settlements.

7. The full report on the response by UN-Habitat to COVID-19 covers activities undertaken at the corporate, national and regional levels for the period from March to August 2020. It outlines key areas which are shaping the work of the organization as it relates to COVID-19 and the consequences of the global pandemic for longer-term work, learning from the current crisis and building back better cities for all.

8. The full report on UN-Habitat activities in response to COVID-19 can be accessed at <https://unhabitat.org/2020-second-session-of-the-executive-board>.
