



United Nations Habitat Assembly of the
United Nations Human Settlements Programme
Second session
Nairobi, 5–9 June 2023

Draft proceedings of the United Nations Habitat Assembly of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme at its second session

I. Organization of the session (agenda items 1–6)

A. Opening of the session (agenda item 1)

1. The second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly (UN-Habitat Assembly) was held at the headquarters of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) in Nairobi from 5 to 9 June 2023.
2. The session was opened at 10.10 a.m. on Monday, 5 June 2023, by Román Meyer Falcón, President of the UN-Habitat Assembly.

B. Opening statements

3. Opening statements were delivered by Zainab Hawa Bangura, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi; António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, via video message; Li Junhua, Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs; Csaba Kőrösi, President of the United Nations General Assembly, via video message; Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director of UN-Habitat. Following a musical performance by “Ghetto Classics”, statements were also delivered by Slumber Tsogwane, Vice-President of Botswana, speaking on behalf of Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, President of Botswana; and William Ruto, President of Kenya. Additional opening statements were delivered by Johnson Arthur Sakaja, Governor of Nairobi; Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), on behalf of Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UNEP; Fatimetou Abdel Malick, head of the Regional Council of Nouakchott, a thought leader.
4. In his opening remarks, Mr. Meyer Falcón said that the UN-Habitat Assembly offered an opportunity to advance the objectives outlined in the strategic plan for the period 2020–2023, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda. Issues to be addressed included the increase in the world population and recent urbanization trends, which projected that 68 per cent of the world population would live in cities by 2050. Collective efforts towards innovation in the approach to urban growth were necessary, to facilitate better living conditions for all, to provide a pathway out of poverty, inequality and exclusion, and to act as an engine for economic growth.
5. Ms. Bangura expressed gratitude to Mr. Ruto, whose presence at the second session of the UN-Habitat Assembly reflected the close partnership between Kenya and the United Nations and the commitment of his country to the operations of the United Nations in Africa and the global South. As the lead United Nations organization in matters related to human settlements and sustainable urban development, UN-Habitat was focused on mitigating climate change and making cities environmentally friendly. In Kenya, for example, UN-Habitat was supporting Government efforts to

implement policy, legislative and programmatic measures to accelerate action towards a carbon-free country, with a view to promoting appropriate building materials, green technologies and local natural resources. It was also working to curb pollution, ensure more liveable public spaces, create environmentally friendly jobs, conduct waste management projects and develop energy climate resilience for poverty reduction. The United Nations Office at Nairobi continued to work with UN-Habitat on green initiatives, including waste collection and sorting stations to increase recycling. Nairobi was a global United Nations hub; the United Nations Office at Nairobi was the only United Nations office in the global South that had seen an increase in United Nations entities seeking to relocate their staff to it. In that regard, the General Assembly had approved an unprecedented programme of investments in the United Nations complex in Nairobi, including a substantial expansion and upgrade of conference facilities. Those projects would be conducted in close partnership with UN-Habitat and UNEP. She welcomed the support of Member States to those investments and to all United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in Kenya.

6. The text of the Secretary-General's message is reproduced in annex [--] to the present proceedings.

7. Mr. Li noted that the focus during the current session on achieving a sustainable urban future through inclusive multilateralism was both relevant and timely. Despite the progress made and the promise to leave no one behind, some 670 million people still lived in extreme poverty, one quarter of young people were without schooling, training or employment, and safe access to water and sanitation services was still not guaranteed. For that reason, the Secretary-General had called on world leaders to deliver a rescue plan for people and the planet to generate transformative actions at the national and global levels, providing greater support to developing countries in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, including by addressing the financing gaps.

8. While cities played a critical role in the achievement of sustainability, the goal of sustainable cities was still far from being realized. He expressed concern at the sparsity of data to monitor Sustainable Development Goal 11, which limited the possibility to make effective decisions. The reality of rapid urbanization needed to be addressed to ensure better living standards for all. It was crucial that sustainable urban development remain high on the multilateral agenda and in global development efforts.

9. Mr. Kőrösi said that the United Nations was leading crucial global efforts to understand the root causes of complex crises, implement an ambitious sustainability development agenda and protect the planet from the scourge of climate change. UN-Habitat played a vital role in all such endeavours. Cities were at the epicentre of the converging crises currently faced, which were magnified in urban areas, particularly in developing countries. In order to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, comprehensive data statistics collection and dissemination were necessary. Governments needed to monitor the spatial distribution of future populations in order to assess the risks associated with climate change, flooding, heat waves, epidemics, food security and fresh water availability. A mindset shift was also required as a matter of urgency. To achieve genuine sustainable transformation, it was necessary to strengthen the science-policy interface, advance evidence-based solutions and approach goals holistically.

10. While shortcomings related to the impact of the Sustainable Development Goals represented a universal issue, people living in developing countries, including those in special situations, were the most affected. Political will, commitment, solidarity, financing and action were essential in that regard. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic had demonstrated the capacity for taking radical and transformative action when humanity was under threat. Building on that momentum and mobilizing political commitments was therefore necessary, including through a review of the lessons learned from the voluntary national reviews and the adoption of innovative policies based on scientific inputs. The upcoming Sustainable Development Goals Summit would offer the opportunity to commit to bold solutions, including in urban areas, as the interdependence of the global goals was crucial to unlocking potential, fully optimizing resources and achieving successful outcomes.

11. In her statement, Ms. Sharif said that the world was facing multiple interrelated crises. The COVID-19 pandemic had intensified inequalities and fuelled conflicts worldwide, as humanity faced a triple planetary crisis. The Paris Agreement and climate-related goals could only be achieved if Member States prioritized sustainable urbanization as the basis for sustainable development. The participation of housing and planning ministers at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was welcome as part of efforts to prioritize a just transition of cities and communities for future generations. Extreme climate events, conflicts, natural disasters, global pandemics and the cost-of-living crisis were felt first and foremost in cities. Multidimensional inequalities continued to deepen, weakening the social contract

underpinning societies. Adequate housing and urbanization could serve to provide a better quality of life; enhanced planning and organization in those areas could enable more people to be lifted out of poverty. Overreliance on carbon and consumption was not only severely detrimental to the planet, it was also leaving billions of people in inadequate housing, with increasing numbers experiencing homelessness.

12. Transformative impact on the ground could only be achieved through multilateral action. UN-Habitat had followed the guidance of Member States at the High-Level Meeting on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda in setting the priorities of UN-Habitat in its strategic plan for the period 2020–2023, and was grateful for the inputs from the ministerial round tables at the World Urban Forum and the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change. Pragmatic approaches and policies were required to guide cities and countries towards zero waste and carbon neutrality, in addition to financing for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Member States needed to prioritize national and local cooperation, with human rights and the Charter of the United Nations serving as the basis for sustainable urbanization.

13. Mr. Tsogwane said that the theme of the second session of the UN-Habitat Assembly was apt since it underscored the need to enhance global solidarity in addressing challenges such as rapid urbanization, climate change, conflict and financial crises. Concerted efforts that involved regional and international bodies, Governments, policymakers, civil society organizations and religious and community leaders were required to build and strengthen resilience in the face of those challenges. Future generations should be inspired to ensure prosperity based on the values of social cohesion and on the principle of leaving no one behind.

