



**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

First open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme: high-level midterm review

Summary by the Chair

I. Introduction

1. The Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) held its first open-ended meeting for a high-level midterm review since the implementation of the new governance structure of the Programme mandated by General Assembly resolution 73/239 of December 2018, from 29 June to 1 July 2021. More than 300 participants took part in the meeting, including the President of the General Assembly of the United Nations, the President of the United Nations Habitat Assembly, and ministers and ambassadors and other representatives of Member States. The majority of participants attended the meeting online, while some members of the Bureau and chairs of regional groups attended the meeting in person at the headquarters of UN-Habitat.

2. The present summary by the Chair captures the proceedings of the meeting of the Committee for a high-level midterm review. The summary complements the report and the outcomes of the meeting, contained respectively in documents HSP/OECPR.2021/7 and HSP/OECPR.2021/8.

II. Agenda item 1

Opening of the meeting

3. At the first plenary meeting of the Committee, on Tuesday 29 June 2021, the Chair, Mr. Beyene Russom, Permanent Representative of Eritrea to UN-Habitat, called to order the first open-ended meeting for a high-level midterm review of the Committee, welcomed participants and representatives and invited high-level officials to deliver opening remarks.

A. Opening statements

4. In her opening statement, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi, expressed her appreciation to the Government of Kenya for extending the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccination programme to the United Nations community in Kenya and for the support provided by the Government to the United Nations in building the new COVID-19 hospital facility in Nairobi. She highlighted the importance of the mandate of UN-Habitat during the time of the pandemic, noting that cities were on the front lines of the fight against COVID-19.

5. In her opening remarks, the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, recalled the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide, in particular in urban areas. Noting that the mandate of UN-Habitat was more relevant than ever, she underscored the need to help cities and communities build back in a better, greener and fairer manner. Reaffirming her support for the strategic plan of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme for the period 2020–2023, she expressed her appreciation to the Bureau for its work to prepare for the high-level midterm review.

6. In his opening remarks, Mr. Volkan Bozkir, President of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, thanked the Executive Director for the invitation to the first open-ended meeting of the Committee for a high-level midterm review and expressed his gratitude to the Republic of Kenya for the hospitality extended and for hosting the United Nations Office at Nairobi. Commending the efforts of UN-Habitat to support the response of cities to the pandemic, he stressed the importance of land-based revenue in funding a green recovery and urged Member States to fund the strategic plan of UN-Habitat for the period 2020–2023. He emphasized the critical nature of the actions of local governments for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and called on global leaders to raise awareness of the significance of sustainable urbanization, with a specific focus on greening cities. Addressing the digital divide and investing in sustainable infrastructure were also important for the achievement of the Goals. The high-level meeting on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, to be convened during the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly, in 2022, would be a watershed moment for the international community to reaffirm its commitment to sustainable urbanization. He encouraged delegates to participate in the regional forums for sustainable development to be hosted by the respective Regional Economic Commissions in the months leading up to the high-level meeting.

7. Addressing the meeting in a video message, Ms. Martha Delgado, President of the United Nations Habitat Assembly, said that the high-level midterm review was a unique opportunity to reflect on the progress made in the work of UN-Habitat and on the potential adjustments to be made to the new reality on the ground. Emphasizing the importance of multilateralism in the fight against COVID-19, she stressed the need to enhance support for UN-Habitat in both its normative and operational work. She congratulated the Programme for taking a leading role in the global debate on the COVID-19 pandemic and for guiding cities in their recovery responses, which she said should be regional in nature and yet adapted to local conditions.

8. Ms. Farida Karoney, Cabinet Secretary for Lands and Physical Planning of Kenya, speaking on behalf of Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta, President of Kenya, said that the President welcomed the first high-level midterm review of the Committee as a sign of transformative progress in the governance of UN-Habitat. The meeting provided an opportunity to identify gaps and provide guidance for the implementation of the second phase of the strategic plan of UN-Habitat for the period 2020–2023. Noting that Kenya had continuously supported UN-Habitat through core contributions, she called on Member States to contribute to non-earmarked funding, also calling on the Secretary-General to increase the regular budget of the Programme. She noted that Kenya had submitted its first voluntary quadrennial report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and encouraged other Member States to do the same. She welcomed the planned dialogue on cities and pandemics as an important part of the agenda of the meeting. In particular, she took note of the report on progress in the implementation of UN-Habitat Assembly resolution 1/2 on the United Nations System-wide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements, adopted by the UN-Habitat Assembly at its first session in May 2019, acknowledging the importance of addressing urban crime. On behalf of the President of Kenya, the Cabinet Secretary officially opened the first open-ended meeting for a high-level midterm review of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

B. Organizational matters

9. The Chair briefed participants on the work conducted by the Bureau in preparation for the meeting and presented the organization of work.

C. Adoption of the agenda and the workplan for the first open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives for a high-level midterm review

10. The meeting adopted the agenda (document HSP/OECPR.2021/1) and the workplan for the first open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives for a high-level midterm review.

D. Opening statements by regional and political groups

1. Group of 77 and China

11. Ms. Agrina Mussa, Permanent Representative of Malawi, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group took note of the proposed outcomes of the meeting. Noting that the three governing bodies of UN-Habitat had clearly defined mandates, she said that the Committee played an important role in the governance and operations of UN-Habitat and in enhancing its effectiveness in order to achieve sustainable human settlements, urbanization and rural development. The Committee needed to be kept abreast of all developments taking place at UN-Habitat to effectively and efficiently perform its oversight mandate. She expressed concern with regard to any attempts to minimize or downplay the role of the Committee and said that the Group opposed any action that could weaken the nature and scope of the outcomes of the high-level midterm review. She commended the secretariat for the progress made in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and drew attention to the need to support developing countries, in particular countries in post-conflict contexts. The capacity-building and resource mobilization strategies of UN-Habitat were important in that regard. Resource mobilization in particular was critical in the light of the financial situation of UN-Habitat. She commended the Executive Director and her staff for the efficient organization of the meeting.

2. European Union

12. Ms. Katrin Hagemann, speaking on behalf of the European Union, its Member States, Serbia and Ukraine, noted the relevance of the continuous implementation of the New Urban Agenda and provided an overview of related actions being taken in the European Union. She noted the importance of addressing challenges and opportunities in rural areas, which were crucial for the development of urban areas. She highlighted the New Leipzig Charter, a framework that set principles for local approaches and multilevel governance for better quality of life in cities. The European Union had provided development cooperation to various partner countries and cities, including support for city-to-city partnerships. The European Union was committed to supporting the monitoring of the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals at the local level through voluntary local reviews.

3. Group of African States

13. Mr. Chol Ajongo, Permanent Representative of South Sudan, speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, expressed particular appreciation for the high-level participation at the meeting. While the Group supported innovative ways of conducting work during the pandemic, it would have been preferable for the draft outcomes of the meeting to be adopted by the Committee in person, given the potential for virtual negotiations to undermine the principles of equal participation. When agreeing to the current governance structure, the Group had highlighted that it had envisaged a platform for all Member States to deliberate and take decisions to strengthen the Programme. The Group took particular interest in the implementation of the resource mobilization strategy and urged Member States to continue to provide non-earmarked voluntary contributions in order to avoid UN-Habitat becoming a project-based organization. He took note of the progress report of the Executive Director on the implementation of resolutions and decisions adopted during the first session of the UN-Habitat Assembly, in particular given that two of those resolutions had been sponsored by the African Group, namely, resolution 1/2 on the United Nations System-Wide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements and resolution 1/5 on enhancing urban-rural linkages for sustainable urbanization and human settlements.

4. Group of Latin American and Caribbean States

14. Mr. Sebastian Nicolino, Deputy Permanent Representative of Argentina to UN-Habitat, speaking on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, said that the Group valued the meeting of the Committee. Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, workplans needed to be reviewed and redesigned, and the inclusion of an agenda item on the pandemic was therefore opportune. Recalling General Assembly resolution 75/224, in which the Assembly encouraged Member States to make voluntary contributions for the sustainability and predictability of financial resources, he said that the Group was aware of the financial limitations of the Programme and called on Member States to make their voluntary financial contributions.

