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Normative and operational activities of UN-Habitat, including reporting on the programmatic activities of UN-Habitat in 2020 and the implementation of subprogrammes, flagship programmes and technical cooperation activities

Normative and operational activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme: the flagship programmes

Report of the Executive Director

Introduction

1. The present document highlights progress made with regard to the flagship programmes as critical instruments for advancing a more integrated approach with regard to the normative and operational activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) in line with decisions 2019/4 and 2020/2 of the Executive Board. It reviews the five flagship programmes: (a) "Inclusive, Vibrant Neighbourhoods and Communities"; (b) "People-Focused Smart Cities"; (c) "RISE-UP: Resilient Settlements for the Urban Poor"; (d) "Inclusive Cities: Enhancing the Positive Impact of Urban Migration"; and (e) "Sustainable Development Goal Cities" ("SDG Cities"). For each flagship programme, the report provides a short overview of the programme, outlines the strategy used and progress made, and sets out a way forward, based on current challenges and opportunities.

2. Launched at the tenth session of the World Urban Forum, held in Abu Dhabi in February 2020, the flagship programmes are key to delivering the UN-Habitat strategic plan for the period 2020–2023, with each programme strongly linked to different outcomes across the plan's domains of change. Because of those interlinkages, the programmes foster innovative, integrated approaches to programming. They are aimed at advancing each programme's contribution to global priorities such as urban regeneration, frontier technologies, climate change and migration and displacement, as well as localizing the Sustainable Goals through SDG Cities.

3. In conclusion, the report offers opportunities to the Executive Board of UN-Habitat to discuss how the flagship programmes can be used as an instrument to strengthen the integration of normative and operational work, to prioritize such work and to scale up its impact in line with the Board's mandate and the contributions it can make to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and other global agendas. The report takes into consideration further priorities proposed for the UN-Habitat work programme and budget for 2021.

* HSP/EB.2020/19.

I. Flagship programme 1: Inclusive, Vibrant Neighbourhoods and Communities

A. Overview of flagship programme 1

4. Seventy-five per cent of the world's cities are more unequal today than they were 20 years ago, with basic urban services, affordable housing and livelihood opportunities unevenly distributed across neighbourhoods and communities. Historic urban core areas are often neglected. Flagship programme 1 is aimed at transforming deprived areas and strategic locations of cities into connected, dynamic, diverse and vibrant neighbourhoods.

5. The programme will not only reduce inequalities but also yield economic, social and environmental benefits for the wider city and its hinterland, thus leaving no one and no place behind.

6. The programme addresses the need to establish and mainstream an inclusive and sustainable approach to urban regeneration that will lead to:

(a) **Social inclusion.** A human-rights-based approach is aimed at reducing poverty, avoiding and governing processes of gentrification and exclusion of vulnerable groups, addressing possible human rights violations (e.g., issues of evictions) and putting in place a strategy to avoid, mitigate and manage resettlement;

(b) **Shared economic prosperity.** Inclusive urban regeneration is aimed at ensuring socioeconomic diversity in the revitalized areas and benefiting the city as a whole, directing private investments to benefit the commons while expanding revenue streams for the city;

(c) **Physical functionality and environmental sustainability.** The approach addresses issues of connectivity and functionality with a citywide perspective, improves land-use efficiency and focuses on overall reduction of emissions through retrofitting, green technologies, well-designed densities and mixed uses that support walkability.

7. The programme is expected to achieve the following outcomes:

(a) Local governments are guided by global norms for urban regeneration which provide an integrated spatial approach, mainstream human rights, recognize gendered experiences of urban deprivation and foster inclusive and culturally sustainable economic development.

(b) Enabling institutional environments are created at the country and local levels for sustainable and contextually appropriate urban regeneration policies, strategies, plans, investment models, legal and financial frameworks and inclusive governance mechanisms that provide for the rights to participation and to an effective remedy for any breach of rights.

(c) Strategic initiatives build multi-stakeholder partnerships and promote community action.

Alignment with the strategic plan for the period 2020–2023

8. The programme contributes mainly to domain of change 1 (Reduced spatial inequality and poverty in communities across the urban–rural continuum) and its three outcomes: increased and equal access to basic services, sustainable mobility and public space; increased and secure access to land, and adequate and affordable housing; and effective settlement growth and regeneration. It also generates co-benefits for outcomes under other domains of change (e.g., 3.1 on reduced greenhouse gas emissions and improved air quality, and 3.2 on improved resource efficiency and protection of ecological assets).

B. Strategy of flagship programme 1

9. The programme is currently mapping countries and cities with a strategic interest in urban regeneration. The programme is aimed at providing an umbrella for ongoing urban regeneration interventions at the regional and country levels.

10. The programme builds upon different, existing tools, guidance documents and projects, including the participatory process, for example, slum upgrading, urban regeneration, public space and housing solutions, which can be applied in neglected neighbourhoods.