14. The UN-Habitat Assembly should seize the opportunities presented by the urban transition. Housing shortages, the growth of informal settlements and inadequate infrastructure in areas such as energy, health, transport, water and sanitation, exacerbated by a lack of proper planning and governance, were policy failures that compromised the commitments of Member States under the New Urban Agenda. Sustainable urbanization needed to go hand-in-hand with creating jobs and improving quality of life; otherwise, not only economic development, but also peace and security, could be jeopardized. Many Governments struggled to manage the rising expectations of citizens, which had resulted in frustration, especially among young people. Well managed and planned urbanization that ensured sustainable development could help to ease that frustration. UN-Habitat played a fundamental role in advancing resilient, safe and prosperous cities globally, and it should work closely with southern African States to raise awareness and advance the concept of resilient and sustainable cities. The planning and development of such cities should be based on solid partnerships with stakeholders, including the private sector, inside and outside the Southern Africa region. Concluding his remarks, he urged UN-Habitat to strengthen regional and subregional cooperation with other international organizations to implement the New Urban Agenda, especially in Africa. Regional economic communities, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area, could be used to help promote sustainable urbanization.

15. In his statement, Mr. Ruto, welcoming participants to Kenya, said that the lives and livelihoods of millions of people around the world had been adversely affected by various challenges of an unprecedented scale: a devastating pandemic, a relentless economic crisis driven by geopolitical tensions and the triple planetary crisis of pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change. The number of people living in urban areas was set to rise in the coming years, most of all in the global South, owing in part to social, economic and political upheavals. The increase in global production and consumption as a result of a growing population and increasing urbanization meant that efficiency and sustainability must be improved to avoid overwhelming the planet's capacity to support life. The UN-Habitat Assembly provided an opportunity for the global community to discuss and reflect on the progress made in ensuring sustainability as the world's population approached 10 billion people, and to address the link between the high demand for basic goods and the pressure on resources and the environment.

16. Upholding the fundamental right to decent housing was critical to sustainable urbanization. The lack of affordable financing was a major obstacle, not only to sustainable urbanization but also to sustainable development more generally. Discriminatory practices within the financing system for urban development must therefore be addressed. He reiterated the urgent need to strengthen UN-Habitat and enhance its capacity to help Member States in advancing sustainable urbanization and human settlement development.

17. The inaugural African Climate Action Summit, which would be held in Nairobi from 4 to 6 September 2023, would allow African countries to reach a common position in preparation for the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. He expressed the hope that a framework would be adopted at the session under which the global South and the global North could work in partnership to find a win-win solution to the climate crisis. With adequate investment, Africa could play a key role in decarbonizing manufacturing and industrialization and promoting green growth.

18. Mr. Sakaja, welcoming participants to Nairobi, said that the second session of the UN-Habitat Assembly was being held at a time of peril and promise. Citizens had now understood the dangers of climate change, the vulnerability of populations to extreme weather events and the threat to the basic natural systems upon which cities depended. They had also understood that action could wait no longer. There was a new urgency to identify how to improve the resilience of cities and share expertise, experience and financing options, with a view to ensuring that the most vulnerable groups and the environment were protected. Urban climate action was critical in that regard, but time was of the essence. More than half of humanity currently lived in towns and cities, and that figure was set to rise to two thirds by 2050. It was therefore important to ensure that, by 2050, affordable housing and dignified homes were available to all. As progress on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals had slowed, it was encouraging that the Assembly would consider how to localize the Goals, thereby enabling the efforts of countries, towns and cities to be aligned with their specific circumstances. Specific action points in that regard would be welcome. In closing, he said that, in the light of the urgency and importance of the challenges that the world faced, his city was proud to host delegates from 193 countries, as well as Presidents, other stakeholders and, in particular, representatives of subnational governments. Mayors and governors of some 80 cities would be participating in various events during the Assembly session, including a discussion on smart cities and urban innovation.

19. Ms. Mrema said that the opening of the second session of the UN-Habitat Assembly coincided with World Environment Day 2023, the theme of which was beating plastic pollution. Many efforts were being made in that regard. For example, the second session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, had recently concluded with a mandate to develop a zero draft of an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution. The global community was calling for a broad, innovative, inclusive and transparent agreement that was based on science and ensured support for developing nations. Urban centres and local governments were at the forefront of efforts to address the scourge of plastic pollution, which would require action on multiple fronts and was linked to the triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste.

20. For its part, UNEP looked forward to cooperating closely with UN-Habitat in seeking pollution-free plastic solutions and partnering on urban climate action. Cities were bearing the brunt of climate change. Extreme and slow-onset events had compromised urban infrastructure, water and sanitation, energy systems and transportation; urban populations exposed to high temperatures were set to increase nine-fold by 2050; and 90 per cent of urban areas were prone to flooding. She highlighted four priority areas for building climate-friendly and resilient cities. First, countries must rethink how cities were built. Commitments by the Group of Seven on urban cooling, sustainable buildings and transport systems were to be welcomed and should be implemented at the city level. Second, investments were needed in nature-based solutions, which stored carbon, reduced energy use and provided protection against extreme weather events. Third, people-centred innovations were necessary; UNEP and UN-Habitat had partnered on the Waste Wise Cities initiative to combine technology and human ingenuity to tackle plastic pollution. Fourth, finance was required to scale up environmental action by cities and Governments. Lastly, she expressed the hope that the Assembly would provide clear pathways for government action, thereby ensuring that cities remained places of opportunity and hope for future generations.

21. In her statement, Ms. Abdel Malick said that the time had come to redouble efforts for a sustainable future built on social justice and equality. The Sustainable Development Goals would not be achieved without the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, as public services were critical to the attainment of more than half of the Goals. Moreover, regional and local governments had in-depth knowledge of their communities, the challenges they faced and the needs and concerns of local people. They had shown their commitment to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by localizing the Goals, implementing innovative, sustainable and people-centred policies, and demonstrating leadership and good governance. Global crises, which had been exacerbated by climate change, had revealed the importance of public services and the role of regional and local governments in guaranteeing equitable access to such services, promoting and protecting common goods, empowering local communities, revitalizing nature and rethinking governance systems, with a view to

building solidarity and ensuring the inclusion of women and young people. In the light of the mounting crises, including real-estate speculation, fragmentation of basic infrastructure and the persistence of segregation and exclusion, it was essential to leverage the right to the city and the immense potential of the New Urban Agenda as catalysts for achieving the 2030 Agenda. Local and regional governments must be recognized as political actors and their greater representation in global governance processes ensured. She welcomed the Assembly's focus on inclusive multilateralism – one based on trust, the development of a new economic system and the consolidation of a new governance architecture – with the aim of safeguarding democracy, building peace and achieving universal, sustainable, resilient and inclusive development for people and the planet.

C. Presidential dialogue

22. At the 2nd plenary meeting, following the opening statements, a presidential dialogue was held, a summary of which is set out in section A of annex [–] to the present proceedings.