5. Group of Western European and other States

15. Mr. Asif Choudhury, Deputy Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to UN-Habitat, speaking on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States, reaffirmed the support of the Group for the mandate of UN-Habitat and commended the efforts to align the Programme with the overall planning cycles of the United Nations and to contribute to common country analyses. He encouraged UN-Habitat to ensure that, in future, an external review of the strategic plan was conducted before a high-level midterm review of the Committee and said that it would have been preferable to conduct a working midterm review. Regarding the external evaluation of the implementation of the strategic plan envisioned for 2022, he requested that the evaluation be shared with the Executive Board in a timely manner. The Group welcomed the reflection on the role of UN-Habitat within the broader United Nations system. Certain agenda items under the midterm review were better adapted to an Executive Board meeting. He requested that, during the midterm review, sufficient time be allocated for substantive dialogue between Member States.

E. National opening statements

16. The representative of Oman reiterated the support of Oman for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and indicated that the Government of Oman had put in place initiatives and policies related to the Agenda.

17. The representative of Turkey highlighted the importance of the mandate of UN-Habitat and provided an overview of national efforts to provide safe and sufficient housing, indicating that Turkey was ready to share its expertise and knowledge with other countries facing similar issues. He recalled the recent visit of the Executive Director of UN-Habitat to Turkey and the nomination of Ms. Ermine Erdogan, the First Lady of Turkey, as a Champion of the Waste Wise Cities global programme.

18. The representative of Egypt said that his country aligned itself with the statements of the Group of 77 and China and the Group of African States. Stressing the need to fully respect the roles of the three governance bodies of UN-Habitat, he commended the work of UN-Habitat, in particular during the COVID-19 pandemic. Egypt had made its voluntary contribution for 2020 and urged other Member States to make their contributions. He thanked the UN-Habitat Regional Office for Arab States, based in Cairo, for its work in Egypt and in other Arab countries and reminded representatives that the city of Luxor would host World Cities Day on 31 October 2021.

19. The representative of Italy said that his country aligned itself with the statement of the Group of Western European and other States and that the Government of Italy had recently considered its contribution to UN-Habitat for 2021. Foreign ministers and development ministers of the G20 were meeting concurrently in Italy, where financing for local development was also being discussed. Italy noted that the city of Florence had recently submitted its voluntary local review, a demonstration of the country's commitment to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

20. The representative of Switzerland noted the support of Member States for the transformative change of UN-Habitat, both at its headquarters and in the field. He suggested that, in the future, an external review of the strategic plan should be done before the high-level midterm review of the Committee. Switzerland had supported different projects since the approval of the strategic plan of UN-Habitat for the period 2020–2023, contributing up to \$20 million. The representative stressed the untapped potential of the role of UN-Habitat in the policy area of sustainable urban development and welcomed the creation of the taskforce on the future of cities. Switzerland was confident that the midterm review presented an opportunity for UN-Habitat to regain the trust of Member States with regard to further funding. UN-Habitat should reassess its subprogrammes to align with the funds available. The presentation of a more focused programme of work to the Executive Board would be welcome.

21. The representative of the United States of America said that his country aligned itself with the statement delivered by the United Kingdom on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States. The lack of engagement of Member States in the preparation of the Committee meeting was concerning. He requested that, in the future, Committee meetings be prepared in a transparent and consultative manner. Executive Board meetings could have been an avenue for consultation in preparation for the high-level midterm review of the Committee. The midterm review should assess the organization's success in the implementation of its work programme, as guided by UN-Habitat Assembly decisions, and of the strategic plan for the period 2020–2023. Representatives at the meeting should provide guidance to the Executive Director and the secretariat on the way forward in the light of programmatic and budget shortfalls.

22. The national statements below were delivered during the third plenary meeting on Wednesday, 30 June 2021.
23. The representative of Botswana said that Botswana aligned itself with the statements of the Group of 77 and China and the Group of African States. He commended the Executive Director and her team on the progress made in the implementation of the strategic plan of UN-Habitat for the period 2020–2023. He recalled the memorandum of understanding signed with UN-Habitat in December 2020 and shared the country’s appreciation of the support received from the UN-Habitat Regional Office for Africa. Botswana was committed to submitting a midterm report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda by the end of July 2021.
24. The representative of Malawi said that his country aligned itself with the statements of the Group of 77 and China and the Group of African States. He commended UN-Habitat on the progress made in the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the UN-Habitat Assembly at its first session and said that Malawi had submitted its report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Malawi was committed to maintaining its contribution to non-earmarked funding. In Malawi, projects had been implemented in relation to green cities, resilience to climate issues and upgrading slums. He expressed reservations with regard to referring to the present high-level midterm review as a hybrid meeting and requested that the meeting be re-qualified as “online” or “virtual”. Online or virtual meeting formats might not be optimal for effective and equal engagement by Member States in negotiations.
25. The representative of Colombia said that negotiations on the substantive outcomes of the meeting should be maintained even if meetings were conducted online.
26. The representative of Costa Rica expressed support for the statement of Colombia and expressed a wish to continue discussions regardless of the format of meetings.
27. The representative of Switzerland expressed support for the position of Colombia and Costa Rica and appreciation for the engagement of delegations attending the meeting online.
28. The representative of Algeria endorsed the statements made by the Group of African States and the Group of 77 and China and expressed support for the activities of UN-Habitat. He echoed the statement of Malawi with regard to meeting formats, while recognizing the flexibility provided by virtual formats, which enabled Member States to attend meetings under the current circumstances. He raised concerns with regard to the quality of the negotiations conducted in an online format and requested that those concerns be noted on the record.
29. The representative of South Sudan, speaking also on behalf of the Group of African States, concurred with the statements of Algeria and Malawi with regard to virtual negotiations and reiterated the position of the Group of African States with regard to online meetings, stressing the connection challenges faced by some Member States owing to technical constraints.
30. The representative of Egypt said that his country aligned itself with the statements made by the Group of African States, the Group of 77 and China, Algeria, Malawi and South Sudan. He stressed the difficulties and challenges inherent to the conduct of online negotiations and said that hybrid formats should only be used until in-person meetings could once again be convened.
31. The representative of Zimbabwe said that Zimbabwe aligned itself with the statements made by the Group of African States, Algeria, Egypt and Malawi, stressing that virtual negotiations on substantive matters might disadvantage countries facing connection challenges.
32. The Chair took note of the concerns raised by representatives with regard to the format of the meeting and requested flexibility from Member States, given the circumstances, to allow for consultations to take place online. There was no objection to the proposal by the Chair.
33. Opening, regional and some national statements are available online at <https://unhabitat.org/High-level-mid-term-review-meeting-of-the-Committee-of-Permanent-Representatives-to-UN-Habitat> by clicking on the “Statements” icon.

III. Agenda item 2

Midterm review of the implementation of the strategic plan of UN-Habitat for the period 2020–2023

A. Presentation by UN-Habitat

34. The Executive Director, providing an overview of the results achieved in the implementation of the first two years of the strategic plan of UN-Habitat for the period 2020–2023, emphasized that the integrated implementation of the strategic plan had been constrained by uneven funding of the four domains of change and by the continuous lack of core funding. As a result, the ability of UN-Habitat to fulfil its mandate as the leading global body for normative work on human settlements was impaired. The Executive Director proposed a recalibration of the strategic plan, taking into account the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Implementation of the UN-Habitat strategic plan for the period 2020–2023 during 2020 and 2021: background and main results

35. A representative of the secretariat presented an overview of the results achieved during the first two years of the implementation of the strategic plan of UN-Habitat for the period 2020–2023, which had been endorsed by the Committee of Permanent Representatives in 2018 and approved by the UN-Habitat Assembly at its first session in 2019. The plan was grounded in a rights-based approach and a commitment to leave no one and no place behind, and underscored the importance of delivering results and impact through an integrated approach to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 11, and the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Institutional reforms, such as the reworking of the organizational structure of UN-Habitat, along with a recognition of the catalytic function of the Programme, enhanced strategic partnerships and the new regional architecture had been crucial in leveraging impact. The annual report on the strategic plan for 2020 provided an update on the progress made towards the planned results, measured against their indicator targets for 2020 at the country, regional and global levels.

2. An integrated approach to implementing the strategic plan of UN-Habitat for the period 2020–2023

36. The integrated approach, which aimed to maximize impact in the implementation of the strategic plan and in the realization of the global urban development agenda, encompassed the four domains of change and the five flagship programmes. The domains of change were being implemented in an interconnected manner to optimize resources and results, while the five cross-cutting global flagship programmes integrated the normative and operational work of UN-Habitat to bring about transformative change in cities and human settlements.

