



**Committee of Permanent Representatives to the
United Nations Human Settlements Programme**

**First open-ended meeting/
High-level midterm review**

Nairobi, 29 June–1 July 2021

Item 2 of the provisional agenda*

**Midterm review of the implementation of the
strategic plan of the United Nations Human
Settlements Programme for the period 2020–2023**

**Summary of the annual progress report for 2020 on the
implementation of the strategic plan of the United Nations
Human Settlements Programme for the period 2020–2023**

Note by the secretariat

1. In paragraph 3 of its resolution 1/1 (HSP/HA.1/Res.1), the United Nations Habitat Assembly of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) requested the Executive Director to report annually to Member States on progress achieved in the implementation of the strategic plan and the activities set out in the work programme of UN-Habitat. Accordingly, the secretariat has prepared its annual progress report for 2020 on the implementation of the strategic plan of UN-Habitat for the period 2020–2023, a summary of which is set out in the present note. (The full report is available at <https://unhabitat.org/governance/committee-of-permanent-representatives>.)
2. In line with requests from Member States, the report sets out progress towards planned results (outcome areas) against indicator targets for 2020. Results were gathered from headquarter offices, country offices and regional offices in a survey-based data-collection exercise undertaken in January and February 2021.
3. The report shows clearly that UN-Habitat is implementing initiatives that contribute to the fulfilment of the mandate of the organization by alleviating poverty and inequality, enhancing shared prosperity, strengthening climate action and preventing urban crisis. It also indicates that the Programme has been advancing its catalytic functions, creating more innovative urban solutions and ideas, working increasingly with strategic partners and delivering more tightly focused interventions.
4. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic disrupted the implementation of certain activities which had been planned in the work programme and budget for 2020, while other activities had to be adapted to address the immediate challenges posed by the pandemic. Implementation was further hindered by a lack of full funding for the approved work programme and the supporting budget. In that context, the present report provides information on some of the constraints that led to a number of the key targets set for 2020 not being fully met and certain outcome areas being prioritized through an internal review process. The lessons learned from that process have been incorporated into the planning for 2021 and the draft work programme for 2022.

* HSP/OECPR.2021/1.

5. In its first year, and notwithstanding the challenging context described above, the strategic plan for the period 2020–2023 proved to be a robust instrument for responding to the global pandemic and preparing human settlements for a sustainable recovery. UN-Habitat produced publications, tools, guidelines and technical materials through its earmarked funding and funds available at the country and regional levels to inform its global normative work, improving both its operational activities and its field presence.

6. The annual progress report also provides information on the design and launch of the UN-Habitat flagship programmes, which aim to strengthen the delivery capacity and efficiency of the strategic plan by consolidating initiatives to engage with Governments and UN-Habitat partners. The flagship programmes are intended to serve as vehicles to reinforce integration of UN-Habitat normative and operational work for greater efficiency and impact in the four domains of change of the strategic plan.

7. The strategic plan for the period 2020–2023 connects long-term results with global urban development agendas, based on a theory of change with four interlinked domains, which are mutually reinforcing. They are supported by several drivers to support the mandate and expertise of UN-Habitat, including policy and legislation, urban planning, governance and finance.

8. The report marks the first year of implementation of the strategic plan for the period 2020–2023. It notes a number of adjustments to the work programme and deliverables, based on an ongoing analysis of external conditions, and presents the results to date. It sets out the normative and operational activities of UN-Habitat with related results at the local, national, regional and global levels. Impact is illustrated through specific outcomes and stories for each of the four domains of change and the milestones achieved during the reporting period.

9. The implementation of the strategic plan has been supported by a new organizational structure, designed to strengthen implementation and facilitate a renewed approach to strategic partnerships, knowledge- and evidence-based interventions and the creation of innovative solutions.

10. The report notes that 6 of the 12 outcome areas of the strategic plan are relatively underfunded and therefore lagging behind in their implementation. As they are largely project-funded initiatives, achievement of the full strategic plan may rely on donor preferences and strategies. As a result, predictable and long-term funding remains a strategic priority for the organization to ensure a more balanced delivery of outputs and results.

11. Important deliverables include innovative financial mechanisms, particularly the Sustainable Development Goal Cities flagship initiative, which will accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at the local level. In addition, the Cities Investment Facility has been designed to serve as a clearing house for urban projects in close collaboration with large-scale investors from the public, private and multilateral sectors.

12. The annual progress report contains the following four sections:

(a) Section 1 presents an introduction that outlines the strategic priorities for 2020, an account of the response by UN-Habitat to the COVID-19 pandemic during the year, its focus on advancing urban issues within the United Nations system and the “centre of excellence” approach it pursues to achieve impact at scale.

(b) Section 2 sets out a detailed assessment of the progress and results achieved in each of the four domains of change, presenting transformative stories and demonstrating results.

(c) Section 3 illustrates the way in which UN-Habitat assumes a catalytic role to advance urban issues through strategic partnerships and provides a brief look ahead towards the strategic plan for 2021.

(d) Section 4 provides an overview of the financial performance of UN-Habitat in 2020.

13. As UN-Habitat reviews its achievements and challenges in the first year of the strategic plan for the period 2020–2023, the report offers recommendations to inform further implementation. Those include planning and setting targets commensurate with secured funding; strengthening the catalytic function of the organization; and refining the approach to establishing UN-Habitat as a centre of excellence. Finally, the report demonstrates the need to customize responses at the local, country and regional levels.