D. First Ladies' dialogue

23. At the 3rd plenary meeting, on the morning of Tuesday, 6 June 2023, the UN-Habitat Assembly held a high-level round table on the theme “Women shaping cities and communities”. The round table was hosted by the First Lady of Kenya, Rachel Ruto, and moderated by Victoria Rubadiri, a journalist. A summary of the round table is set forth in section B of annex [–] to the present proceedings.

E. Attendance

24. The following [–] Member States of the UN-Habitat Assembly were represented: [to be completed]

25. Observers to UN-Habitat for [to be completed] also participated.

26. The following United Nations bodies were represented: [to be completed]

27. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented: [to be completed]

28. A full list of those attending the session may be found in the list of participants (HSP/HA.2/INF/[–]).

F. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 2)

29. At the 2nd plenary meeting, in accordance with rule 13 of its rules of procedure, the UN-Habitat Assembly adopted the following agenda, on the basis of the provisional agenda (HSP/HA.2/1), as orally amended:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda.
3. Report of the Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.
4. 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 (UN-Habitat), including coordination matters.
8. Review of progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
9. Report on the World Urban Forum.
10. Dialogue on the special theme for the second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly.
11. Discussions on the UN-Habitat strategic plan.
12. Adoption of the report of the second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly.
13. Additional agenda items and other arrangements for the next session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly.

14. Election of officers.
15. Other matters.
16. Closure of the session.

30. At the 2nd plenary meeting, in accordance with rule 26 of its rules of procedure, the UN-Habitat Assembly decided to establish a committee of the whole for the consideration of various items of its agenda. The Assembly also decided, in accordance with the recommendations of the Bureau, that the Committee of the Whole would be chaired by Dampthey Bediako Asare (Ghana), that it would commence its work on the morning of Tuesday, 6 June 2023, and that it would consider item 7, activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), including coordination matters, item 8, review of progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, item 9, report on the World Urban Forum, and item 11, discussions on the UN-Habitat strategic plan. The Assembly further decided to establish an ad hoc open-ended drafting committee, to be chaired by Saqlain Syeda (Pakistan), with support from the representatives of Morocco, Nigeria, Portugal and the United Republic of Tanzania, to consider the draft resolutions, draft decision and draft ministerial declaration prior to their consideration by the UN-Habitat Assembly, and that the drafting committee, upon the conclusion of its work, would forward the draft outcome documents to the Committee of the Whole for onward transmission to the Assembly for its consideration.

G. Report of the Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (agenda item 3)

31. At the 2nd plenary meeting, Ms. Syedah outlined the information set out in document HSP/HA.2/2, providing an overview of the work of the Committee in preparation for the current session of the Assembly, including four meetings of the Bureau of the Committee, in June and December 2022, and in April 2023, and in five meetings of the Bureau of the Assembly, in October 2022, February 2023, and April, May and June 2023, to prepare both for the second open-ended meeting of the Committee and for the second session of the Assembly.

32. The second open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives had been held in Nairobi from 29 May to 31 May and on 2 June 2023, during which the Committee had prepared several draft resolutions, decisions and a ministerial declaration for consideration by the Assembly at the current session. Noting that those documents had undergone thorough negotiation by the Committee, she encouraged the Assembly to consider and adopt without reservations the draft resolutions, decisions and ministerial declaration before it. In closing, she thanked all the Member States for the commitment they had shown during the second open-ended meeting of the Committee, and their willingness to work informally during the public holiday of 1 June 2023 in order to bridge any gaps and build consensus around outstanding issues.

H. Credentials of representatives (agenda item 4)

33. At the 4th plenary meeting, on the afternoon of Tuesday, 6 June 2023, the President reported that, in accordance with paragraph 2 of rule 17 of the rules of procedure, the Bureau had received and examined the credentials of representatives and alternate representatives attending the second session of the UN-Habitat Assembly submitted by Member States and had recommended their participation in the session.

I. Election of the members of the Executive Board (agenda item 5)

34. At the 2nd plenary meeting, the UN-Habitat Assembly was informed of the recommendation of the Committee of Permanent Representatives at its second open-ended meeting that the term of the current members of the Executive Board be extended until 2025.

J. Adoption of the report of the Executive Board (agenda item 6)

35. At the 2nd plenary meeting, the UN-Habitat Assembly adopted the report of the Executive Board of UN-Habitat to the UN-Habitat Assembly at its second session (HSP/HA.2/3), following an oral presentation of the report by the Chair of the Board, Silvio Albuquerque.

K. Work of the Executive Board

36. The Executive Board of UN-Habitat held its second session of 2023 on the afternoon of Thursday, 8 June 2023. The report of the Executive Board on the work of its second session of 2023 is set out in document HSP/EB.2023/[--].

L. Policy statement by the Executive Director

37. At the 2nd plenary meeting, the Executive Director delivered a policy statement as an introduction to the general debate. She began by noting that the UN-Habitat Assembly was meeting at a time where multilateralism was needed more than ever to address the many challenges currently faced worldwide. The challenges, which were enormous, were felt first and foremost in urban areas, but the Sustainable Development Goals were the bedrock of effective multilateralism, and commitment to them was the key to a better future.

38. The second session of the Assembly could contribute to the new social compact proposed by the Secretary-General to restore trust and rebuild solidarity. Housing was a crucial component of the new social compact, accompanied by social protections, universal education and healthcare, food and delivery of an adequate standard of living for all. Cities and communities also needed to be made more resilient to the triple planetary challenge of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss. Making that happen equitably required the reform of the global financial architecture: she called on Member States to consider strengthening financing and investment across all levels of government, with consideration of the role of local finance and local governments. If cities and local economies were to generate revenue, investment in adequate planning and management was required to optimize revenue and productivity. Delaying investment in urban infrastructure would entail significant costs in terms of lost opportunity and higher future costs related to productivity and sustainability.

39. In the spirit of multilateralism, Member States had worked together to prepare for the second session of the Assembly, and had made significant progress on multiple draft resolutions, including on adequate housing, smart cities, localization of the Sustainable Development Goals and climate adaptation, as well as enablers like financing, data and digital transformation. The second session of the Assembly was an opportunity to strengthen ongoing work on the Sustainable Development Goals and redouble efforts to empower local and regional authorities to accelerate action towards the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda.

M. Work of the Committee of the Whole

40. The Committee of the Whole established by the UN-Habitat Assembly at the 2nd plenary meeting was chaired by Dampety Bediako Asare (Ghana). It held [--] meetings between 5 and 9 June to consider the agenda items assigned to it and draft resolutions, a draft decision and a draft ministerial declaration. [to be completed]

41. The report of the Committee is set out in document HSP/HA.2/CW/L.1.

N. Work of the drafting committee

42. [to be completed]

II. Activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), including coordination matters (agenda item 7)

43. At the 2nd plenary meeting, the Executive Director drew attention to her report on the activities of UN-Habitat (HSP/HA.2/4), which focused on the expansion by UN-Habitat of its strategic partnerships and normative and operational activities, and improved internal coordination, as well as progress in the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the Assembly at its first session. The report was complemented by four addenda containing, respectively, a joint progress report of the executive directors of UNEP and UN-Habitat on joint activities in the urban environment (HSP/HA.2/4/Add.1/Rev.1); a report on cooperation with United Nations system entities, intergovernmental organizations and other UN-Habitat partners in the implementation of the strategic plan for the period 2020–2023 (HSP/HA.2/4/Add.2); a note by the secretariat on the draft stakeholder engagement policy (HSP/HA.2/4/Add.3); and a note on highlights of the Annual Report 2022 on the implementation of the strategic plan of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme for the period 2020–2023 (HSP/HA.2/4/Add.4). A note by the secretariat on a country activities report 2022–2023 (HSP/HA.2/INF/2) was also available.