37. Although, owing to insufficient funding, the flagship programmes had not progressed as anticipated, the potential remained to spur multidimensional and sustainable change through the strong, integrated approach. An analysis of projects approved in 2021 showed a high level of integration in the portfolio of projects. The analysis also showed an imbalance between the global normative and operational work, which was partly attributable to uneven funding. Opportunities to further strengthen integration in the project portfolio were being sought, including in the balance between normative and operational work.

3. Financial position and implications for implementation

38. With regard to the financial status of UN-Habitat, \$193.7 million had been mobilized, or 76.6 per cent of projected income. While regular budget allocations had remained constant, earmarked contributions had increased significantly, by 49.7 per cent. Non-earmarked contributions for core activities were low, at 26 per cent of the annual target income of \$4.9 million for 2021. Efforts to increase core contributions continued and austerity measures had been implemented to ensure that core expenditure did not exceed income projections and acquisition.

39. With regard to financial performance by domain of change, significant variations in funding affected the balanced implementation of the strategic plan. While income acquired for domain of change 1, “spatial inequality and poverty”, and domain of change 4, “urban crisis prevention and response”, had almost met the funding target, income for domain of change 3, “climate action and

urban environment”, was relatively low, and income for domain of change 2, “prosperity for cities and regions”, was extremely low.

40. Underfunding affected staffing and reduced the capacity of the organization to fully deliver and meet demands at all levels.

4. Proposals for the recalibration of the strategic plan

41. Despite the challenges encountered, the strategic plan for the period 2020–2023 remained relevant, alive and fit for purpose. However, it was critical to recalibrate areas of work to rebalance investments and better respond to current and future demands. Three lenses were proposed to inform the consideration by Member States of the recalibration of the strategic plan:

- (a) Responding to new vulnerabilities and risks in cities;
- (b) Preparing cities in terms of function and form to address potential risks and hazards and adapting to the future in terms of resilience and climate change;
- (c) Creating conditions for long-term social and economic city recovery.

5. Potential areas for further support and development

42. Key areas of development had been identified to support the implementation of the strategic plan up to 2023, including the strengthening of data systems to enhance analytical capacities, the development of financial systems to better support facility investments in cities, and diversification of funding. Recalibrating the strategic plan for the period 2020–2023 was expected to create an enabling environment for a green and just long-term socioeconomic recovery, which would require additional, different, and flexible funding across the portfolio and priorities.

43. The following outcomes were proposed for the consideration of Member States as part of the midterm review of the plan:

- (a) Review of the strategic plan as a document which remained relevant and valuable, providing a framework for recovery from the pandemic and a road map towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;
- (b) Three lenses, focused on new vulnerabilities, resilience, and sustainable recovery, to inform decisions and advise the Executive Board on any needed review of the strategic plan and its implementation;
- (c) Consideration of the need for additional funding, both earmarked and flexible, to support the implementation of work in priority areas identified by the Committee of Permanent Representatives;
- (d) Support for initiatives to further strengthen an integrated approach for implementing the strategic plan and systems for monitoring progress.

B. Discussions

44. The representative of Malaysia said that Malaysia supported efforts by UN-Habitat to develop innovative approaches to diversifying funding and developing cities for all. The country had organized the Malaysian Urban Forum and was completing voluntary local reviews.

45. The representative of Costa Rica expressed appreciation for the efficient planning of the meeting. He encouraged UN-Habitat to strengthen the four pillars of the strategic plan and expressed support for the innovative and integrated approach adopted in the flagship programmes. He encouraged UN-Habitat to also strengthen programming at the regional level and recognized the inclusive and extensive work done in the Latin American region.

46. The representative of Serbia, recognizing that UN-Habitat had identified areas where the Programme added value, said that more details would be appreciated on concrete measures to tackle the thematic areas of inequality and climate change. He reiterated the offer made by his country to open a national office in Belgrade. He expressed concern regarding the poor attendance at the present meeting.

47. The representative of Argentina said that his country was working to implement government action for a better and more sustainable future, where all people enjoy equal rights and access to the benefits and opportunities that cities could offer, and where the international community reconsiders urban systems and the physical form of urban spaces as a means to achieve that shared goal. Regulated

planning, construction, development, management and improvement of urban areas through national urban policies, legislation and regulations was required to enable development and improve quality of life. Sustainable, integrated and inclusive development required coordination and the institutional articulation of national, provincial and local territorial planning strategies.

48. The representative of Brazil welcomed the recalibration of the UN-Habitat strategic plan through the three lenses proposed. He said that Brazil aligned itself with the statement of Serbia regarding the need for high-level attendance at the present meeting. He reiterated his country's strong support for UN-Habitat and the Committee and recalled the critical role played by the Programme in the global South.

49. The representative of Zimbabwe said that her country aligned itself with the statement of the Group of African States and the Group of 77 and China, and called for enhanced financial support for UN-Habitat in order to ensure that the Programme was present where it was needed. She requested that UN-Habitat ensure geographical balance in staffing.

50. The representative of Switzerland expressed appreciation for the presentation delivered by the Secretariat and highlighted the need for more time to be dedicated to substantive discussions during Committee meetings. While Switzerland concurred that the strategic plan was robust and supported the "three lenses" approach as a useful tool that could guide the programme of work, he asked UN-Habitat to clarify the lens focusing on "new vulnerabilities and risks in cities". He suggested that the three lenses approach be applied during the preparation of the next programme of work for 2022, to be presented in more detail during the next session of the Executive Board.

51. The representative of Kenya said that her country aligned itself with the statements of the Group of African States and the Group of 77 and China and supported the UN-Habitat strategic plan as a valuable and relevant road map towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. She recognized the success of the resource mobilization strategy, as shown in the increase in the number of donors, and urged UN-Habitat to continue seeking additional funding sources. She expressed concern with regard to the frozen staff positions resulting from austerity measures.

52. The representative of Colombia said that her country recognized the relevance of the mandate of UN-Habitat and invited UN-Habitat to further translate its work into policies and to improve South-South collaboration.

53. The representative of Germany said that her country aligned itself with the statements of the Group of Western European and other States and of the European Union. She invited UN-Habitat to comprehensively map implementation, successes and gaps in the future to capture lessons learned, and to map the impact of limited resources on the implementation of the strategic plan to explore how the situation could be improved over the next two years. The high-level midterm review could be aligned with the preparation of the independent external midterm review of the strategic plan, which would only be available in 2022. The Committee should use the lessons learned to plan the next cycle of Committee meetings.

54. The representative of Egypt emphasized the importance of highlighting the progress made in the implementation of the strategic plan and the need to shed light on success stories and best practices. He expressed the hope that there would be an improvement in the financial situation of UN-Habitat in the coming year to ensure the full implementation of the strategic plan as adopted by the UN-Habitat Assembly in May 2019 and called for its full implementation despite the challenges faced by the Programme.

55. Thanking representatives for their statements and guidance, the Executive Director said that UN-Habitat recognized the role of partnerships with Member States, through common country analyses, in the local implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. She reiterated that the strategic plan was still relevant and said that it had been prepared using an integrated approach, which would continue to be promoted when addressing sustainable urbanization. Responding to a question, she said that although vulnerabilities were not new, the way they were presented was new, and overlapping vulnerabilities had created hotspots in cities. The proposed "three lenses" methodology would be used to adjust normative and programmatic support, which meant providing targeted support to mitigate emergency challenges and addressing the underlying causes of vulnerabilities.

C. Conclusions

56. The Committee of Permanent Representatives:

(a) Took note of the report of the Executive Director on the midterm review of the implementation of the strategic plan of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme for the period 2020–2023 (HSP/OECPR.2021/2), the note by the secretariat on 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 (HSP/OECPR.2021/INF/2), and the annual progress report for 2020 on the implementation of the strategic plan of UN-Habitat for the period 2020–2023;

(b) Took note of the briefing of the Executive Director on the midterm review of the implementation of the strategic plan of UN-Habitat for the period 2020–2023;

(c) Adopted recommendation 2021/2 on the implementation of resolution 1/1 on the United Nations Human Settlements Programme strategic plan for the period 2020–2023, as set out in document HSP/OECPR.2021/8.