Partnership development

11. The programme is designed to build broad coalitions. Stakeholders include civil society organizations, academia and research institutes, national and local governments, non-governmental organizations, international organizations and the private sector.

12. That approach provides clear entry points for other entities of the United Nations system, at both the country and regional levels, in line with the United Nations system-wide strategy on sustainable urban development. Partnerships with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization are being pursued.

C. Progress of flagship programme 1

13. Since the launch of the programme at the tenth session of the World Urban Forum, taking into account limited means, the initial focus has been on improving in-house coordination of and support for urban regeneration initiatives at the global, regional and country levels; mapping ongoing regeneration initiatives; and supporting programme development of new urban regeneration initiatives (e.g., in Lagos and Abeokuta, Nigeria; Yangon, Myanmar; Cuba; and Kyrgyzstan).

14. The focus has also been on expanding the partnership networks with cities and Member States (including the Seoul Metropolitan Government; Cape Town, South Africa; and France).

D. Way forward for flagship programme 1

15. The external challenges and opportunities shown in table 1 have been identified and are to be addressed in order to move the flagship programme forward, including through a broader mobilization of the United Nations development system.

Table 1
External opportunities and challenges related to flagship programme 1

Opportunities	*Challenges*
• The programme can build on existing partnerships and respective experiences for the normative development of global guidelines, strategic approaches and tools for capacity development • The programme will mainstream an urban regeneration dimension into national urbanization policies, as well as the development of citywide strategies, based on profiling and gap analysis	• UN-Habitat has been engaging in various partnerships focusing on urban regeneration at the global, regional and country levels; however, the amount of knowledge generated has been limited • The varied urban regeneration initiatives from partners have been accompanied by limited coordination platforms • There has been a lack of comprehensive mainstreaming of urban regeneration into national and city-level development agendas • Local governments have limited capacity to engage with the private sector and civil society in urban regeneration processes, as well as limited understanding of financing mechanisms

16. The following internal challenges have been identified:

(a) Deprioritization in the work programme and budget for 2021 further limits the resources available to take this work forward, unless earmarked voluntary contributions are mobilized. The current staffing capacity and lack of seed funding already greatly limit the progress that can be made.

(b) Urban regeneration has the potential to create co-benefits against a wide variety of outcomes across the domains of change but requires a stronger normative framework within UN-Habitat to maximize and operationalize its integrative potential.

(c) Human resource constraints have also made it difficult to engage in existing global and regional coordination mechanisms.

17. There is high demand for urban regeneration, further supported by the focus on housing quality, neighbourhood design and public space in coronavirus disease (COVID-19) recovery strategies. In addition, urban regeneration, which focuses on the reuse of existing assets, is an essential element of Green New Deal recovery interventions.

18. The development of a global normative framework and guidance on urban regeneration is being prioritized with partners. Adjusting and integrating existing tools and services can leverage additional technical advisory services and programme development at the regional and country levels and provide a good return on investment.

19. If core or earmarked resources become available, the following phasing is being considered:

(a) **Years 1–4 (2020–2023):** Establish global normative frameworks for urban regeneration and demonstration of the approach through the implementation of strategic initiatives that build multi-stakeholder partnerships and community action in priority subregions globally.

(b) **Years 5–8 (2024–2027):** Build an enabling institutional environment for urban regeneration policies, legal and financial frameworks and inclusive governance mechanisms, and scale up implementation.

(c) **Years 9–10 (2028–2029):** Refine normative guidance, report on the impact of ongoing initiatives and further scale up implementation.

20. In the short term, pending further resourcing, the focus will be on (a) further internal awareness-raising on the integrative potential of urban regeneration approaches through the establishment of a cross-cutting community of practice, live learning on existing regeneration initiatives and the mapping of available expertise; and (b) formalization of agreements with key partners, focusing on developing the normative framework, mapping best practices and exploring the feasibility of local knowledge hubs led by partner organizations.

II. Flagship programme 2: People-Focused Smart Cities

A. Overview of flagship programme 2

21. The main objective of flagship programme 2 is to make urban digital transformation work for the benefit of all, driving sustainability, inclusivity and prosperity and the realization of human rights in urban areas. This programme enables UN-Habitat and its partners to make a contribution to a field that is often focused on technology and driven by industry. It is critical that smart city planning focus on solving specific sustainability problems, battling climate change, reducing poverty and increasing the participation of citizens.

22. UN-Habitat takes a human-rights-based approach that starts with identifying real challenges and priorities described by citizens, communities and urban residents.