44. The Executive Director said that the documents showed the relevance of the integrated support provided by UN-Habitat to address persistent and new urban challenges, and how the Programme leveraged opportunities for sustainable development in cities and human settlements, including through strategic partnerships. With the completion of comprehensive organizational reform in 2020, in addition to its new governance structure, UN-Habitat was now a fit-for-purpose Programme, and was attracting greater support from Member States and stakeholders, as demonstrated by the some \$500 million in earmarked UN-Habitat grants raised between 2020 and 2022, and the recognition of the New Urban Agenda as a road map to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and other global agendas. UN-Habitat was elevating the urban dimension of sustainable development and delivering the strategic plan for the period 2020–2023 through its strategic partnerships, including with the World Health Organization, UNEP and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, as well as through regional collaborative platforms and country-level work. Since 2022, UN-Habitat had been leading the way for the Local2030 Coalition, a new United Nations partnership to localize and accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, for which UN-Habitat served as permanent co-chair and hosted the secretariat. UN-Habitat had also achieved significant results through its normative and operational activities, as outlined in the highlights of the Annual Report 2022 and document HSP/HA.2/INF/2. In closing, she said that the period from 2019 to 2023 had been very dynamic, confirming the relevance of the New Urban Agenda for inclusive multilateral collaboration in times of crisis, and the strength of the convening power and advisory role of UN-Habitat amid the broadening field of urban development policy, practice and actors.

45. The Assembly referred further consideration of agenda item 7 to the Committee of the Whole.

46. [to be completed]

III. Review of progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (agenda item 8)

47. At the 2nd plenary meeting, the Executive Director drew attention to her report on the activities of UN-Habitat (HSP/HA.2/5), which provided an overview of the progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

48. She outlined the information in the report, including activities carried out by UN-Habitat since 2019 to supported Member States and other stakeholders in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, which remained central to achieving the 2030 Agenda. Despite high interest in the Agenda by Member States, the world was off-track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals according to the principles outlined in the New Urban Agenda, as highlighted in the quadrennial report of the Secretary-General on progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (2019–2022) (A/76/639–E/2022/10). To make further progress with the 2030 Agenda, the quadrennial report recommended that Member States elevate the transformative commitments of the New Urban Agenda as tools to enable countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and meet their commitments under the Paris Agreement and other global agendas. The interest of Member States in advancing the New Urban Agenda, including in the areas of housing, climate and the environment, urban crisis, urban prosperity and finance, and localization of the Sustainable Development Goals, must be met with action.

49. Action was also needed to increase both the quantity and the quality of national progress reports on the New Urban Agenda for the next reporting cycle, in preparation for the 2026 quadrennial report. Noting that only 25 Member States had submitted progress reports in time for consideration in the 2022 quadrennial report, she urged Member States to initiate the preparation of national progress reports for the 2026 reporting cycle, stressing that reports must be submitted in the third quarter of 2025 at the latest, and that the reporting burden could be lowered by better aligning New Urban Agenda reporting with activities under national urban forums and national urban policies. She also asked Member States that had submitted progress reports for the 2022 cycle to prepare an update of their reports for the 2026 cycle, and invited regional groups and non-governmental organizations to submit their own reports to assist UN-Habitat in assessing progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

50. The Assembly referred further consideration of agenda item 8 to the Committee of the Whole.

51. [to be completed]

IV. Report on the World Urban Forum (agenda item 9)

52. At the 2nd plenary meeting, introducing the item, the Executive Director drew attention to the report of the tenth and eleventh sessions of the World Urban Forum (HSP/HA.2/6), highlighting salient aspects of the reports.

53. She noted that the tenth session of the Forum had proved to be the last major United Nations conference of the pre-COVID-19 era, and the discussions and call to action at the session to ensure that cities grew in harmony with nature, address inequalities and build upon the peace and development nexus had laid the foundations for building back better and greener in the wake of the pandemic. The eleventh session of the Forum had subsequently taken place at a moment when the world's cities were facing the "triple C" crisis of COVID-19, climate change and conflict, and participants had heard warnings that there should be no further delay in taking action to ensure that no person and no place was left behind. Overall, the Forum generated broad and long-lasting legacy initiatives that enabled UN-Habitat partners to continue engaging during the intersessional period, such as declared and budgeted actions; advocacy through the alumni network on local voluntary reviews and global projects; urban initiatives, including the Cities Investment Facility and the Forum-Policy-Practice initiative, which pushed for more implementation; and the host-city legacy initiatives undertaken by all Forum host cities.

54. The Assembly referred further consideration of agenda item 9 to the Committee of the Whole.

55. [to be completed]

V. Dialogue on the special theme for the second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly (agenda item 10)

56. At the 4th plenary meeting, introducing the dialogue on the special theme of "Sustainable urban future through inclusive and effective multilateralism: achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in times of global crises", Michal Mlynár, Deputy Executive Director of UN-Habitat, drew attention to the report on the special theme (HSP/HA.2/7) and provided an overview of the priority topics of the dialogue.

57. He recalled that at the high-level meeting on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, in April 2022, Member States had committed to advancing action on adequate housing with basic services and inclusive planning; climate mitigation and adaptation and environmental sustainability; urban crisis reduction and recovery; localization of the Sustainable Development Goals and multilevel governance; and sustainable financing for infrastructure and urban basic services. The dialogue presented an opportunity to examine ways in which inclusive and effective multilateralism could further those policy priority areas.

58. The report presented an argument for investment in critical enablers that would support action in the priority areas, namely data and knowledge; advocacy, communications and partnerships; capacity-building; and digital transformation. The report also recommended eight concrete pathways for achieving a sustainable urban future amid the multiple existing crises. Member States were invited to consider how some of those pathways could be highlighted in key upcoming multilateral meetings, including the meeting of the High-level Political Forum to be held in July 2023, the Sustainable Development Goals Summit in September 2023 and the Summit of the Future to be held in New York in September 2024. They were also invited to identify, agree on and commit to advancing transformative pathways for multilateral collaboration, multilevel governance and financing mechanisms for urban development that would help lead people and the planet out of the present unsustainable trajectory.