IV. Agenda item 3

Progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda

57. At its second plenary meeting, on the afternoon of Tuesday, 29 June 2021, the Committee considered agenda item 3, entitled “Progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda”.

A. Presentation by UN-Habitat

58. The Executive Director briefed the Committee on sub-item 3 (a), the report of the Executive Director on an update on the preparation of the quadrennial report of the Secretary-General on progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (HSP/OECPR.2021/3), and on sub-item 3 (b), the report of the Executive Director on the implementation of the ministerial declaration adopted by the UN-Habitat Assembly at its first session (HSP/OECPR.2021/INF/3) and the ministerial declaration of the UN-Habitat Assembly at its first session (HSP/HA.1/HLS.1). As a background document for the discussion of sub-item 3 (c), the Executive Director drew attention to General Assembly resolution 75/224 on the implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations Conferences on Human Settlements and on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme. She noted that the Secretary-General had requested a report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda every four years and stressed the importance of a comprehensive and inclusive reporting mechanism.

1. Preparation of the quadrennial report of the Secretary-General on progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda

59. The representative of the secretariat recalled that the first report of the Secretary-General on progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda had been produced in 2018 and submitted the same year to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council. Although unexpected challenges and opportunities had emerged since the first report had been released in 2018, action to implement the main recommendations of that report, which focused on creating an incremental and inclusive reporting system and reinforcing the United Nations system-wide coordination mechanism for monitoring and reporting, had advanced steadily. UN-Habitat had developed several mechanisms to follow up, report on and strengthen the review of the New Urban Agenda, and encouraged Member States to submit their national reports in preparation for the second quadrennial report.

60. The Executive Director reaffirmed the commitment of UN-Habitat to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and emphasized its universality and the commitments of Member States on the issue of sustainable urban development. The New Urban Agenda was an accelerator for addressing the main challenges associated with Sustainable Development Goal 11 on cities and human settlements, and played a role in the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.

61. The New Urban Agenda would be implemented through a multilevel and integrated approach that would incorporate the contributions of all Member States, different tiers of government and other stakeholders and partners. The New Urban Agenda was linked to the UN-Habitat strategic plan for the period 2020–2023 and its implementation.

62. The New Urban Agenda took a people-centred, participatory approach and the reporting guidelines developed by UN-Habitat highlighted the importance of local governments in following up on the commitments of Member States.

63. The first quadrennial report on progress on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda had included information on work conducted in collaboration with more than 23 United Nations entities, 5 regional commissions and 30 partners, which had also resulted in more than 12 United Nations entities adopting strategies for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. A key recommendation was to implement a user-friendly reporting platform using participatory data.

64. Work had begun on the second quadrennial report, due in 2022, and, in that regard, the contributions of Member States, regional and subregional parties, major groups and other stakeholders would be important. Several reporting mechanisms had been prepared, including a monitoring process that drew on indicators and data from the 2030 Agenda, reports submitted by Member States, national cities data and disaggregated data sets.

65. In response to the recommendations of the first quadrennial report, UN-Habitat had developed the Urban Agenda Platform, the Urban Indicators Programme and the Global Monitoring Framework for the New Urban Agenda to harmonize reporting with other development agendas.

66. UN-Habitat urged Member States to enhance support for data monitoring, collection, and analysis systems, and to develop inclusive measures at the subnational and local levels to serve as a catalyst for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Voluntary national and subnational reports should be submitted to the Urban Agenda Platform, including complementary reports prepared by local authorities and other stakeholders.

67. There were some hindrances to the preparation of the quadrennial report. Only 14 Member States had submitted their reports so far and 16 Member States were currently drafting them. Overall, there was low institutional, policy and financial capacity in many countries for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. UN-Habitat stood ready to support Member States requiring further guidance. The timely submission of reports would enable UN-Habitat to strengthen the impact and influence of the New Urban Agenda.

2. Implementation of the ministerial declaration adopted by the United Nations Habitat Assembly at its first session

68. Progress had been made on many of the commitments of the ministerial declaration despite the disruptive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Executive Director encouraged Member States to build capacity for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, deploy additional resources to implement the action points of the ministerial declaration, and build appropriate governance and institutional structures that would withstand current and future threats.

69. UN-Habitat continued to work with Member States, United Nations entities and other stakeholders in the implementation of the 10 commitments made by ministers at the first session of the UN-Habitat Assembly in 2019.

70. In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Member States had adopted significant response measures related to housing needs, policy development, the protection of vulnerable groups, the development of innovative solutions and the deployment of additional resources.

71. In addition, mobilization and advocacy efforts at all levels had raised the level of engagement of Member States and a wide range of partners during Urban October, World Cities Day, World Habitat Day, and at the launch of *World Cities Report 2020: the Value of Sustainable Urbanization*.

3. High-level meeting to assess progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda

72. The Executive Director recalled that the high-level meeting on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda was mandated by General Assembly resolution 75/224 of December 2020 and would take place in 2022 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The Executive Director said that the quadrennial report of the Secretary-General on progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda would be presented in February 2022 and would be the main input of the high-level meeting.

73. The tentative date of the high-level meeting was 28 April 2022. The date would be confirmed in September 2021 by the President of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly.
74. The Executive Director said that the meeting came at a critical juncture. Fourteen Member States had submitted their national reports on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, while few governments had included urban issues in their voluntary national reviews. The meeting would present an opportunity to take stock of the progress made in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, while the eleventh session of the World Urban Forum in June 2022 would constitute an opportunity to brief Member States on the outcomes of the high-level meeting.
75. The regional component of the preparatory process would provide vital input leading up to the high-level meeting in 2022. The Executive Director strongly encouraged representatives to participate in the regional forums for sustainable development that would be hosted by the regional economic commissions in the months leading up to the high-level meeting. The high-level meeting would be comprised of a high-level opening ceremony followed by an interactive dialogue with key constituents of the New Urban Agenda and an afternoon session, leading to further deliberations and an outcome document.
76. Meetings during the week of the high-level meeting would provide an opportunity to engage with the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, the Economic and Social Council, business leaders and civil society. The outcomes of the High-Level meeting could reiterate the importance of the New Urban Agenda as a road map for accelerating the Decade of Action, sustainable urbanization, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and realizing the Paris Agreement.
77. The High-Level meeting was seen as an important event to engage the international community and created an opportunity to increase funding. The high-level meeting should not to be seen as a stand-alone activity but rather as an event that should reaffirm the mandate of UN-Habitat.

B. Discussion

78. The representative of Finland said that his country aligned itself with the statements of the European Union and the Group of Western European and other States. Although the report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda was important, developing indicators to assess the implementation of the Agenda was of the utmost importance. Finland had involved 160 partners in the preparation of its national report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, which it would submit in the coming weeks. He thanked UN-Habitat for its normative support in developing voluntary local reviews and voluntary national reviews.
79. The representative of Germany welcomed the overview of the efforts of UN-Habitat on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the urban dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals. She expressed support for the voluntary local reviews and the local work done to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and she thanked UN-Habitat for its commitment to achieving a sustainable urban world.
80. The representative of Argentina highlighted the importance of achieving safety, inclusion and resilience, providing livelihoods and quality of life for all, and promoting sustainable consumption and production when implementing the New Urban Agenda. Argentina had worked on urban-rural territorial linkages and innovation and on land use and had promoted public housing and urban development, paying particular attention to women and LGBTQ communities. Argentina had also made progress in housing for the elderly.
81. The representative of Senegal said that his country aligned itself with the statement made by the Group of African States and commended the Executive Director for initiating a review of the strategic plan to take into account the challenges and implications of the COVID-19 crisis. Senegal had made progress with regard to water, sanitation and hygiene, and health infrastructure and had submitted a report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Senegal was collaborating with UN-Habitat on the development of a national urban policy.
82. The representative of Egypt said that the New Urban Agenda was a key tool. Egypt had been one of the first Member States to submit its report on the implementation of the Agenda. The Egypt Vision 2030 national agenda, composed of a national committee working with a wide range of partners, captured the country's commitment to housing and informal settlements and to effective partnerships with governments. His Government extended its appreciation to UN-Habitat for the work conducted by the UN-Habitat regional office in Cairo.

83. The representative of Burkina Faso congratulated the Executive Director for the efforts to implement the New Urban Agenda and commended the quality of the presentations at the Committee meeting for a high-level midterm review. He welcomed the support provided by UN-Habitat in the review of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and remained committed to providing financial support to UN-Habitat.