23. The programme is expected to achieve the following outcomes:

(a) **Policy transformation**: Increased focus on and mainstreaming of people-centred, sustainable and inclusive digital transition as a critical policy topic in high-level political forums and global dialogues on smart cities;

(b) **Financing digital urban innovation**: Increased investment and financing for people-centred smart cities to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, with a specific focus on developing countries, small and medium-size cities and grass-roots urban communities;

(c) **Digital empowerment and capacity-building**: Enhanced capacity of governments at all levels to adopt a people-centred, privacy-enhancing and rights-preserving approach to digital technologies for inclusion and sustainable urban development in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Alignment with the strategic plan for the period 2020–2023

24. This programme contributes mainly to domain of change 2 (Enhanced shared prosperity of cities and regions) and outcome 2.3 (Expanded deployment of frontier technologies and innovations for urban development).

25. The programme will also help to create co-benefits for outcomes across all domains of change, primarily outcomes 1.1 (Increased and equal access to basic services, sustainable mobility and public space), 1.2 (Increased and secure access to land and adequate and affordable housing), 2.1 (Improved spatial connectivity and productivity of cities and regions), 3.2 (Improved resource efficiency and protection of ecological assets) and 4.3 (Enhanced resilience of the built environment and infrastructure).

B. Strategy of flagship programme 2

26. The programme acts as an umbrella for engagement by UN-Habitat at the global, regional and country levels on smart cities.

27. Taking into account that this is a new area of engagement for UN-Habitat, there is a strong focus on normative work to arrive at an overall definition of and guidance on people-centred smart cities, along with guidance on capacity assessment and development at the national and local levels, and on the development of tools.

28. The programme focuses on knowledge-sharing and advocacy though its engagement in global and regional networks, platforms and mechanisms such as the United for Smart Sustainable Cities initiative. Advocacy is needed to help ensure that voices from marginalized groups, including children, youth and older people, women in vulnerable situations and people with disabilities, as well as cities with fewer resources, are more strongly heard in global platforms, including the United for Smart Sustainable Cities initiative, the Open and Agile Smart Cities initiative and the Cities for Digital Rights coalition.

29. One key area of intervention for UN-Habitat is supporting national and local governments in their digital transitions. This requires a multilevel governance strategy and the building of skills and capabilities to develop, and effectively use, digital technologies in an ethical and inclusive way. UN-Habitat is seeking to support national and subnational governments in developing smart city strategies aligned with national urban policies.

30. Finally, significant financing must be mobilized for urban innovation projects that have a direct positive impact on the planet and on people's lives in cities, prioritizing developing countries and communities with less access to resources.

Partnership development

31. The programme's strategy is to build broad partnerships with Member States, United Nations entities, local government entities, private sector-based platforms and other non-State actors. So far, these include the International Telecommunication Union, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and other regional economic commissions, Open and Agile Smart Cities, Nordic Smart Cities, United for Smart Sustainable Cities, the Cities for Digital Rights coalition, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Smart Cities Network, the World Smart Sustainable Cities Organization, the World Economic Forum, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the G20 Global Smart Cities Alliance, the European Union, France, Smart Dubai, United Nations Technology Innovation Labs and Alianza Smart Latam.

32. Other partnerships are being explored with the PVBLIC Foundation, P3 Smart City Partners, HafenCity University Hamburg (Germany) and Viable Cities, the Swedish strategic innovation programme for smart and sustainable cities.

C. Progress of flagship programme 2

33. Since the launch of the programme at the tenth session of the World Urban Forum, taking into account limited means, the initial focus has been on improving in-house coordination, mapping ongoing initiatives, identifying good practices, expanding partnership networks and identifying potential resource mobilization opportunities.

34. Within the scope of available resources, the following initial activities were supported:

(a) Production of a draft toolkit on digital cities;

(b) Launch of a regional programme by UN-Habitat and ECE entitled "Smart sustainable cities for the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda";

(c) Limited support in response to requests received from counterparts in Egypt, Estonia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Myanmar and Nigeria;

(d) Collaboration with the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and the China country office to produce a smart city strategy for the Chengdu high-tech zone.

D. Way forward for flagship programme 2

35. The external challenges and opportunities that have been identified and are to be addressed in order to move the programme forward, including through a broader mobilization of the United Nations development system, are shown in table 2.

Table 2
External opportunities and challenges related to flagship programme 2

Opportunities	*Challenges*
• Existing partnerships and respective experiences can serve as building blocks for the normative development of global guidelines, strategic approaches and tools for capacity development. • Global guidance on people-focused smart cities can be facilitated through UN-Habitat governance mechanisms. • A smart cities dimension can be mainstreamed into national urbanization policies, along with the development of citywide smart cities strategies. • There is growing demand for technical support in Africa, Europe and Asia, including in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.	• UN-Habitat and its partners have been engaging in various initiatives focusing on smart cities at the global, regional and country levels, using different approaches. • There is a lack of comprehensive mainstreaming of a smart cities dimension in an integrated matter into national and city-level development agendas. • The application of frontier technologies at the city level has been driven by supply rather than demand.