59. The dialogue on the special theme for the second session of the UN-Habitat Assembly was held at the 5th and 6th plenary meetings, on Wednesday, 7 June 2023. The dialogue comprised introductory remarks by the President of the Assembly, the Executive Director and the Chief of the Urban Practices Branch, a virtual keynote address on the special theme, followed by four panel discussions on the themes of "The big challenges of our time", "The key enablers driving the Sustainable Development Goals in the time of crisis", "Multilevel governance and Sustainable Development Goal localization" and "Closing key takeaways and the Summit of the Future". The summary of the dialogue on the special theme for the second session of the UN-Habitat Assembly by the President of the Assembly is set out in section C of annex [--] to the present proceedings.

VI. Discussions on the UN-Habitat strategic plan (agenda item 11)

60. At the 4th plenary meeting, introducing the item, the Deputy Executive Director said that, although the first two years of implementation of the current strategic plan had been marked by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, UN-Habitat had nevertheless achieved a number of positive results. For instance, as a result of the work of UN-Habitat in some 45 countries, more than 3 million people in slums and informal settlements now had access to basic services, such as water and sanitation; public spaces in 90 cities had been upgraded; and, in some 70 cities, municipal solid waste management had been improved through the Waste Wise Cities initiative. The contribution of cities to climate action had also been discussed by ministers participating in the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Cairo in 2022.

61. The Assembly's approval of the current strategic plan to cover the period 2024–2025 would enable UN-Habitat to consolidate its efforts and further increase its impact, while also aligning its strategic planning cycle with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system. The extended plan would be guided by the three policy priorities of universal access to adequate housing, urban and local climate and biodiversity action, and preventing and responding to crisis and contributing to sustaining peace; and two drivers, namely localization of the Sustainable Development Goals and financing. Preparations would likewise begin on the strategic plan for the period 2026–2029, which, it was envisaged, would be founded on a stronger evidence base, including the quadrennial report of the Secretary-General on progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (A/76/639–E/2022/10) and the outcomes of the forthcoming meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, which was to review the implementation of Goal 11, and the upcoming Sustainable Development Goals Summit. Lessons learned and recommendations arising from evaluations of the work of UN-Habitat, consultations with a broad range of urban stakeholders and greater outreach within the United Nations system would also be incorporated, as would a stronger emphasis on monitoring and reporting.

62. The Assembly referred further consideration of agenda item 11 to the Committee of the Whole.

63. [to be completed]

VII. Adoption of the report of the second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly (agenda item 12)

64. [to be completed]

VIII. Additional agenda items and other arrangements for the next session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly (agenda item 13)

65. [to be completed]

IX. Election of officers (agenda item 14)

66. [to be completed]

X. Other matters (agenda item 15)

67. [to be completed]

XI. Closure of the session (agenda item 16)

68. [to be completed]

Annex [--]**Message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the United Nations Habitat Assembly at its second session**

Excellencies, friends,

Cities are central to the human story. Through much of our history, they have driven progress. The decisions taken in them have determined our path. Ideas and innovations that originated in cities have shaped our world, and today, their role is more important than ever, because the UN-Habitat Assembly meets the world in crisis: inequalities are increasing; global temperatures are rising with catastrophic effects; debt is straining developing countries' economies to the limit, and half-way to the deadline for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we are leaving more than half of the world behind.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has hobbled progress in poverty reduction; an estimated 670 million still live in extreme poverty, and over one billion people still live in slums, driven to cities not due to jobs and opportunities as in the past, but due to lack of services elsewhere.

There is still time to reverse these trends. But to do so, we must fight for the future we want; the future envisaged in the Sustainable Development Goals, the New Urban Agenda and the Paris Agreement.

Cities are critical battlegrounds. They generate 70 per cent of global emissions, they house half of humanity, and, by 2050, over two billion more people will call them home. My report, "*Our Common Agenda*", calls for a reinvigorated and more inclusive multilateralism, recognizing the pivotal role that cities and other local authorities play in addressing the challenges we face.

Such multilateralism is vital to help cities to play their part, to ensure the finance, information and support is in place for them to become resilient, inclusive and sustainable.

Multilateralism must support cities to take action on climate, advance access to affordable housing and deliver the local initiatives needed to make the Sustainable Development Goals a reality.

I am confident that that this UN-Habitat Assembly session will advance these aims, including through your ministerial declaration. Together, we can achieve the sustainable urban future we need to build a peaceful, prosperous and healthy world for all.

Thank you.

Annex [--]**Summaries by the President of the UN-Habitat Assembly of the dialogues****A. Presidential dialogue**

1. At the 2nd plenary meeting, following the opening statements, a presidential dialogue was held. The moderator of the dialogue, Eleni Giokos, CNN anchor and correspondent, introduced William Ruto, President of Kenya, who responded to issues and themes raised by Ms. Giokos.
2. The moderator, noting that housing was a priority of Kenya's current governmental agenda, asked how sustainable and affordable housing could help break the generational cycle of inequalities in the country. Mr. Ruto, providing background information, said that some 50 per cent of Kenyans currently lived in urban settlements, and that proportion was rising. In the meantime, there was a deficit of around 2 million affordable houses in Kenya, and around 6.5 million people living in informal settlements. Of the 50,000 housing units currently being constructed by the private sector, a very high percentage were not affordable to the majority of people in Kenya. In response, the Government of Kenya planned to build 250,000 housing units per year, making land available, encouraging new technology, and facilitating financing to support the process. There would be a strong focus on green housing developments that included social structures, such as schools and hospitals; green spaces; and sustainable, energy-efficient housing. Closely associated with the housing programme was a nationwide tree planting programme, which was aimed at planting 15 billion trees through a multi-agency approach involving both the public and private sectors. The activity, he said, was an existential imperative, given the climate change crisis facing humanity.
3. Mr. Ruto then expanded on the global context of country action on adequate, affordable housing. Noting that 1.6 billion people worldwide were living in inadequate housing, he underscored the importance of multilateralism in responding to a global crisis. The role of the UN-Habitat Assembly in providing a forum for experts, civil society, the private sector and other actors was crucial in helping formulate the global conversation on housing.
4. On the matter of funding for housing development, he described various models that were being developed in Kenya. Proposed changes to the Employment Act would allow deductions of 3 per cent from employees' basic pay, which would be matched by employers, to help fund the plan to construct up to 250,000 housing units every year. In adopting such an approach, the Government had studied successful housing programmes in other countries, including the Republic of Korea and Singapore. The large-scale construction programme would generate employment and income in other sectors, including manufacturing, and would provide an opportunity to build the skills and expertise of young people engaged in various aspects of construction, such as the design, engineering, surveying, and building trades. The entire value chain would be involved, with a focus on standardizing housing products so they could be produced at scale and at low cost. Public land would be made available to mitigate the initial costs of development and purchase.
5. With regard to private sector involvement, Mr. Ruto acknowledged that private sector constructors were profit driven and would see more value in higher-cost developments. However, public-private partnerships, taking advantage of both private sector enterprise and the mandate of the Government to provide public goods, offered a potential win-win situation by which low-cost housing could be sustainably financed. Successful examples of such cooperation were already evident in Kenya, for example in the renewable power generation and water supply sectors.
6. Turning to the global decision-making and financing architecture on issues of environmental concern, including climate change and housing, he said that there need not be any contradiction between sustainable development and industrialization. Effective working models of clean energy, green growth, and decarbonization of manufacturing existed. For example, around 90 per cent of electricity generated in Kenya now came from renewable sources. The continent of Africa contained many potential renewable energy assets, including wind, solar, geothermal and water power sources, that could be developed given the right investment and technology input. A candid conversation was needed on such matters to move away from the current global impasse, whereby dialogue was often framed in terms of opposites such as North versus South, clean energy versus fossil fuels, or sustainability versus development; where aid or assistance was often viewed as a solution to national challenges; and where numerous meetings, often with significant carbon footprints, were held without meaningful solutions emerging. The world had shown, most recently in adapting to the energy crisis

precipitated by the conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, that decisions could be taken very quickly to deal with pressing crises, given the political will to do so and a positive mindset. Drawing on such experience, Mr. Ruto stated his conviction that the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held later in 2023, should be so successful in its outcomes that no further such meetings would be necessary.