84. The representative of Colombia thanked the Executive Director for the overview of the report. The adoption and implementation of the New Urban Agenda was a milestone for multilateralism. Colombia had prepared reports on its implementation and invited Member States which had not submitted their reports to do so. She recalled the work done to rebuild after Hurricane Iota had struck Providencia Island and extended special thanks to the United Nations and UN-Habitat for the efforts to rebuild the island.

85. The Executive Director responded to the comments and took note of the feedback and guidance.

C. Conclusion

86. The Committee of Permanent Representatives:

(a) Took note of the reports of the Executive Director on an update on the preparation of the quadrennial report of the Secretary-General on progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (HSP/OECPR.2021/3) and on the implementation of the ministerial declaration adopted by the United Nations Habitat Assembly at its first session (HSP/OECPR.2021/INF/3) and the respective updates thereto, as provided by the Executive Director;

(b) Took note of the Executive Director's briefing on the preparations for the General Assembly high-level meeting to assess progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda;

(c) Adopted recommendation 2021/3 on the quadrennial report of the Secretary-General on progress on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, the high-level meeting of the General Assembly to assess progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, and the eleventh session of the World Urban Forum. The recommendation is set out in document HSP/OECPR.2021/8.

V. Agenda item 4

Progress in the implementation of the decisions and resolutions adopted by the United Nations Habitat Assembly at its first session

87. At its third plenary meeting, on the morning of Wednesday, 30 June 2021, the Committee of Permanent Representatives considered agenda item 4 on progress in the implementation of the decisions and resolutions adopted by the UN-Habitat Assembly; agenda item 5 on the report of the Executive Director on the implementation of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme COVID-19 response plan; agenda item 6 on preparations for the eleventh session of the World Urban Forum; and agenda item 7 on alignment of the planning cycles of UN-Habitat with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review process.

A. Presentation by UN-Habitat

88. The Executive Director gave a briefing on the item and a representative of the secretariat provided an overview of the progress made in implementing the resolutions and decisions adopted at the first session of the UN-Habitat Assembly, held in May 2019.

1. United Nations Habitat Assembly resolution 1/2 on United Nations System-Wide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements

89. The representative of the secretariat said that a concept note had been developed with financial costing on the peer review process and that 10 countries had already confirmed their involvement in the process. An inter-agency framework to implement the Safer Cities Guidelines and a partnership with the Global Network on Safer Cities had been established.

90. The COVID-19 pandemic had confirmed the need for a multidimensional approach to safety and the need to scale up country interventions, which would require additional resources. Additional resources would also allow UN-Habitat to develop further capacity development activities, test the Urban Safety Monitor, and produce documentation and evaluations to support cities' policies.

2. Resolution 1/3 on enhancing capacity-building for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the urban dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

91. Progress in the implementation of resolution 1/3 had been accelerated in recent months following the adoption of the capacity-building strategy and its implementation plan by the Executive Board. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, UN-Habitat was engaged in the digitization of capacity-building activities. A digital capacity-building strategy was being drafted and an online platform had been developed to host digital capacity-building tools.

92. The integration of the work on capacity-building had been strengthened through better alignment with the flagship programmes and through strong partnerships with universities and with the regional economic commissions of the United Nations.

93. Additional resources would allow UN-Habitat to further develop capacity-building tools and to translate illustrated toolkit of the New Urban Agenda into the six official languages of the United Nations.

3. Resolution 1/4 on achieving gender equality through the work of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme to support inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements

94. UN-Habitat had been developing mechanisms to ensure that gender considerations were systematically included in the work of the Programme. Gender markers had been included in the new Environmental and Social Safeguards System.

95. Additional resources would allow UN-Habitat to expand data collection and analysis and the monitoring of the impact of the gender component in its programmatic work.

4. Resolution 1/5 on enhancing urban-rural linkages for sustainable urbanization and human settlements

96. Most of the progress in Africa in the implementation of resolution 1/5 had been made through the support provided to nine countries focusing on urban-rural linkages in local policies, and in rolling out capacity-development activities. Global compendiums and webinars had been organized to raise awareness globally of the importance of enhancing urban-rural linkages. The COVID-19 crisis had increased the relevance of the topic and had enhanced the role of intermediary cities, in particular in the domains of food security, access to health and migration.

97. Additional funding would allow UN-Habitat to further develop the programme beyond the African continent, increase its capacity to collect and analyse data and undertake work on the impact of urban-rural linkages on sustainable urbanization.

5. Decision 1/3 on arrangements for the transition towards the new governance structure of UN-Habitat

98. The draft stakeholder engagement policy was expected to be submitted to the UN-Habitat Assembly in 2023 at its second session for consideration and approval.

99. Progress on the draft stakeholder engagement policy had been limited, as the Executive Board had decided to suspend meetings until such time as in-person negotiations could resume.

100. Additional resources would allow UN-Habitat to scale up action in the following areas: investing in the strengthening of engagement with local governments, parliamentarians and the private sector; developing relations with new strategic partners; developing guidelines for effective stakeholder engagement in monitoring urban Sustainable Development Goals, in particular in data production, to reach the target of 1,500 voluntary local reports submitted by 2023; and enhancing internal coordination between headquarters and other outposted offices.

B. Conclusion

101. The Committee of Permanent Representatives:

(a) Took note of the report and update of the Executive Director on progress in the implementation of the decisions and resolutions adopted by the UN-Habitat Assembly at its first session (HSP/OECPR.2021/4);

(b) Adopted recommendation 2021/1 on the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the UN-Habitat Assembly at its first session, which is set out in document HSP/OECPR.2021/8.

VI. Agenda item 5

Report of the Executive Director on the implementation of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme coronavirus disease (COVID-19) response plan

A. Presentation by UN-Habitat

102. The Executive Director, briefing the Committee on the UN-Habitat response to COVID-19, said that the programmatic response to the pandemic was focused on the three pillars of the response of the United Nations system: health, humanitarian, and socioeconomic.

103. The response plan was being deployed in close partnership with the relevant United Nations agencies and was focused on urban areas, which had been hit particularly hard owing to their density and the mobility and connectivity of their population.

104. A total of \$32 million had been mobilized in the context of the COVID-19 response plan, corresponding to 44 per cent of the total amount pledged. Some 75 projects in 37 countries and 300 cities and over 10 million people had benefited directly and indirectly from UN-Habitat work. The work done by UN-Habitat on data and mapping had benefited 1700 cities.

105. UN-Habitat was the lead United Nations entity on the Secretary-General's Policy Brief on COVID-19 in an Urban World.

106. The level 3 emergency for the COVID-19 response had been suspended in March 2021 at the Programme level and the Programme intended to focus on the following key areas:

(a) Working with a coalition of global thought leaders and stakeholders in public and private spheres to increase the focus on policies and actions to mitigate local social and economic impacts of COVID-19;

(b) Engaging through United Nations country teams supporting the review and development of socioeconomic analyses of the COVID-19 impact and related response plans;

(c) Actively supporting the development of common country analyses and cooperation frameworks, building on the Policy Brief of the Secretary-General.

B. Discussions

107. The representative of Argentina thanked the Secretariat for the efforts made in response to COVID-19. Argentina highlighted its commitment with regard to housing, sanitary infrastructure, home hygiene, access to food, care networks supported by community organizations, and the promotion of basic services to people in areas of high population density with the aim of generating employment and revenue through the construction sector.

108. The representative of Egypt expressed support and appreciation for the work conducted by UN-Habitat as presented in the report on the COVID-19 response plan. He encouraged UN-Habitat to continue its engagement with Member States and partners on the best means to ensure the effective implementation of the response plan, noting that the severe consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and possible related future socioeconomic developments would require the plan to be constantly revised and adapted.

109. Responding to the comments, the Executive Director expressed appreciation for the support, feedback and guidance received from Member States. UN-Habitat recognized the importance of the issues of energy efficiency, physical space, gender violence, home hygiene and sanitation, which were reflected in the UN-Habitat strategic plan and in the flagship programmes. The Executive Director reiterated the call to Member States to further support the response of UN-Habitat to the COVID-19 pandemic.

C. Conclusions

110. The Committee of Permanent Representatives took note of the report of the Executive Director on the implementation of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme coronavirus disease (COVID-19) response plan (HSP/OECPR.2021/5).