36. The following internal challenges have been identified:

(a) As is the case for flagship programme 1, deprioritization in the work programme and budget for 2021 further limits the resources available to take this work forward, unless earmarked voluntary contributions are mobilized. The current staffing capacity and lack of seed funding already greatly limit the progress that can be made. There is a call to mainstream the work on frontier technologies.

(b) Mainstreaming of the subject can happen only once a normative dimension has been developed. Therefore, the priority should be developing global guidance (with partners).

(c) Human resource constraints have made it difficult to engage in existing global and regional coordination mechanisms.

37. In the short term, pending further resourcing, the focus will be on (a) further internal awareness-raising with regard to people-centred smart cities through web-based sessions with all staff members at the global, regional and country levels, a smart cities task team (community of practice) and targeted training for core staff; (b) development of global guidelines for people-centred smart cities and (c) expansion of partnerships.

38. Additional opportunities lie in the use of frontier technologies in monitoring the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and progress towards the urban dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals.

39. UN-Habitat is also maximizing synergies with its work on innovation, including through the development of the UN-Habitat Innovation Challenges initiative and collaboration with the Connected Places Catapult and its Urban Links Africa programme.

III. Flagship programme 3: RISE-UP: Resilient Settlements for the Urban Poor

A. Overview of flagship programme 3

40. The greatest and most urgent challenge today is to build climate resilience for the close to one billion urban poor residing in informal settlements. Governments face challenges in safeguarding their citizens and scaling investment in adaptation to the level of basic services and infrastructure in informal neighbourhoods.

41. Flagship programme 3 supports countries and cities with integrated technical assistance, building on lessons learned in slum upgrading and climate programmes. The programme combines community-led planning with national policy engagement to mobilize large-scale investment for adaptation and resilience for urban poor communities.

42. At the national level, the programme mainstreams pro-poor climate resilience in national policy and frameworks to integrate and prioritize community-based adaptation initiatives as part of national adaptation plans and nationally determined contributions. Advisory services for national

actors centre on reforming national urban policies to make climate processes and resources more relevant for, and accessible to, the urban poor.

Alignment with the strategic plan for the period 2020–2023

43. The programme contributes to domain of change 3, with a focus on outcome 3.3 (Effective adaptation of communities and infrastructure to climate change). It will create additional co-benefits for outcomes under all domains of change: outcome 1.1 (Increased and equal access to basic services, sustainable mobility and public space); outcome 1.2 (Increased and secure access to land and adequate and affordable housing); outcome 3.2 (Improved resource efficiency and protection of ecological assets); and outcome 4.3 (Enhanced resilience of the built environment and infrastructure).

B. Strategy of flagship programme 3

44. The programme is emerging as an umbrella initiative for combining, accelerating and improving a suite of ongoing and new initiatives. It will, in particular, build on years of work on participatory slum upgrading and urban resilience.

45. The programme can build on already well-developed normative work and strong partnerships. The review by UN-Habitat of national climate commitments under the Paris Agreement[1] highlighted the urban adaptation focus in countries. The ability to mobilize the required national support to attract climate finance depends largely on the ability to integrate urban and human settlements issues into national climate planning and commitments. UN-Habitat has already developed guidance on how to strengthen this.[2]

46. The programme embraces the funding-to-financing paradigm and will contribute to the Cities Investment Facility with a climate finance angle, including through the solidification of the approach and the development of methods and tools where there is currently a gap (e.g., bankability and project development).

Partnership development

47. The programme builds on the broad partnerships developed in the run-up to the Climate Action Summit convened by the Secretary-General in New York in September 2019, including with Member States, local government networks and other non-State actors.

48. The programme offers an opportunity for stronger strategic partnerships with key United Nations entities such as UNDP and UNEP.

C. Progress of flagship programme 3

49. Since the launch of the programme at the tenth session of the World Urban Forum, in close collaboration with development partners, national and local governments and the private sector, UN-Habitat has strengthened its advocacy for building climate resilience for the urban poor, including under the Global Centre on Adaptation[3] led by the Netherlands, and is one of four selected global programmes under the Cities Action Track.

50. The programme is the umbrella initiative for the engagement of UN-Habitat with the Adaptation Fund,[4] combining several existing operational and normative activities. Key accomplishments include the mobilization of $12 million for community-level adaptation infrastructure in Pakistan and Viet Nam, bringing the value of adaptation programmes to approximately $50 million, focusing on the following countries: Comoros, Fiji, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar, Malawi, Mongolia, Mozambique, Pakistan, Solomon Islands and Viet Nam. Meanwhile, concept notes have been approved for a total of approximately $81 million, focusing on the following countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Saint Lucia and Sudan.

51. The programme is the contribution of UN-Habitat to the global multi-partner initiative on building the climate resilience of the urban poor, launched by President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya at the Secretary General's Climate Action Summit in September 2019.