7. While global events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine had led to unfortunate consequences, including rising commodity prices and an increase in the cost of living, such issues were not insurmountable and could be resolved by acting together. The President expressed the hope that the international conference for a new global financial pact being hosted by France on 22 and 23 June 2023 would be the springboard for a revised financial architecture that would be further refined at future forums during 2023, including by the United Nations General Assembly, and would form the basis of a successful outcome at the climate change conference.

8. Mr. Ruto then responded to questions from participants. Responding to a question about the impact of higher tax rates on the poverty gap and entrepreneurship, he first put the matter in a global context. Considering tax revenue as a percentage of gross domestic product, Kenya was well below the countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and also below a number of other countries in Africa. Adequate tax revenue was essential for a government to provide sufficient quantity and quality of public services. In addition, tax revenue generated the funding needed to finance programmes, such as the Affordable Housing Project, that would assist lower-income persons to increase their incomes and move into higher tax brackets, generating further revenue for the Government to carry out its agenda and reducing the need for outside assistance or aid.

9. Responding to a query about the miscommunications and politicization that had characterized the inception of the Affordable Housing Project in Kenya, and the potential need to first engage in a civic education programme to inform citizens before implementing the project, the President observed that it was essential to take action and avoid procrastination. For example, the National Housing Corporation of Kenya had been inaugurated many decades earlier, but its inaction had been a major factor in the current housing crisis afflicting Kenya. Upgrading Kenyan housing was a priority to promote the dignity and decency of those inhabiting low-quality dwellings, and the urgency of the Affordable Housing Project overrode political differences.

10. Finally, the President responded to a query about the Financial Inclusion Fund in Kenya, popularly known as the Hustler Fund, which, he said, constituted a bottom-up economic approach to small-scale financing. It had enabled many millions of citizens to access short-term credit at a low rate of interest, enabling the start-up of small enterprises and increasing their ability to purchase goods and services, thereby stimulating other elements of the economy.

B. First ladies' dialogue – "Women shaping cities and communities"

11. At the 3rd plenary meeting, on the morning of Tuesday, 6 June 2023, the UN-Habitat Assembly held a round table hosted by the First Lady of Kenya, Rachel Ruto, on the theme "Women shaping cities and communities". The round table was organized in three segments. The first segment featured introductory remarks by Ms. Victoria Rubadiri, moderator; remarks by Ms. Maimunah Mohamed Sharif, Executive Director of UN-Habitat; a short video on the work of the First Lady of Botswana, Ms. Neo Masisi, to empower women and youth and to combat gender-based violence in Botswana; a short video on efforts being undertaken by the Government of Kenya and the Office of the First Lady to address gender equity and empower women in Kenya; and a video message from the First Lady of Türkiye, Emine Erdoğan.

12. The second segment featured remarks from two Kenyan women whom, against great odds, had succeeded in improving their lives and those of their communities, thanks to the support provided by the economic empowerment programmes of the Office of the First Lady of Kenya, under the Mama Doing Good programme; remarks by Ms. Ruto, First Lady of Kenya; and a poem read by Botswana poet, Tjawangwa Dema.

13. The third and last segment comprised a round-table discussion between the Executive Director of UNEP and the First Lady of Kenya, followed by remarks by Phildah Kereng, Minister of Environment and Tourism, Botswana, and concluding remarks from the moderator.

1. Segment 1: introductory remarks

14. In her introductory remarks, Ms. Rubadiri said that the purpose of the round table was to examine the significance of women's role in accelerating progress towards sustainable development globally; explore innovative solutions for women's leadership and partnerships to unleash the transformative potential of women in managing and shaping cities and communities, for a better quality of life for all; and consider strategies for scaling up investment and financing opportunities to support women's leadership and action in shaping cities and communities.

15. The Executive Director said that, with only seven years to achieve the ambitious promises of the Sustainable Development Goals, the world could not afford to exclude women from the table, stressing that women and girls were key to sustainable urban development, as was their participation in decision-making at the community level. Emphasizing that an estimated 435 million women and girls worldwide were living in extreme poverty in 2021, she said that action was urgently needed to empower women, and she commended Ms. Ruto for her role in helping other women to fulfil their potential to be leaders at all levels. For its part, UN-Habitat was taking a gender transformative approach across its work, and all UN-Habitat teams were strongly encouraged to not merely respond to the intersectional experiences of women, but also to contribute to transforming the structures that continued to keep women back. For instance, UN-Habitat was working with partners in different countries, including Afghanistan, to empower women by increasing their access to land and property rights, from which they were often excluded. Such exclusion limited their decision-making power within their families and communities and made them vulnerable to experiencing poverty, exploitation and sexual violence. The work in Afghanistan had resulted in securing the inclusion of women in land titles, which was a significant achievement.

16. UN-Habitat also helped to empower women through its participatory planning tools and the digital Her City toolbox, which had been applied in over 350 cities across more than 100 countries. It was clear that cities planned with women and girls were cities that worked better for everyone, and that participatory planning that considered the needs of women and girls resulted in more inclusive, equal and sustainable cities. Thus, the UN-Habitat Women-Led Cities initiative was working to promote women's leadership and economic empowerment through partnerships and impact investing, recognizing that the exclusion of women from urban decision-making led to poor standards of living and that the empowerment of women leaders had enormous potential to achieve transformative change. In closing, she urged all representatives to stand up for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and all those who were the subject of discrimination on the basis of their gender or identity.

17. Speaking via audiovisual presentation, Ms. Erdoğan drew attention to the launch of a zero-waste project in Türkiye in 2017, and the creation in 2023 of an International Day of Zero Waste day on 30 March, with support from UN-Habitat, to inspire global action towards zero waste. The zero-waste movement, of which Türkiye was a leader, emphasized the significant role of individuals in tackling the pressing problem of urban waste and embracing more environmentally sustainable lifestyles. While significant strides had been made in addressing urban waste, a lot more work was needed to move away from consumerism and the prevalent throwaway culture towards a zero-waste culture. The movement showed that such a transformative change was possible, in particular if it included the broad participation of women.

2. Segment 2: case studies

18. Participants heard the inspiring stories of Ms. Beatrice Achieng and Rose Njoki Muruatetu, two Kenyan women who had received support from the Mama Doing Good organization and had overcome great hardships to become leaders in their communities.