VII. Summary of the dialogue on cities and pandemics

111. The dialogue on cities and pandemics, a matter of current relevance for sustainable urbanization, was held under agenda item 5 during the fourth plenary meeting, on the afternoon of Wednesday, 30 June 2021. The dialogue was based on the UN-Habitat report entitled “*Cities and Pandemics: Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future*”, launched on 31 March 2021.

A. Introduction to the dialogue

112. The Executive Director opened the session by recalling that the mandate of UN-Habitat included both field operations and research on norms and standards for adequate human settlement, which had positioned the Programme as a key organization in the ongoing global debates on the impacts of the pandemic on cities and urban communities.

113. The Executive Director said that UN-Habitat had collaborated with CitiIQ to set up a digital, city response tracking service that provided data on the state of cities before the pandemic, on the impact of the pandemic and on cities’ responses to the pandemic, enabling analyses of the realities of COVID-19 in urban areas and leading to the publication of *Cities and Pandemics: Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future*.

114. The Committee took part in an interactive dialogue focused on priority areas of work for strengthening synergies between the implementation of the UN-Habitat strategic plan for the period 2021–2023 and the pandemic recovery in urban areas. Some key findings of *Cities and Pandemics: Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future* were presented, including a recognition of the pandemic as an issue for sustainable urbanization.

115. The post-COVID-19 recovery should be inclusive, equitable, green, and resilient and should help overcome social hardship, vulnerabilities and risks, and build the capacity of cities to overcome future such crises.

B. Interventions by Panellists

1. Mr. Etienne Krug, World Health Organization

116. Mr. Krug said that cities had been on the front lines of the fight against COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic, a situation which continued, and that they were not prepared for such a health crisis.

117. Lessons should be learned from COVID-19. Healthy and liveable cities were usually better prepared and more resilient in the face of health crises. The World Health Organization had published those conclusions as early as May 2020.

118. Mr. Krug highlighted the need to intensify cooperation in the future. Cities needed to learn from one another in order to achieve transformative change. Efforts needed to be intensified and should include capacity-building, awareness-raising, gathering urban data, impactful measures and support for decision-making in cities.

2. Ms. Mariana Mazzucato, Professor, University College London and Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose

119. Ms. Mazzucato said that the pandemic had demonstrated how ill-prepared the world was to manage a global health crisis across a range of issues, including the underpayment of health workers, the digital divide and uneven global access to vaccination programmes.

120. Besides the global health crisis associated with COVID-19, there were several other crises that were equally important and threatening, including the climate crisis, the economic and financial crisis that could result from the global pandemic and the looming biodiversity crisis. It was urgent to find systemic and structural solutions that addressed the underlying problems rather than just fighting the symptoms.

121. Public investments and public procurement, in particular in the context of pandemic recovery programmes, presented an opportunity to catalyse sustainable development. Public procurement could be mission- and goal-oriented. As an example, it could aim to reduce carbon emissions, breach the digital divide or contribute to the rethinking of social contracts.

3. Mr. Lee Kinyanjui, Governor of Nakuru County, Kenya

122. Mr. Kinyanjui said that the global pandemic had led to significant negative impacts in Kenya. Lockdown measures had economic implications and had meant hardship for nearly everyone, but especially for the urban poor. Lockdowns had often made work impossible, affecting the income of workers and making payment of services and rent difficult.

123. The problem was felt even more in cities than in rural areas. Kenya had been confronted with an increase in gender-based and domestic violence during lockdowns. Problems in informal settlements included overcrowding in particular, but also poor sanitation, which amplified the effects of COVID-19.

124. The county government in Nakuru had tried to address those issues through urban planning, and public transportation planning, and by improving poor information and communications technology infrastructure to enable access to digital learning and technology in general.

125. There was a need to plan or re-plan urban centres and to place greater emphasis on more sustainable financial and fiscal management in cities in order to be more resilient in the event of such public health crises.

4. Mr. Rajagopal Balakrishnan, Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing

126. Mr. Rajagopal said that the COVID-19 pandemic was significantly amplified by inadequate housing conditions. He recalled that people living in informal settlements, homeless people and migrant labourers were particularly hard-hit by the pandemic.

127. Cities should take a human rights-based approach to housing, in particular at the current juncture, and evictions should be banned. No one should be left behind, and marginalization and discrimination, which had flared up during the pandemic, should be tackled as a priority. Homeless people should be provided with permanent housing and there should be caps on rent. In terms of rental costs, the focus should be on stabilizing the housing market. The private sector should be constrained in such a way that housing and land speculation were minimized in order to prevent the situation from worsening.

C. Discussion during the dialogue

128. To open the discussion, Ms. Victoria Rubadiri, journalist and moderator of the dialogue, posed some questions to the panellists.

1. Question: How is health integrated in a practical sense when thinking through urban environments?

129. Responding to the question, Mr. Krug said that, in an ideal world, we would start from scratch and build a city where we could transport ourselves in a healthy way. While we were not in an ideal world, in some cases, the situation could be retrofitted. The pandemic had been terrible in terms of deaths and the economic crisis it was causing, but it had also brought lessons to the world. Many cities had taken positive steps towards replicating those lessons in other places, taking the opportunity to think about equity.

2. Question: There is a need to re-plan our urban centres, considering that more than half of the urban population in sub-Saharan Africa is living in slums. Looking at the African context, what needs to be done as we look at the bigger picture?

130. Responding to the question, Mr. Kinyanjui said that re-planning was not easy and required consolidated efforts. A pandemic was an event that could occur at any time and countries should be prepared for it and have open spaces for social activities. It should be possible to stay indoors for several days without endangering mental health.

3. Question: When it came to government responses to the pandemic, in many cases, the tools, budget and even the autonomy to respond adequately were lacking. Moving forward, how can we deal with such scenarios and structures, especially from a policy perspective, to ensure that cities are able to respond adequately even with policy constraints as seen during the pandemic?

131. Ms. Mariana Mazzucato responded by sharing an initiative taken by Camden London Borough Council, which had adopted mission-oriented policies, with four objectives to be achieved, as follows: 1) by 2025, every young person would have access to economic opportunity that enabled them to be

safe and secure; 2) by 2030, those in positions of power in Camden were going to be as diverse as the community; 3) by 2030, everyone would eat nutritious, affordable and sustainable food; and, 4) by 2030, Camden housing estate and its neighbourhood would be healthy and sustainable. She added that co-creation was the hardest part, as policies could be devised, but a stakeholder-driven process was much more difficult to attain.

4. Interventions by Member States

132. The representative of Costa Rica provided an overview of an initiative known as the Costa Rica National Urban Environment Agenda, a coordination mechanism for the main strategic intervention in cities in that country.

133. The representative of Colombia thanked the panellists and highlighted the health and environmental challenges faced by cities and the urgent need to address them. There was a need for the adoption of innovative approaches using information and communications technology and a need to explore how young people could be involved in addressing emerging challenges.

D. Conclusions

134. The panel of experts responded to questions and comments and delivered their takeaway message on the theme, which included a strong call for structural changes in urban governance and in re-planning for the future. Public investment in the context of pandemic recovery would be critical in bridging local spatial and service inequalities, such as the digital divide and unsafe public transport. A speculation-driven economic mode must be replaced by sustainable, goal-oriented economies that directly addressed the new vulnerabilities caused by current urban structures and inequality in the delivery of services, which the pandemic had emphasized and exposed. Although systemic change was challenging, it would be possible through a strong multilateral push to implement the new social contract called for by the Secretary-General. Global pandemic recovery efforts provided an opportunity for those shifts to occur in cities.

135. The moderator ended the session by emphasizing the urgent need to shift to urban planning policies and practices that enabled public health benefits in order for cities to better prepare for and counter possible future pandemics.

VIII. Agenda item 6

Preparations for the eleventh session of the World Urban Forum

136. At its third plenary meeting, on the morning of Wednesday, 30 June 2021, the Committee of Permanent Representatives considered agenda item 6 on preparations for the eleventh session of the World Urban Forum and agenda item 7 on the alignment of the planning cycles of UN-Habitat with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review process.

A. Presentation by UN-Habitat

137. A representative of the secretariat provided an overview of the key preparations for the eleventh session of the World Urban Forum, scheduled to take place from 26 to 30 June 2022, in Katowice, Poland. The theme of the session was “Transforming our cities for a better urban future”.