[1] See https://unhabitat.org/sustainable-urbanization-in-the-paris-agreement.

[2] See https://unhabitat.org/enhancing-nationally-determined-contributions-ndcs-through-urban-climate-action.

[3] See https://gca.org/global-commission-on-adaptation/action-tracks/cities.

[4] See HSP/EB.1/9.

D. Way forward for flagship programme 3

52. Even though climate adaptation is a priority for both UN-Habitat and the United Nations as a whole during the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals, the resources available to advance the flagship programme have been very limited. Opportunities and challenges are summarized in table 3.

Table 3
External opportunities and challenges related to flagship programme 3

Opportunities	*Challenges*
• Existing experience, tools and methodologies • Grant-funded community infrastructure development • Mature Adaptation Fund portfolio • Actual and potential partnerships between the programme, the initiative on building the climate resilience of the urban poor, and more than 20 leading actors • Making Cities Resilient 2030 initiative	• Reduction in human and financial resources and lack of specific expertise (e.g., with regard to climate finance) • More coordination needed between the engagement of UN-Habitat at the global, regional and country levels • Limited Programme-wide knowledge management and communication • Competition, overlap and gaps among tools

53. Further geographical prioritization will be pursued, focusing initially on the Asia-Pacific region and Africa and aimed at mobilizing large-scale technical assistance programmes, with a secondary focus on the Arab States and small island developing States.

54. Furthermore, two key actions are proposed to help scale up the flagship programme:

(a) **Institutionalizing the project identification and formulation process**: This requires resources and specialized skill sets to result in successful projects. A significant amount of the time of staff and specialized consultants is required for each proposal, in addition to the funds that may be raised through project formulation grants. A dedicated project development facility could act as an in-house service centre to better serve all regions and thematic areas. In addition, stronger linkages need to be built between the upstream normative work on climate change and the Adaptation Fund project portfolio;

(b) **Scaling up and changing roles from an implementing agency to a facilitating agency**: Moving forward, as UN-Habitat aims to achieve accreditation with the Green Climate Fund, the nature and scale of projects suggest that UN-Habitat may not be able to implement the full project outputs and activities alone, but that it could strengthen its role as facilitator, matching local adaptation needs with national and international funding priorities and mobilizing key partners to implement large projects. This requires the scaling up of project management capacities, procurement and contracting procedures and the ability of UN-Habitat to apply rigorous social and environmental safeguards in project implementation.

55. The programme will accelerate action in at least 100 cities during the decade of action and delivery. Three distinct phases have been identified:

(a) Phase 1, during the current strategic plan, will involve the setting up of the programme. A global hub needs to be established to lead on knowledge management and normative steering and to provide programme development support to regions and countries that lack capacity.

(b) Phase 2 will focus on proven concept replication and acceleration to encompass a larger number of countries. The pilot cities and countries will serve as references and multipliers, through proof-of-concept, city-to-city exchanges and the calibration of tools and capacity development approaches to bring the programme to scale. This should unlock further access to climate finance and integration into the policy work related to nationally determined contributions and national adaptation plans during the 2025 revision cycle.

(c) Phase 3, as currently planned, will involve the widespread replication of the programme's approach and lead ownership by partner countries and cities, with focused interventions by UN-Habitat and partners, and increased learning and exchange among peers.

IV. Flagship programme 4: Inclusive Cities: Enhancing the Positive Impact of Urban Migration

A. Overview of flagship programme 4

56. Migration is a global trend. Most migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons move to urban areas, looking for safety, increased livelihood opportunities and access to services. Urban migration, in many cases, has a positive impact on social and economic development not only for migrants and their families, but also, when well managed and planned, for cities and towns. While acknowledging that urban population growth, especially when it is rapid and unplanned, often puts stress on urban systems, flagship programme 4 will increase the capacity of government authorities to harness the positive impact of migration on cities and communities. The proposed interventions are aimed at advancing inclusive and sustainable urban development, with a specific focus on urban crisis and displacement contexts.

57. The programme's objective is to improve livelihoods and living conditions for migrants, displaced persons and local communities in vulnerable situations and to enhance social cohesion. By improving government capacity and applying participatory and area-based approaches, interventions will benefit both host communities and migrants. The programme builds upon human-rights-based, multilevel governance and multisectoral and multi-stakeholder approaches and strengthens the role of UN-Habitat in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

58. Under the overall objective of supporting local and national authorities in creating inclusive and non-discriminatory urban environments for all people, especially in situations where a rapid influx of people has led to an urban crisis, three outcomes were defined for the programme:

(a) **Outcome 1**: Strengthened urban and territorial systems to respond to rapid population movements, enabling social, cultural and economic development as a result of the inclusion of migrants in cities and reducing the root causes of migration and displacement;

(b) **Outcome 2**: Strengthened capacity of local authorities for advancing inclusive cities, benefiting both host and migrant communities;

(c) **Outcome 3**: Strengthened social cohesion between host communities and communities of migrants and displaced persons.