19. In her remarks, Ms. Ruto said that the inspiring stories of [--] were examples of the resilience and ability of women to overcome whatever circumstances they faced, if given the right tools and opportunities, and what cities could achieve if they had women in mind. The Government of Kenya had made positive strides towards making cities more sustainable and safer for women, including by improving public facilities such as street lighting, daycare facilities, parks, and walking and cycling lanes in some of its major towns. In order to address the challenges associated with increasing urbanization and rural-to-urban migration, including insufficient housing, growth of informal settlements, inadequate waste management, loss of green spaces, and an increase in air and noise pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from motor vehicles, the Government was investing in affordable and sustainable transport systems and was planning to broaden the number of affordable mortgages from the current 30,000 to 1 million by 2032, which would greatly benefit women, in

addition to encouraging investment in affordable housing for informal settlement dwellers. For its part, the Mama Doing Good organization was working on various initiatives to empower women.

20. The segment closed with a poem read by Ms. Dema.

3. Segment 3: round-table discussion

21. In response to a question from the moderator about the origins of the Mama Doing Good programme, Ms. Ruto said that she had created Joyful Women, a table banking organization, with the help of the Poverty Eradication Commission, in 2009. The Mama Doing Good programme had been established in 2021 and it encompassed Joyful Women, Mama Cycling and other environmental programmes.

22. Asked by the moderator what could be done to ensure that no one was left behind, especially women, Ms. Sharif said that women's leadership, political commitment and women's participation were very important. Women must participate in decision-making at the global, national and city levels. Given that more than half of cities' populations were women, failing to involve them would result in lost opportunities, labour, knowledge and talent.

23. Responding to a question by the moderator about how Mama Doing Good was shaping sustainable cities and communities, Ms. Ruto said that she was seeking to build quality pavements for pedestrians and cyclists and to enhance waste management as part of her programme. Children were being provided with and being taught how to ride bicycles in order to contribute to clean, environmentally friendly cities in the future.

24. Invited by the moderator to comment on action taken by UN-Habitat to empower more women leaders in cities and communities, Ms. Sharif said that UN-Habitat provided expertise and guidance to Member States on planning and building resilient and healthy cities in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). She drew attention to various programmes and initiatives that had been introduced by UN-Habitat, including the "Her City" toolbox, which helped women design and plan their own cities; the Global Public Space Programme, which provided information about how to make public spaces safe for women; and an initiative launched in cooperation with the Government of Afghanistan to include wives' names on land titles. UN-Habitat always gave due consideration to the participation of women when developing its programmes, since cities that were safe for women were also safe for men.

25. Asked by the moderator how she leveraged her position as First Lady to enhance her programmes' outreach in Kenya, Ms. Ruto said that the Office of the First Lady followed the President's bottom-up economic model to empower women and ensure their financial inclusion. The Office sought to raise awareness among women of environmental issues and aimed to plant 500 million trees by 2032. Since many children provided for their families instead of attending school, a programme had been launched to provide meals in public schools, which had resulted in a surge in attendance. She worked with the spouses of members of Parliament, governors, senators and women in general on climate action, especially in the wake of the worst drought that Kenya had experienced in 40 years.

26. In her statement, Ms. Kereng, Minister of Environment, Natural Resources Conservation and Tourism, Botswana, stressed the importance of women's participation and leadership in urban planning. Factors such as adequate housing, facilitation of business and trade for women's economic empowerment, resilience and adaptation to climate change, and a clean and healthy environment were key for ensuring the safety, security, prosperity and health of women and girls. Urban planning policies must take account of the needs of women and address the issues of poverty, vulnerability to gender-based violence and exclusion. She also drew attention to the importance of research and data in monitoring urbanization trends and identifying areas for investment. In her closing remarks, she urged UN-Habitat and the First Lady to continue their programmes to guide and inspire women and girls across the African continent.

C. Dialogue on the special theme of the second session – “A sustainable urban future through inclusive and effective multilateralism: achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in times of global crises”

27. [to be completed]

Annex [--]**Summary by the President of the UN-Habitat Assembly of the high-level debate**

1. Ministers and other high-level representatives delivered statements on a range of themes related to human settlements, focusing on the special theme of the second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly: “A sustainable urban future through inclusive and effective multilateralism: achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in times of global crises”. A number of representatives expressed their countries’ commitment to supporting UN-Habitat in achieving its aims and objectives in the field of human settlements, including through supportive action at the international, regional and national levels, while assisting the Programme to deliver on its mandate through increased efficiency, transparency and accountability.
2. Many representatives expressed support for the Executive Director, Maimunah Mohd Sharif, and the secretariat for the measures that had been undertaken to improve the operations and management of the Programme, including through adoption of a new governance structure, and to increase its focus on achieving practical results. The efforts of the secretariat to achieve a financial turnaround and regain the trust of donors was commended. Several viewed the UN-Habitat strategic plan for the period 2020–2023 as a positive vehicle for implementing actions that advanced the programme of the organization, including the New Urban Agenda.
3. The propitious timing of the current meeting was noted, with several important meetings on the horizon – the meeting of the High-Level Political Forum to review the status of Sustainable Development Goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities in July 2023; the Sustainable Development Goals Summit in September 2023; and the Summit of the Future in September 2024. The current Assembly session presented an opportunity to demonstrate leadership in advancing sustainable urban development in that context.
4. There was consensus that the achievement of global goals for human settlements faced a wide array of challenges. Rapid urbanization was taking place across the globe, while a large and growing number of urban dwellers still lived in slums and informal settlements, and urban development agendas were being compromised by lack of funding and resources. Instability and conflict, including the ongoing war between the Russian Federation and Ukraine,¹ resulted in myriad problems both within the field of conflict and beyond, including increased flow of migrants, refugees and displaced persons, destruction of urban settlements, and increasing energy and food prices. In recent years the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic had severely compromised the ability of Governments and other actors to provide essential services for populations and disrupted social and economic progress. Added to those challenges, the world continued to face a growing incidence of environmental threats, including climate change, rising sea levels threatening low-lying communities in coastal and island locations, increased number and impact of natural disasters, biodiversity loss, and pollution, reducing the capacity to provide inhabitants with a clean, healthy, safe and sustainable environment in which to live, work and interact. Social issues also were growing in prominence – inequality, declining quality of life, increased cost of living, urban insecurity and crime, overcrowding leading to social tensions, and discrimination and exclusion. In the face of the onslaught of challenges, global resilience and the ability to resolve the issues at hand were being severely weakened and tested. As a consequence, the status of the city as a symbol of human civilization and a vehicle of modernization was under threat.
5. It was apparent that those challenges could only be resolved by collaborative action. In that context, the theme of the current session of the Assembly, with its focus on multilateral action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in order to secure a sustainable urban future, was apposite and timely. One representative said that the world must unite to find a way forward within an equitable multilateral system that was respectful of differences but united in a shared desire for an inclusive, sustainable future for all. The concept of localization of the Sustainable Development Goals offered a practical framework for countries to undertake realistic actions contributing to global targets.
6. The New Urban Agenda was viewed as a positive framework and road map for helping countries to attain their urban development objectives. One representative stated that swift and efficient implementation of the New Urban Agenda would contribute to tangible progress on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and addressing the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Several representatives highlighted actions being taken in their

¹ Two representatives delivered statements on this matter in exercise of the right of reply.

countries to align their developmental strategies with international instruments, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda.

