



Executive Board of the United Nations
Human Settlements Programme
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Financial, budgetary and administrative matters

Update on the ongoing restructuring of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme

Report of the Executive Director

I. Introduction

1. In February 2018, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) launched a reform process to transform the governance and strategic and substantive focus of the Programme, underpinned by the following four pillars:

- (a) New governance architecture;
- (b) Development of a new strategic plan;
- (c) Internal change process;
- (d) Organizational restructuring.

2. The new governance architecture was established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 73/239 of 20 December 2018, and the first session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat Assembly) was held in Nairobi from 27 to 31 May 2019. During its first session, the UN-Habitat Assembly adopted a new strategic plan for the period 2020–2023 and the Programme initiated its internal change process.

3. UN-Habitat is actively engaged in the implementation of the fourth pillar, organizational restructuring, to better enable the fulfilment of its mandate to support Member States and development partners in their efforts to implement and monitor the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda at the local, national and subnational levels, to leave no one and no place behind.

II. Organizational structure and staffing

4. The new organizational structure of the headquarters of UN-Habitat was presented to the Executive Board at its resumed first session in November 2019. In January 2020, UN-Habitat staff were laterally reassigned to organizational units within the new structure. To date, largely as a consequence of limited financial resources, the exercise has been limited to staff serving at the headquarters of the Programme. The additional staffing capacity required to optimize the new structure will be finalized in line with operational exigencies, subject to available funds.

5. The United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation remains inadequately funded to support the level of staffing necessary to fully implement the organizational structure of UN-Habitat as approved by the Executive Board.

* HSP/EB.2020/19.

III. Regional architecture of UN-Habitat

A. Regional reform

6. Full implementation of the new organizational structure also involves the review and reform of the presence of UN-Habitat at locations away from headquarters (“the regional architecture”).

7. A key principle of regional reform is the optimization of the support provided by UN-Habitat to Member States in mobilizing for a decade of action, including through enhanced financing, and the strengthening of national implementation and the institutions necessary to achieve the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

8. A second guiding principle is the call by Member States for the overall reform of the United Nations development system to encourage integrative, effective and agile ways of working to ensure impact at the country and regional levels. The ultimate goal of restructuring the regional architecture is to enable the organization to best leverage its assets and deliver on its integrated mandate as part of “one coordinated United Nations”. In that respect, UN-Habitat will be guided, as appropriate, by the findings and conclusions of the reports of the Secretary-General to the United Nations Economic and Social Council on repositioning the United Nations development system.¹

9. A strategic regional presence will foster close linkage between the normative work of UN-Habitat and its operations in the field. To ensure the achievement of its mandate, the unique needs and context of each country and region must be recognized; in that regard, a diverse and flexible typology of presence at the country and regional levels will ensure that UN-Habitat identifies its priorities and has the workforce required to provide support that is sharply focused on the needs and expectations of host countries and well coordinated with its partners.

B. Criteria for typologies of presence

10. A clear and transparent process will be followed to determine the type of presence most appropriate to ensure the effective deployment of resources and capacities in support of country action for the implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in each country or region. Geographic locations of offices will likewise be determined by a clear and transparent process. Further details related to both the typology of presence and geographic locations will be articulated and communicated to the Executive Board once developed.

11. In that regard, the Executive Director wishes to bring to the attention of the Executive Board a recent directive, dated 7 November 2019, from Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chef de Cabinet, Executive Office of the Secretary-General, on procedures for the establishment of United Nations offices away from headquarters.

12. The process set out in the directive for the establishment of offices is as follows:

(a) The head of the relevant entity (in the present case, the Executive Director of UN-Habitat) should consult with and seek approval in principle from the Executive Office of the Secretary-General for the establishment of the proposed office. The initial consultation will provide an opportunity for consideration of institutional policy or political aspects, including any offer of financial and/or in-kind support from the prospective host government;

(b) Should such initial approval be provided by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, the technical, financial and legal aspects of the proposed sub-office, as well as the necessary legal instruments, may be discussed with the relevant offices and departments of the Secretariat;

(c) The Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations will provide legal assistance to the establishing entity in the negotiation of the host country or other office agreement with the host government, as well as any related financial and administrative agreements;

¹ The operational activities for development segment of the Economic and Social Council provides overall coordination and guidance to the United Nations development system to assess whether the objectives, priorities and strategies of the system respond adequately to the policies formulated by the General Assembly, including the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and General Assembly resolution 72/279 of 31 May 2018 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

(d) The establishing entity (in the present case, UN-Habitat) will be responsible for reporting to legislative bodies, including the General Assembly, as needed and deemed appropriate.