Alignment with the strategic plan for the period 2020–2023

59. While the programme is clearly linked to domain of change 4 (Effective urban crisis prevention and response) of the UN-Habitat strategic plan, strong linkages exist to outcomes under domains of change 1 and 2.

B. Strategy of flagship programme 4

60. The programme has a regional focus aimed at strengthening the country and multi-country capacity of UN-Habitat. It serves as an umbrella for global, regional and country projects in regions, countries and cities affected by migration and displacement, with demand-driven subsidiary projects implemented in cooperation with different partners and aligned with UN-Habitat corporate analysis of priority countries and regions, such as West Africa, the Arab States, and Latin America and the Caribbean. It supports programme development and implementation strategies, resource mobilization, capacity development activities and the adaptation or development of tools, building on existing materials, approaches and tested methodologies, in line with recent United Nations reform plans. Project implementation is led by regional and country offices.

61. Among other activities, the flagship programme headquarters team plays a crucial role in knowledge-sharing and including the urban dimension through its engagement in global and regional networks, platforms and mechanisms such as the High-level Panel on Internal Displacement, the United Nations Network on Migration, the Global Refugee Forum, the Global Forum on Migration and Development, the World Bank Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD) network and the Cities Alliance joint work programme on migration and cities. Under the flagship programme, global advocacy and outreach activities are supported and knowledge-sharing events organized.

Partnership development

62. The programme offers a platform for strengthening partnerships across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus at the global, regional, national and local levels, increasing the engagement of UN-Habitat in global platforms such as the United Nations Network on Migration, the Mayors Migration Council and the Global Alliance for Urban Crises, and regional mechanisms such as the regional United Nations development system issue-based coalition on human mobility in the Asia-Pacific region.

63. Priority strategic partnerships are being developed with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization on Migration (IOM) at the global, regional and country levels.

C. Progress of flagship programme 4

64. Since the launch of the programme at the tenth session of the World Urban Forum, the focus has been primarily on programme development in migration- and displacement-affected contexts in cooperation with different partners, strongly focusing on priority regions such as the Sahel in West Africa and the Andean countries in Latin America. This includes programmes in the Far North Region of Cameroon and in Burkina Faso, both conflict regions with large-scale displacement. Such programmes foster human security approaches and are designed to use urbanization strategies in humanitarian contexts.

65. Since March 2020, programmes supported under the flagship programme have included COVID-19 preparedness and response components, including mitigation of the social and economic impacts of the pandemic on urban migrants and displaced persons.

66. The Programme's active engagement in the United Nations Network on Migration, with UN-Habitat co-leading the working group on access to services, in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO), resulted in a comprehensive policy brief on "Enhancing access to services for migrants in the context of COVID-19 preparedness, prevention, and response and beyond".[5] By co-leading the thematic working group on urbanization and internal migration of the World Bank KNOMAD network, UN-Habitat helped to shape two policy briefs, focusing on East and West Africa.

67. The engagement in the United Nations Network on Migration has also led to a joint project proposal by WHO, ILO and UN-Habitat in Ethiopia for the United Nations multi-partner trust fund to support the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

68. In cooperation with partners, two new tools will soon be published under the flagship programme: one providing global guidance and recommendations for local authorities on the inclusion of migrants, and the other focusing on urban profiling in migration and displacement contexts in Turkey.

69. UN-Habitat, in cooperation with the Joint Internally Displaced Person Profiling Service and the International Institute for Environment and Development, has also submitted a paper to the High-level Panel on Internal Displacement, underlining the importance of urban interventions, multisectoral and spatial data collection and whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches.[6] In the report of the Secretary-General "Making migration work for all",[7] UN-Habitat, along with United Cities and Local Governments, emphasized the role of local authorities with regard to the inclusion of migrants in urban areas.

70. Outreach and advocacy activities for the programme's thematic areas included a session within the "Live Learning Experiences" series organized by United Cities and Local Governments, UN-Habitat and Metropolis; a United Nations Network on Migration listening session on migrants' access to services; and a webinar on human mobility in the urban-rural continuum in the time of COVID-19.[8]

[5] See https://migrationnetwork.un.org/sites/default/files/docs/final_network_wg_policy_brief_covid-19_and_access_to_services_1.pdf.

[6] See https://www.un.org/internal-displacement-panel/news/international-institute-environment-and-development-iied-joint-idp-profiling-service-jips-and.

[7] A/72/643.

[8] See http://urbanpolicyplatform.org/policy-legislation-and-governance-webinar-series.

