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Normative and operational activities of UN-Habitat,
including reporting on the programmatic activities of
UN-Habitat and the implementation of
subprogrammes, flagship programmes and technical
cooperation activities and the engagement of
UN-Habitat in countries, territories and areas affected
by conflict and disaster

Highlights of normative and operational activities for the period January–June 2023**

Annex to the report of the Executive Director on normative and operational activities of UN-Habitat, including an update on SDG Cities, the Sustainable Urban Resilience for the Next Generation (SURGe) initiative and activities for the period January–June 2023 (HSP/EB.2023/17)

I.   Activities towards implementation of the strategic plan

1.   Under **Subprogramme 1** on 'Reduced spatial inequality and poverty', UN-Habitat continues to reposition sustainable and adequate housing as a key component for the accelerated implementation of the SDGs. During the reporting period, UN-Habitat's activities reached 69,000 and 18,200 people respectively with improved water and sanitation in Tanzania; 27,000 people with participatory slum upgrading interventions in Madagascar[1], 958,000 people with improved connectivity and green mobility, including support to start-ups and rapid bus transit in 10 cities globally; engaged with housing, land and property rights for Syrian refugees in Lebanon and in Iraq with 17,326 claims registered using the Secure Tenure Domain Model[2].

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* HSP/EB.2023/10.

** The present document is being issued without formal editing.

[1] PPAB Madagascar: des projets transformatifs réalisés et en cours. December 2023. Jon Andry

[2] Global Land Tool Network. UN-Habitat 2023

2.   The Secretary-General's Report on Inclusive Policies and Programmes to Address Homelessness [3] was finalized with UN-Habitat support. It proposes to redefine homelessness and the needed responses.

3.   The success of the global policy cooperation on adequate housing led to the adoption of the two resolutions during the second UN Habitat Assembly in June 2023: the resolution on 'adequate housing for all' and the resolution on 'accelerating the transformation of informal settlements and slums by 2030'. Both resolutions restate the integrative concept of housing and its centrality as a vehicle to deliver spatial equity and thus accelerate sustainable urban development. The Global Action Plan on Accelerating Slum Transformation mobilised 16 Southern Africa Development Community member countries in a sub-regional strategic framework. Strategic messages on access to water informed the work of Global Water Operator Partnership Alliance and created synergies with UN-Habitat's operations on waste management and plastic pollution in informal settlements and slums.

4.   UN-Habitat and the Government of Iraq collaborated on drafting a legal decree to recognize Yazidi minority's land rights, approved in December 2022. It recognizes and grants land ownership and property rights for the Yazidi minority in 11 collective townships (mujamma'ats) in Sinjar district, Iraq, formalizing the occupancy certificates issued by UN-Habitat.

5.   UN-Habitat continues to address spatial inequality and poverty through its work on urban-rural linkages, integrating livelihoods in territorial development. In March, the Mérida Communique [4] was adopted by a group of 60 experts from research institutions, governments, UN agencies and civil society organizations. The Communique urges all stakeholders to address the growing territorial imbalance between urban and rural areas.

6.   Within the **Subprogramme 2** on 'Enhanced shared prosperity of cities and regions' there has been a strong focus on national urban policies, localizing the SDGs and smart cities.

7.   National urban policy cooperation in Senegal, Guinea and Comoros has enhanced urban territorial development, informed by major regional events such as the African Ministerial session on national urban policies. The National Urban Policy Database indicates the quantity and quality of progress made by countries in urban policy development. Technical cooperation and field operations have led to projects that enhance sustainable development within cities, such as the 'Sustainable Cities: Integrated approach pilot' in India. The project infuses sustainability strategies into planning and management of cities, building resilience and strengthening their governance capacity. In Egypt, after the endorsement of a new National Urban Policy, UN-Habitat is supporting policy implementation at national and local levels. This includes a revised city planning guidance that improves planning and development practices, advances investments and accelerates SDGs in cities. In Palestine, support from UN-Habitat to the government culminated in the adoption of a National Urban Policy.

8.   The integrated support that UN-Habitat is providing on SDG localization is anchored around five components: Global Urban Monitoring Framework, Voluntary Local Reviews (VLR), SDG Cities, multilevel governance and Local2030 coalition. It is delivered through:

   i.   Technical cooperation: UN-Habitat is supporting SDG localization processes and specifically VLRs in Bosnia, Costa Rica, Finland, Georgia, Ghana, Jordan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Palestine, Philippines, Serbia, Tajikistan, Thailand, the Gambia, Tunisia, Tanzania and Uganda. The SDG Cities flagship programme continues to expand its operation with a focus on Ghana and Tunisia amongst others.

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[3] Inclusive Policies and Programmes to Address Homelessness. July 2023. United Nations General Assembly.

[4] Recovering territorial balance by strengthening Urban-Rural Linkages Towards a Global Partnership to Promote Urban-Rural Linkages Approach. June 2023. UN-Habitat

ii. Capacity building: a new module on territorial planning for SDG localization is being finalized and was piloted in a regional training organized with the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) in Amman, Jordan, with participants from 7 countries.

iii. Advocacy: some 40 events were organized, including at the High-Level Political Forum in New York (July 2023), to advance the localization agenda globally.

iv. Knowledge development: UN-Habitat's corporate *sdglocalization.org* platform was launched, along with an online hub on *multilevelgovernance.org*. In addition, UN-Habitat has been leading the development of a UN Policy Paper on VLRs, in partnership with UNDESA, UCLG and UNDP.

9. UN-Habitat has been steering the work of the Local 2030 coalition secretariat, including high level engagement during the SDG Summit and the launch of the call for proposals on SDG localization under the Joint SDG Fund, in addition to providing continuous coordination support among UN Agencies on localization.