7. The UN-Habitat Assembly, as one representative remarked, was a significant platform to bring together representatives of Member States, civil society organizations and other stakeholders to discuss and formulate strategies for the sustainable urbanization of the world. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed appreciation that adequate and affordable housing, urban climate action, urban crisis recovery, localization of the Sustainable Development Goals, and finance and prosperity all featured prominently in the agenda for action at the current session of the Assembly, and expressed the hope that strong decisions would be taken, leading to affirmative action.

8. Many representatives placed progress on human settlements in the wider framework of sustainability, recognizing the interconnectedness of all aspects of social, economic and environmental advancement. In such a scenario, cities and other settlements needed to be at the forefront of global efforts to promote green development and the circular economy. The modern city should target carbon neutrality, energy efficiency, climate resilience and biodiversity conservation; should pioneer spatial planning, efficient green transport systems and proper waste management across the life cycle; and should help people achieve a satisfactory quality of life, including through the provision of employment opportunities and inclusive social policies with a particular focus on vulnerable people and communities. Good governance, coordinated and participatory action, and the articulation of intersectoral, multilevel and multistakeholder processes were essential drivers of that agenda.

9. One of the major issues facing settlements was the provision of adequate housing of good quality. Many cities continued to face the challenge of slums and informal settlements, and how to provide affordable housing for low-income urban dwellers. Issues of land governance and security of tenure added a further complex layer to the problem. One representative said that decent housing was essential for an inclusive, healthy and prosperous urban future, while another stated that it lay at the core of efforts under the New Urban Agenda to ensure social, economic, environmental and spatial sustainability, spatial justice, social inclusion, integrated governance, and reduction of poverty. Several options were available to help address the issue, including consolidation of the skills of private and public partners to construct affordable housing; upgrading the value chain by strengthening the capacities of all actors; setting up financing mechanisms to assist low-income households in the purchase of housing units; and instigation of municipal housing policies programmes that included upgrading and the provision of services such as electricity, water and transport, and the greening of public spaces.

10. Other enablers of urban regeneration and revitalization were identified, including financial and technical support and technology transfer to accelerate the implementation of local actions and ensure that no one was left behind; the direction of resources by UN-Habitat and other actors, in their annual programmes related to adequate housing, urban resilience, disaster risk reduction, climate action, and urban crisis prevention and response, to countries that were most in need; developing clear strategies for fostering global and regional synergies in addressing urban challenges; and developing data-based technologies for evidence-based planning and assessment of progress towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. Regular monitoring, reporting and transparency were essential to maintain momentum, as well as the sharing of successes and challenges to enable mutual learning and inspire further action. Several representatives placed particular stress on the use of new digital technologies as a tool for conceptualizing and designing urban transformations, although one representative remarked that a lack of international guidance on the use of digital technology in the urban sphere was holding back its development. The resolution before the Assembly at the current session on people-centred smart cities offered an opportunity to address that shortcoming.

11. A number of representatives alluded to the increasing range of international and regional initiatives that were assisting countries to achieve their national objectives with regard to human settlements. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, described the efforts being made by their countries to make available resources to assist partner countries in that regard. Areas benefiting from such support included access to reliable services and socioeconomic opportunities for migrants in urban settlements; improving the living conditions of vulnerable populations; strengthening inclusive land governance and promoting land access rights through the Global Land Tool Network; support for UN-Habitat in transforming informal settlements and slums through the Cities Alliance; the expansion of models for sustainable, carbon-neutral and smart cities; and waste management and climate change adaptation.

12. One representative said that the collaboration of UN-Habitat with the Geneva Cities Hub and with the Economic Commission for Europe, the organizer of the Forum of Mayors, had strengthened the links between local, national and international action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Other forums relevant to the global urban agenda included the African Clean Cities Platform, which was aimed at promoting and disseminating environmentally sound waste management within the context of the circular economy; the upcoming Group of 7 meeting of ministers of sustainable urban development in Japan in July 2023; and the twelfth session of the World Urban Forum, scheduled to take place in Egypt in 2024. Several representatives noted that the next World Cleanup Day would take place on 16 September 2023, offering an opportunity to focus on cleaning up litter and waste to improve the urban environment; while the next World Cities Day would be held on 31 October 2023. The value of a regional approach was highlighted by several representatives. A growing number of regional initiatives offered support to countries, including the African Urban Forum, and the regional plan for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda being developed in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

13. The importance of cooperation at the national level was also highlighted by a number of representatives. Considerable value was added to activities through the engagement of all stakeholders, including governmental institutions at all levels, the private sector, and organizations representing civil society, communities, Indigenous peoples, academia, women and young people. Planning should adopt a gender perspective and inclusive decision-making processes to ensure equitable outcomes, fostering social cohesion and resilience. Several representatives alluded to upcoming national urban conferences or forums that aimed to move forward the urban agenda through a multi-stakeholder, multilevel approach. One representative expressed regret that the new stakeholder engagement policy of UN-Habitat had not yet been concluded, affirming that the engagement of local authorities, experts and civil society provided true added value to UN-Habitat.

14. Many representatives highlighted efforts being made in their countries to resolve urban issues and bring about improvements in all aspects of life in cities and towns. These included regulatory and legislative action to strengthen implementation; putting in place the necessary administrative, institutional and organizational structures for streamlined urban planning; the articulation of integrated policies placing the urban agenda in the context of the wider social, developmental and environmental agenda; the development of long-term strategies and programmes for human settlements; decentralization of governance to promote planning at the local level; improvement of transport networks to enhance connectivity and accessibility; increasing investment in cities to stimulate sustainable growth; implementation of projects on slum upgrading, affordable housing and enhancing land tenure security; rehabilitation of degraded urban areas; improved waste management systems; use of digital technology for monitoring and reporting on Sustainable Development Goal indicators; the establishment of municipal forums to ensure coordinated action; interventions to help children, including in the field of education; and measures to improve the quality of housing and urban infrastructure.

15. Finally, a number of representatives expressed their ambitions with regard to ensuring a sustainable future for human settlements, and the role of UN-Habitat in attaining that objective. The first stage of that process was to achieve a successful outcome of the current session of the Assembly, including a ministerial declaration, thus moving the urban agenda forward and helping to ensure that current and future generations inhabited a sustainable, resilient and healthy planet. Several representatives said that the theme of the current session, with its focus on multilateralism as a means of achieving the targets of the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda, constituted a strong platform for action on human settlements. There was agreement on the crucial role of the UN-Habitat Assembly as the main intergovernmental forum in which Member States identified the urban challenges affecting the planet and agreed on the main strategies to tackle them, in a spirit of international cooperation. Collaboration between all partners, under the leadership of UN-Habitat, was integral to creating a better future for urban areas, where no one was left behind and cities became hubs of innovation, inclusive development and shared prosperity.