D. Way forward for flagship programme 4

71. The flagship programme will continue to have a prioritized geographical focus where there is the greatest need and opportunity for UN-Habitat to add value to broader United Nations efforts in addressing urban migration and displacement challenges across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus (currently the Sahel and Andean countries).

72. Additional core resources or voluntary contributions are needed to initiate or support research and data collection, build further knowledge, adapt the most relevant tools (e.g., by addressing migration through national urban policies) and strengthen UN-Habitat engagement in global and regional networks. Seed funding is also important to scale up programme development support in line with demand. Different models need to be explored to position policy and programming capacity where the need is highest or where strategic partnerships can be developed (e.g., with UNHCR and IOM).

V. Flagship programme 5: Sustainable Development Goal Cities

A. Overview of flagship programme 5

73. The implementation of the New Urban Agenda allows for harnessing the transformative potential of sustainable urbanization and helping countries and cities to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. National and local urban policies, urban planning, revenue and governance systems and financing of public services and infrastructure are key instruments.

74. Flagship programme 5 offers a systematic way to support cities in contributing to the achievement of the Goals, effectively localizing them, through the following sequence:

(a) Using spatial and data analysis to identify and locate a city's greatest challenges and opportunities;

(b) Through strategic planning, engaging all communities and stakeholder groups to reach a common vision for 2030;

(c) Strengthening capacity in key areas such as inclusive governance, municipal revenue and planning;

(d) Identifying Sustainable Development Goal high-impact investments and ensuring their financing through blended finance arrangements;

(e) Measuring and recognizing achievement through United Nations SDG Cities certification.

75. The programme helps to leverage the work done by cities on their voluntary local reviews, providing a comparable measurement framework and process through which cities can accelerate achievement of the Goals and record continued improvement.

Alignment with the strategic plan for the period 2020–2023

76. The programme provides an umbrella for integrated delivery against the different outcomes across the strategic plan.

B. Strategy of flagship programme 5

77. The programme aims to achieve impact at scale, reaching 1,000 cities by:

(a) Making available to participant cities online tools in the areas of data and capacity strengthening, adapted for a variety of city types, and an investment facility that links investable Sustainable Development Goal impact initiatives with a national and global pool of investors;

(b) Supporting implementation through (i) national or city-based urban labs set up by relevant authorities and engaging local academia and professionals, which can adapt the tools to specific local contexts and provide technical support for their implementation; and (ii) regional support hubs with expertise in the SDG Cities tools, which will provide technical backstopping to participating cities and labs and facilitate regional experience sharing and training among groups of similar cities;

(c) Monitoring and recognizing achievement through SDG Cities certification;

(d) Managing and disseminating knowledge and lessons learned, further developing tools and ensuring quality control and global reporting through a global knowledge hub.

78. Start-up capital for the development of tools, building on the existing tools and normative products of UN-Habitat, is needed to put in place the necessary systems and guidance. Participating national and local authorities are responsible for establishing their own urban labs and supporting the costs of regional support hubs through subscription. United Nations Member States will be also invited to host regional support hubs and the global knowledge hub.

79. The programme further aims to achieve scale by co-developing and making available to partner entities tools that can run their own SDG Cities programmes, tailored to their constituent cities, while providing information as needed by the global knowledge hub for its global reporting and knowledge management function.

Partnership development

80. A broad coalition is essential for the success of the flagship programme and includes national authorities responsible for cities and urban development, international and national networks of cities, cities and subnational governments, and international investors, including major banks, financial institutions and funds, philanthropies and international financial institutions.

81. Strong partnership with urban project preparation capacity in other international organizations will provide opportunities to share experience and continually strengthen the quality of advisory capacity available for project preparation for investment in key urban sectors.

C. Progress of flagship programme 5

1. Development of the SDG Cities tools and instruments

82. Progress with regard to the development of tools and instruments to support the programme has been made in the following areas:

(a) **Data and analytics.** In July, UN-Habitat co-hosted with the city of Madrid a virtual global expert group meeting to initiate the preparation of a United Nations system-wide urban monitoring framework, for endorsement by the United Nations Statistical Commission. This could inform urban standards for United Nations country common assessments and cooperation frameworks, global guidelines for voluntary local reviews and the SDG Cities programme;

(b) **Online tools for sustainable urban management.** Key services in areas of inclusive governance, planning and revenue that provide diagnostics, capacity development and implementation support are being selected from the 2020 UN-Habitat catalogue of services for development into digital tools;

(c) **City investment facility**. Through its three tiers – portal, advisory and vehicle – the city investment facility links urban Sustainable Development Goal impact projects with a global network of investors committed to the Goals. A detailed concept note has been shared with potential donors.

2. Onboarding of cities

83. With the Regional Office for Africa, discussions are under way regarding the participation of six cities and surrounding territories in the United Republic of Tanzania, in partnership with UNDP, and cities in Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Madagascar, in partnership with the United Nations Global Sustainability Index Institute.