B. Discussion

138. The representative of Poland thanked the Executive Director and the World Urban Forum coordination office for their efforts to prepare for the eleventh session of the World Urban Forum. Preparations for the session, conducted in coordination with the Government of Poland and the city of Katowice, had progressed well despite the constraints resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The representative of Poland invited the Executive Director to visit the country in September 2021 to advance the preparations for the session.

139. The Executive Director thanked the Government of Poland and the city of Katowice for acting as the hosts of the eleventh session of the World Urban Forum and said that she would be pleased to visit Poland in September 2021, if possible, depending on the COVID-19 situation. A concept note for the eleventh session of the World Urban Forum would be shared with Member States in July 2021.

C. Conclusion

140. The Committee of Permanent Representatives:

(a) Took note of the briefing and report of the Executive Director on preparations for the eleventh session of the World Urban Forum (HSP/OECPR.2021/6);

(b) Adopted paragraph 5 of recommendation 2021/3 on the quadrennial report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, the high-level meeting of the General Assembly to assess progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, and the eleventh session of the World Urban Forum. The recommendation is set out in document HSP/OECPR.2021/8.

IX. Agenda item 7

Alignment of the planning cycles of UN-Habitat with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review process

A. Presentation by UN-Habitat

141. Introducing the item, the Chair drew attention to the note by the secretariat on the alignment of the planning cycles of UN-Habitat with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review process (HSP/OECPR.2021/INF/4).

142. The Executive Director provided an update on the progress made to align the planning cycles of UN-Habitat with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review process pursuant to Habitat Assembly resolution HSP/HA.1/Res.1.

143. The role of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system was to provide key system-wide strategic policy orientations and operational modalities for the development cooperation and country-level modalities of the United Nations development system. While the strategic plan of UN-Habitat for the period 2020–2023 was not yet aligned with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review process, the domains of change identified in the strategic plan were reflected in the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, making the UN-Habitat strategic plan consistent with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review for the period 2021–2024.

144. The Executive Director indicated that the Executive Board and its ad hoc working group on programmatic, budgetary and administrative matters were currently reviewing two scenarios for possible alignment of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review process with the strategic plan process of UN-Habitat.

145. In scenario 2, set out in document HSP/EB.2020/16/Add.1, the UN-Habitat Assembly would retain the UN-Habitat strategic plan for the period 2020–2023 as is, adopt an interim two-year UN-Habitat strategic plan for the period 2024–2025, and then adopt a full, four-year UN-Habitat strategic plan for the period 2026–2029, enabling UN-Habitat to align with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review process, but not until the cycle of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review that would take place during the period 2025–2028. Under this scenario, however, the UN-Habitat Assembly would take note of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review process.

146. In scenario 3, set out in document HSP/EB.2020/16/Add.1, the UN-Habitat Assembly would extend the UN-Habitat strategic plan for the period 2020–2023 to a period of six years, covering 2020–2025. To implement the scenario, the UN-Habitat Assembly could meet as scheduled in 2023 and effect the extension. The UN-Habitat Assembly would meet in 2025 for a third session to adopt the next four-year UN-Habitat strategic plan for the period 2026–2029, enabling UN-Habitat to align with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review process, but not until the cycle of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review that would take place during the period 2025–2028. Under scenario 2, the UN-Habitat Assembly would also take note of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review process.

147. The two scenarios would have different impacts on the governance framework, which had been analysed by the Executive Board with regard to cost effectiveness, the potential for a proliferation of meetings and the impact on the four-year cycle of the UN-Habitat Assembly, to ensure the approval of the aligned strategic plan in 2025. The Executive Board was expected to further review the scenarios during its second session in 2021.

B. Discussion

148. The representative of Egypt expressed support for the alignment, and in particular for the development of an interim strategic plan in 2023 (scenario 2). He said that Egypt was available for further consultations on a proposal to be submitted to the UN-Habitat Assembly.

149. Responding to the comment, the Executive Director expressed appreciation for the feedback from Egypt, confirmed that the issue would be further discussed by the ad hoc working group on programmatic, budgetary and administrative matters of the Executive Board and expressed the hope that a final recommendation by the Executive Board for consideration by the UN-Habitat Assembly would be made by the end of 2021.

C. Conclusion

150. The Committee of Permanent Representatives took note of the report and briefing of the Executive Director on the alignment of the planning cycles of UN-Habitat with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review process (HSP/OECPR.2021/INF/4).

X. Informal consultations on draft outcomes

151. Before continuing with agenda items 8 to 11, on the evening of Wednesday, 30 June 2021, the Committee of Permanent Representatives held informal consultations on the draft outcomes of the open-ended meeting for a high-level midterm review, as agreed during the adoption of the workplan and organization of work for the meeting. The informal consultations on the draft outcomes were chaired by Ms. Saqlain Syedah, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to UN-Habitat, assisted by the Vice-Chairs of the Committee, the representatives of Costa Rica and Serbia.

152. Prior to the commencement of the open-ended meeting for a high-level midterm review, Member States had held two informal consultations on the draft outcomes of the high-level midterm review, also chaired by Pakistan. The Bureau of the Committee formally recommended that the outcomes of the prior consultations be considered during the open-ended meeting for a high-level midterm review.

153. During the informal consultations held on the evening of 30 June 2021, five draft outcomes recommended by the Bureau were considered, which were subsequently presented for adoption by the Chair at the fifth plenary meeting, held on 1 July 2021.

XI. Agenda item 8**Review of the provisional agenda for the second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly**

154. At its fifth and final plenary meeting, on the morning of Thursday, 1 July 2021, the first open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives for a high-level midterm review considered agenda item 8, review of the provisional agenda for the second session of the UN-Habitat Assembly, agenda item 9, dates and provisional agenda for the second open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, agenda item 10, election of officers of the Bureau, agenda item 11, other matters, and agenda item 12, closure of the session.

155. The Committee agreed on the provisional agenda for the second session of the UN-Habitat Assembly, to be held from 5 to 9 June 2023, as reflected in paragraph 2 of recommendation 2021/4 (document HSP/OECPR.2021/8). The provisional agenda is set out below:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda.
3. Report of the Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.
4. Presentation of credentials of representatives.
5. Election of the members of the Executive Board.
6. Adoption of the report of the Executive Board.
7. Activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, including coordination matters and progress in the implementation of the resolutions adopted at the first session of the UN-Habitat Assembly.

8. Review of progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
9. Reports on the World Urban Forum.
10. Dialogue on the special theme for the second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly.
11. Strategic plan of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and alignment of the planning cycles of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review process.
12. Adoption of the report of the United Nations Habitat Assembly.
13. Provisional agenda and organizational matters for the third session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly.
14. Election of officers.
15. Other matters.
16. Closure of the session.

XII. Agenda item 9

Dates and provisional agenda for the second open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

156. The Committee recommended that the second open-ended meeting to prepare for the second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly be held from 29 May to 2 June 2023. The provisional agenda for the second open-ended meeting of the Committee (document HSP/OECPR.2021/8) was adopted and is set out below.

1. Opening of the meeting:
 - (a) Organizational matters;
 - (b) Adoption of the agenda and the workplan for the second open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.
2. Adoption of the report of the Committee of Permanent Representatives on the work of its first open-ended meeting.
3. Strategic plan of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme:
 - (a) Implementation of the strategic plan for the period 2020–2023;
 - (b) Status of preparation of the strategic plan for the next period by the Executive Board;
 - (c) Alignment of the planning cycles of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review process.
4. Review of the status of preparations for the second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly.
5. Preparation of resolutions, declarations and decisions of the second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly, including the dates and provisional agenda for its third session.
6. Election of officers of the Bureau.
7. Consideration of the draft Chair’s summary of the first open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives for a high-level midterm review.
8. Other matters.
9. Closure of the meeting.

XIII. Agenda item 10

Election of officers of the Bureau

157. The Chair recalled that, in line with rule 27 of the rules of procedure of the UN-Habitat Assembly, the election of officers to the Bureau of the Committee for the period 2021–2023 would take place at the end of the open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives. He explained that, pursuant to the principle of equitable geographical representation, the next Chair of the Committee was expected to be from the Western European and other States and that the United States of America, on behalf of the chair of that regional group, had informed him that the group had not selected a nominee to serve as Chair. The group had suggested that the next regional group in the regional group rotation should serve as the Chair of the next Bureau. The secretariat informed the Committee that, in accordance with the regional group rotation, the next regional group that would serve as Chair would be the Asia-Pacific States.