10. The 'Rapid Own Source Revenue Analysis' tool is tested further to increase locally generated revenues. This tool has facilitated increased investment to cities as it allows optimizing their own revenues and quantifying revenue leakages while identifying points for management reforms. A pilot project is run in Kisumu, Kenya, and similar activities are ongoing in other cities in Kenya, Zambia and Somalia.

11. As part of smart city development support by UN-Habitat in the Arab region, 'Smart Madinah Forum' initiative promotes people centered and SDG-smart cities and propagates the deployment and integration of frontier technologies and innovations for cities. A capacity building programme on 'Digital rights for public sector officials' was conducted in Tirana, Albania.

12. Under the **subprogramme 3** on 'Strengthened climate action and improved urban environment', the Sustainable Urban Resilience for the Next Generation (SURGe), launched by the first Ministerial Meeting on Urbanization and Climate Change at COP27, reached several milestones during the reporting period. This includes finalization of a value proposition and piloting of SURGe in Fiji, Egypt and Morocco. The COP28 Presidency confirmed that a second Ministerial Meeting will take place at COP28 and bring together ministers, mayors and other urban and climate experts to discuss how local level climate finance can be accelerated.

13. Both the importance of the Ministerial Meeting outcomes and SURGe were anchored in a resolution on 'Enhancing the interlinkage between urbanization and climate change' which was passed at the second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly in June. The resolution highlights the importance of cities and local governments' action against climate change and their role in shaping the Nationally Determined Commitments.

14. Highlights of the 'Resilience for urban poor communities – RISE UP' flagship programme also included implementation of nature-based solutions for climate resilience in several vulnerable communities. Solutions for Morondava (Madagascar) included adapting to the impacts of storm surges and saltwater intrusion by afforesting 89 hectares of mangrove forest and desilting water channels. In Lilongwe (Malawi), RISE UP supported prevention of fluvial floods by vegetative cover restoration to slow down the run-off water. Interventions in Honiara (Solomon Islands) focused on slope stabilization along the riverbanks of Mataniko River, which have increased the resilience of informal settlements.

15. UN-Habitat's contributions to biodiversity included support to land-based marine plastic litter action plans in six cities and to the implementation of community and city level priority actions in the Philippines. An ASEAN regional workshop was held jointly with UNEP to support replication across the region in conjunction with the Asia-Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development.

16.   During the reporting period, **Subprogramme 4**, 'Effective urban crisis prevention and response', finalized an institutional plan on solutions to displacement. This plan sums up the contributions of UN-Habitat to the 31 commitments from the Action Agenda for IDPs of the UN Secretary-General. It recognizes UN-Habitat's key role within the UN system to help drive solutions in urban areas, with a focus on data, urban planning, land and housing.

17.   With the rapidly growing needs as well as unprecedented numbers of the displaced (108 million as of January[5]) including in Ukraine, Sudan and after the earthquake in Turkiye and Syria, UN-Habitat continues to adapt its existing practices and methodologies to better address the displacement and migration challenges.

18.   The joint project with UNHCR that fosters local communities of solidarity for migrants and refugees from Venezuela in six countries in Latin America progressed with the design of public spaces and urban planning data and technical advisory services to municipalities.

II.   Activities to advance issues of social inclusion

19.   Phase two of the 'Youth 2030 Cities' project was started which promotes meaningful inclusion of young people in SDG localization. A Youth Advisory Board was introduced to provide strategic advice to UN-Habitat in the achievement of the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs.

20.   The second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly and the High-Level Political Forum led to the development of 'Youth DeclarActions on Sustainable Development'. Finally, UN-Habitat and the Plan International signed a memorandum to advance young people's inclusion in sustainable development processes.

21.   UN-Habitat strengthened its integration into the UN human rights system through engagement with the Universal Period Review process and, in this context, promoted the fundamentality of sustainable urban development and the participation of local authorities for the realization of the human rights.

III.   Technical support and collaboration on knowledge and data

22.   UN-Habitat is leading a global consortium and the European Commission on 'degree of urbanization' (DEGURBA) methodology, endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission in 2018, that enables more consistent evaluation of development progress across the world's cities, towns and rural areas. The method has been implemented with the help of UN-Habitat in 145 cities in 14 countries[6]. A greater number of countries have been consulted on the DEGURBA methodology or have applied its definitions independently. The second phase of DEGURBA project, from 2023 till 2026, expands implementation of the methodology to an additional 65 countries, with a goal of enabling more meaningful geographic comparisons and monitoring of key urban development indicators.

23.   In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, UN-Habitat designed the 'Quality of Life' initiative, supported by the national Quality of Life Program Center and a coalition of countries. The initiative reconceptualizes 'quality of life' and creates a globally relevant, locally applicable index to monitor quality of life in cities. Building on the Global Urban

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[5] UNHCR, 2023.

[6] In Azerbaijan, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Egypt, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Malawi, Mexico, Nepal, Peru, Philippines and Tunisia

Monitoring Framework, the index is designed as a decision support tool for subnational governments to monitor the change in quality of life within a territory.

24. UN-Habitat presented at the 2023 High-Level Political Forum its second global synthesis report on the progress on the achievement of the SDG 11. The 'Rescuing SDG 11 for a Resilient Urban Planet' report finds that, halfway into the Agenda 2030 implementation, the world is far off track in achieving the SDG 11. Out of the six indicators with adequate country data, only two indicators - on waste management (11.6.2) and on public spaces (11.7.1) - were at a "moderate distance to the target," while the remaining four targets on housing (11.1.1), transportation (11.2.1), air quality (11.6.2) and disaster management (11.b.2) were all evaluated to be "far from target".