84. With the Regional Office for Arab States, the “Arab cities without informal settlements” programme is being initiated in collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank, with the identification of a first group of 12 cities in Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

85. According to the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Government of Mexico announced its intention to establish a SDG Cities centre through which cities in Mexico will engage. In Brazil, discussions are under way with the National Bank for Economic and Social Development to pilot the SDG Cities programme in various locations. The Office is exploring interest in Peru and the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

86. With the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, discussions are under way with the Government of China and Chinese national institutions about the potential of a SDG Cities pilot project and participation in China.

87. In North America, discussions are under way to launch a SDG Cities programme this year.

3. Expansion of partnership and collaborations

88. The following collaborators have expressed willingness to support mobilization for the programme: the cities of Madrid and Shanghai; the United Nations Global Sustainability Index Institute; the Dialogue Institute; the Global CEO Alliance; Global Development Incubator; and, Think City.

89. With regard to building city networks, discussions have been initiated and will continue this year with the Commonwealth Local Government Forum, the Cities Alliance, and United Cities and Local Governments.

90. Discussions have been initiated with the following potential additional users and promoters of the city investment facility: World Bank City Resilience Programme, World Resources Institute, International Finance Corporation, United Nations Capital Development Fund and Reall.

D. Way forward for flagship programme 5

91. The lack of availability of core resources makes the further development of the programme dependent on voluntary earmarked contributions, causing potential delays and a fragmented start-up.

92. The response to COVID-19 includes the establishment of Sustainable Development Goal and COVID-19 investment windows by major banks and financial institutions which could be linked with the programme. There is also an increased demand for remote support for cities in the wake of the pandemic.

93. The programme will continue to focus on putting in place the mechanisms to support and scale up the SDG Cities programme. This requires (a) building a broad consensus on the concept of SDG Cities certification; (b) developing relevant tools and instruments; (c) putting in place a governance mechanism; (d) developing strong institutional partnerships, including with United Cities and Local Governments, the Cities Alliance and various city networks; and (e) creating a resource base to take the work forward, mobilizing resources from a wide variety of public and private sector actors.

94. It is of particular importance to complete the United Nations system-wide urban monitoring framework and develop a toolkit for urban monitoring applied to a typology of cities and to put in place the city investment facility by further developing the web portal, incubating the Cities Investment Platform as a self-financed entity and establishing through partnerships vehicles to facilitate financial close.

95. In parallel, the work can continue to formally onboard pilot cities, clarifying the onboarding process, undertaking regional outreach and identifying potential hosts for regional support hubs.

VI. Conclusion

96. The five global flagship programmes have demonstrated great potential as key instruments for integration of the normative and operational work of UN-Habitat and alignment with global priorities as set out in the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals.

97. The engagement by the whole of UN-Habitat and the broad partnership model adopted by all flagship programmes has the potential to achieve impact at scale with a significant return on initial investment.

98. The flagship programmes as such offer important opportunities to put in practice the institutional reforms UN-Habitat has proposed, aligning the normative work of the Global Solutions Division with the advocacy, knowledge and data work of the External Relations, Strategy, Knowledge and Innovation Division while ensuring country-led implementation by the respective regional, subregional and country offices.

99. The limited resources, both core and unearmarked, have slowed the start-up phase of the flagship programmes. The decision to develop tailored strategies for each programme has created a pragmatic way forward, however, building on concrete opportunities and in line with the current prioritization in the proposed revised work programme and budget for 2021. As these are long-term initiatives, strategies are being adjusted in line with available resources. Flagship programmes 1 and 2 are focused on setting the ground for scaling up at a later stage when funding is available. Flagship programmes 3 and 4 are focused on programme development in priority subregions, generating knowledge and informing further normative work. Flagship programme 5 is aimed at putting in place the partnerships and systems needed to operate at scale as quickly as possible.

100. The flagship programmes allow the leveraging of core resources for normative work at scale. Nevertheless, additional resources are needed from both traditional and non-traditional donors to generate knowledge, scale up advocacy, feed into global and regional platforms, and position policy and programme development support closer to geographic priority areas and/or strategic partners.

101. There is a need, across the flagship programmes:

(a) To accelerate the consolidation of strategic partnerships with interested Member States, relevant United Nations entities and international financial institutions, local government networks and non-State actors;

(b) To explore institutional models for each flagship programme to ensure Programme-wide support to build more collaborative partnerships and tap into new resources;

(c) To ensure the mainstreaming of capacity development activities as a key instrument to scale up impact, in line with United Nations Habitat Assembly resolution 1/3 of 31 May 2019, on enhancing capacity-building for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the urban dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(d) To coordinate a resource-mobilization strategy across the flagship programmes, keeping in mind different governance and institutional models, to roll out and scale up the flagship programmes;

(e) To map and pursue integration with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.