158. The following members, nominated by their respective groups, were elected:

Chair: Pakistan (Asia-Pacific States)

Vice-Chair: United Republic of Tanzania (African States)

Vice-Chair: Colombia (Latin American and Caribbean States)

159. The following two positions in the Bureau remained vacant, as the respective regional groups had not presented any nominations.

Vice-Chair: vacant (Western European and other States)

Rapporteur: vacant (Eastern European States)

160. The Chair of the outgoing Bureau recalled the importance of having a functional Bureau for the substantive preparations of the next open-ended meeting of the Committee in preparation for the next session of the UN-Habitat Assembly. He urged the regional groups that had not nominated a candidate to continue caucusing to fill the positions as soon as possible, and requested that their chairs participate in the meetings of the Bureau and in the activities of the Committee in the interim.

XIV. Adoption of the recommendations and decision of the first meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives for a high-level midterm review

161. The Committee of Permanent Representatives adopted the following recommendations and decision, as contained in document HSP/OECPR.2021/8:

(a) Recommendation 2021/1: Implementation of the resolutions adopted by the United Nations Habitat Assembly at its first session, in May 2019;

(b) Recommendation 2021/2: Implementation of Resolution 1/1 on the United Nations Human Settlements Programme strategic plan for the period 2020–2023;

(c) Recommendation 2021/3: Quadrennial report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, the high-level meeting of the General Assembly to assess progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, and the eleventh session of the World Urban Forum;

(d) Recommendation 2021/4: Dates and agenda of the second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly and dates and agenda for the second open ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives;

(e) Decision 2021/5: Election of officers of the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives for the term 2021-2023.

162. The Committee also adopted the draft report of its first open-ended high-level meeting for a midterm review, as set out in document HSP/OECPR.2021/7. The Chair reminded representatives that the reports of Committee meetings were procedural and, as such, did not provide a summary of discussions or additional information beyond describing the proceedings. The Chair would approve the draft report of the meeting with the support of the outgoing Bureau, and once finalized, it would be made available to Member States.

XV. Agenda item 11

Other matters

A. Interventions by Member States

163. The representative of Egypt thanked the Chair and the secretariat for the work conducted over the previous three days and congratulated the new members of the Bureau on their election. He thanked the Permanent Representative of Pakistan for the excellent conduct of the informal consultations on the draft outcomes of the meeting, held on Wednesday 30 June 2021. The work of the Committee served to strengthen the work of UN-Habitat and to resolve future issues.

164. The representative of Morocco commended the work of UN-Habitat during the COVID-19 pandemic. He welcomed the present meeting as an opportunity to share experiences and highlighted the key measures implemented in the country to mitigate the effects of the pandemic and achieve sustainable development. In particular, he underlined the resilience of the housing and town planning sector. In addition, he thanked the Executive Director for her last visit to the country, during which Morocco's country programme for the period 2021–2023 had been signed. The collaboration with UN-Habitat through the country office in Morocco represented an opportunity to put in place a regional platform to reinforce best practices and share experiences on sustainable development.

B. Statements by stakeholders

165. Mr. Hannes Juhlin Lagrelius (World Blind Union) said that he appreciated the work of UN-Habitat to create the Stakeholder Advisory Group Enterprise (SAGE), and its support for the first Global Stakeholders' Forum in May 2019. He also thanked Member States that had ensured multi-stakeholder engagement in monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and commended them for approving the detailed draft partnership strategy annexed to the UN-Habitat strategic plan for the period 2020–2023. The World Blind Union had formulated a request for the inclusion of representatives from diverse stakeholder and constituency groups in the preparations for the eleventh World Urban Forum and in the drafting of the quadrennial report of the Secretary-General on progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

166. Ms. Magdalena García Hernández (General Director, Bufete de Estudios Interdisciplinarios), speaking on behalf of the constituency of local and regional organizations in Urban Thinkers Campus Mexico – Peru, underlined the need for changes in civilization brought to light by the pandemic, which had had a greater impact on women. She requested the Committee and the Executive Director to consider the role of women in the upcoming work of UN-Habitat and in the dialogues that would take place at the eleventh World Urban Forum. She suggested that the co-creation of cities should focus on equality between women and men.

167. Ms. Emilia Saiz (Secretary-General, United Cities and Local Governments), speaking on behalf of the constituency of local and regional governments, thanked UN-Habitat for approving the participation of the constituency in the meeting of the Committee. She emphasized that local and regional governments had been at the forefront in the response to the COVID-19 crisis. The implementation of the New Urban Agenda was an accelerator in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Local actions and engagement with local governments were important to achieve global agendas and she highlighted the importance of voluntary local reviews. She urged UN-Habitat to strengthen the engagement of local governments in processes led by resident coordinators at the country level.

168. Ms. Sri Husnaini Sofjan (Huairou Commission), speaking on behalf of the constituency of women, said that she appreciated the work done by UN-Habitat to implement its strategic plan and commended the Programme for the publication of *Cities and Pandemics: Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future*. She urged UN-Habitat and Member States to focus resources and partner with grass-roots groups in implementing local actions in the context of post-COVID-19 recovery. In particular, she took note of the report on the implementation of UN-Habitat resolution 1/4 on achieving gender equality through the work of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme to support inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements. She called on Member States to invest in UN-Habitat to create a specific programme for gender equality and women's empowerment to achieve substantive equality in cities and human settlements.

169. Mr. Siraj Sait (Co-Chair of SAGE and Director, Noon Centre for Equality and Diversity in Business, University of East London) highlighted the efforts made by UN-Habitat to reinforce stakeholder engagement. He underlined key achievements and ongoing efforts in multi-stakeholder

partnerships over the previous few years, including regular monthly SAGE meetings; the implementation of the Declaration of the First Global Stakeholder Forum of the first session of the UN-Habitat Assembly, ‘Towards a New Stakeholder Contract for the New Urban Agenda’, adopted in May 2019; the planning of key events; support provided for urban policy development at the national level; and participation in UN-Habitat flagship campaigns. He commended the Executive Director and UN-Habitat senior managers for keeping stakeholders and constituencies at the heart of its strategic planning and programme delivery.

XVI. Agenda item 12

Closure of the meeting

170. In her closing remarks, the Executive Director thanked the Chair of the Committee for his excellent work during the first meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives for a high-level midterm review since the implementation of the governance reform of UN-Habitat. She said that 315 participants had registered for the meeting, representing 75 countries, including 5 ministers, from Bahrain, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mexico and Sudan; one deputy minister from Mexico; and 44 partners. She also noted the in-person attendance of 13 delegates at the United Nations Office at Nairobi.

171. Reaffirming the relevance of the UN-Habitat strategic plan for the period 2020–2023 in unlocking the transformative role of urbanization, she noted that the plan was grounded in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and expressed her appreciation for the constructive criticism and guidance received from Member States, which would enhance the delivery of the strategic plan.

172. UN-Habitat was committed to further enhancing engagement with Member States in the preparation of Committee meetings, Bureau meetings, consultations with regional groups and bilateral meetings.

173. The Executive Director recalled the three lenses guiding the work of UN-Habitat in the implementation of the strategic plan, namely, a focus on new vulnerabilities, the enhancement of the form and function of future cities and support for inclusive socioeconomic recovery.

174. UN-Habitat looked forward to working with Member States in developing innovative and creative solutions to create the conditions for long-term social and economic recovery in cities, paying particular attention to translating policy into practice.

175. The Executive Director emphasized the need for unearmarked or softly earmarked funding to support the implementation of the strategic plan and to implement the decisions and resolutions of the UN-Habitat Assembly.

176. In closing, the Executive Director thanked the outgoing Chair and Bureau members and acknowledged the input of non-governmental partners.

177. The Chair thanked all delegations and partners for their active participation during the three-day meeting and for their cooperation during the tenure of Eritrea as Chair of the Committee. He reiterated the importance of the work of the Committee as the intersessional body of the UN-Habitat Assembly.

178. The Chair thanked Bangladesh, Serbia, Costa Rica and the United States in their capacity as members of the outgoing Bureau and wished success to the members of the incoming Bureau.

179. The first meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives for a high-level midterm review was adjourned at 12 p.m. on Thursday, 1 July 2021.