

Minutes of the 64th Ad-Hoc Working Group on Programmatic, Budgetary, and Administrative matters

[Secretariat's notes in square brackets; Grey highlighted text signals changes requested by Member States and amendments made by the Secretariat and/or indications where requests were already reflected]

CHAIR:

- Reminds that guidance and comments of Member States - today inputs are sought for a final draft to be submitted as in-session document to the Executive Board

Opening remarks by the DED:

- Purpose today is to advance work on draft Strategic Plan (SP)
- For easy orientation, Secretariat has prepared overview of what changed
- Reminds delegations of deadline – submitting latest draft as in-session document to the next session of the Executive Board (submit text to UNON conference services Wednesday, latest Thursday this week)
- Based on Member States' guidance and agreement we hope to proceed

Presentation by the Secretariat on recent changes made

- Changes for clarity and style
- Changes on request by Member States (both technical and substantive)
- Changes on language – from the New Urban Agenda (NUA) or UN-Habitat Assembly resolutions

PORTUGAL

- Comments on the process:
 - o Did not expect a line by line negotiated document. Comments verbally exposed in the room were expected to have as much weight as those sent in writing
 - o There were clear comments from a lot of delegations that those changes recently made are not acceptable
 - o Future comments and any comments should be accompanied by a note verbale; an online platform should be set up so that all Member States can see the comments
- Comments on language itself: marginalised communities vs. people in vulnerable situations
 - o The first one is broader; it includes groups experiencing systemic exclusion; for us it would be normal that UN-Habitat works on this; we heard comments on these terms allowing for irresponsible readings, but for us it is necessary that UN-Habitat complies to the UN charter that emphasises equal rights for all
 - o But we also said if it is in the NUA and if the context is appropriate, we can support it. It is not ideal but as NUA in general refers to the usage of “people in vulnerable situations” we can accept it. But, changing from marginalised to people in vulnerable situations is not the same as simply deleting it as was done on one of the outcomes
 - o Gender-related language: Let us be clear: SDG 5 is achieving gender equality; also, NUA refers to gender equality. We did not find once the term mainstreaming gender equality. Even in the UN-Habitat Assembly resolution that the Secretariat refers to it says achieving gender equality - not

mainstreaming. This is because mainstreaming is only a process to an outcome. The SP should have the outcome as achieving gender equality, and not mainstreaming. We can have mainstreaming, but it always has to be coupled with achieving gender equality as outcome.

- Comments paragraph by paragraph:
 - o Executive summary and paragraph 28: In the expected global impact there is a need to add: “in particular those in vulnerable situations” [added as suggested]
 - o Executive summary and paragraph 53: Outcome 2 says “mainstreaming” which is fine but every time we need to add “and achieving gender equality“ [added as suggested]
 - o paragraph 17 refers to NUA, OP 165, when talking about an overarching paragraph, but OP 165 is very context-specific. We propose to change this to NUA, OP 15 sub para c. It will then read: Therefore, (..) UNH will leverage its capacity to support MS to adopt a sustainable, people-centred, age and gender responsive and integrated approach to (...) [amended as suggested]
 - o paragraph 20: introduce “in particular, those in vulnerable situations” [added as suggested]
 - o paragraph 30: must read “decent jobs”, but has already been corrected here
 - o paragraph 39: between “and can hinder.. and ...pollution and floods” we do not have a specific suggestion for reformulation, but request to rephrase it as the way it is written now underscores that these are environmental effects of climate change, which is not the case [revised language suggested]
 - o paragraph 53: should read mainstreaming and achieving gender equality [added as suggested]

COLOMBIA

- Acknowledges that the process is not easy. Understand and appreciate putting together all request and differences in position, thank you for trying. The process that you followed is according to what is used to be done in the framework of the informal AHWG
- Acknowledges adjustments made in the outcome on participatory multi-level governance: it addresses issues raised by Member States in last sessions and refines clarity while remaining the essential focus (i.e., equitable governance and inclusive participation).
- Recognises revisions made to paragraph 12, by focusing on convergence of crisis affecting urban areas. New version has clearer and more accessible narratives. It also deepens the focus on the human impact of the crisis, moving beyond infrastructure concerns to highlight how urban inequalities are exacerbated. Adjustments underscore the need for inclusive urban resilience and reflect the holistic understanding of the social, economic and environmental dimensions of urbanization. We hope this new version will foster greater consensus among Member States, particular those sensitive to the inclusion of certain politically charged references.
- Recognises revisions in paragraph 46 with clearer emphasis on empowering specific groups, which reflects a significant step towards inclusivity by explicitly highlighting the effects of global housing crisis on these groups, the new version strengthens a focus on equity and human rights. We commend the inclusivity of this approach, and believe it would be further strengthened by including people of African descent [included as

suggested]. Similar to other groups highlighted in the para, they experience specific challenges and disproportionate impacts in urban environments that warrant recognition. We are however open to considering flexible wording that acknowledges other affected groups, ensuring that the SP remains inclusive and reflective of diverse realities faced by marginalised communities.

- We welcome the inclusion and emphasis on gender equality and women's empowerment that features strongly in the governance and implementation framework. We hope this will also work as consensus between the Member States present
- Significant enhancement is the introduction of a more comprehensive Monitoring Framework that builds on results-based management principles. A clear definition of impact, outcomes, and outputs enhance accountability;
- Generally, the articulation of the SP with resolutions adopted in the past reinforces the SP's relevance and coherence; it also strengthens alignment with UN-Habitat's strategic direction and its broader mandate

COSTA RICA

- Thanks the ED and the Secretariat for this tremendous effort
- Portugal has already said many things we wanted to say
- Proposal is still under review by our headquarters, particularly the human rights department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- We regret that human rights language is being backtracked
- We reserve our right to come back later with specific comments
- Will appreciate a document in track changes as has been shown this morning

MEXICO

- Thanks the Secretariat for monumental work to try accommodate Member States' priorities and perspectives;
- We commend the inclusion of climate change within the global challenges section
- Would like to see more references to migration, internal displacement, refugee crisis and its impact in cities in order to better integrate these issues in the Programme's work [included in paragraph 38]
- On gender mainstreaming, we recognise there was a need to find compromise but we deeply regret that language related to human rights-based approaches and gender-based approaches were deleted [or diluted?]; the same happened with marginalised groups.
- We believe that the seven aspects of adequate housing should continue to guide UN-Habitat's work, particularly tenure security
- On the Monitoring Framework: how are you planning to integrate quantitative and qualitative indicators, what does it entail and how does it look like? [response integrated in new paragraph 91] We propose to consider the pact principles [was not audible clearly] along with smart principles to leverage UN-Habitat's impact, since they also consider the process itself and not only the results
- We can support all language proposed by Portugal

NETHERLANDS

- We support comments by Costa Rica and Portugal, both content and on process

- We regret the changed the changed language in human rights and gender.
- We do not understand why we hear from the Secretariat that we stick to the agreed language from the NUA but then we see omissions in the references, such as on NUA gender equality and people in vulnerable situations. Paragraph 13 c reads `achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls`. We hope to see this language reflected in the new document [already reflected in paragraph 23, addressed additionally in paragraphs 31 and 53].

GERMANY

- Appreciates efforts to align the draft more consistently with the language of the NUA
- Strongly supports comments made by Portugal and supports inclusion of terms that are more specific and explicitly reflect the needs of vulnerable urban communities and of specific marginalised groups
- Stresses that terms that have been established in the NUA and other UN frameworks internationally agreed should be welcome in the SP. This includes specific terms: gender-based violence and marginalised communities. However, our delegation remains open to deliberations on this language and we hope we can accommodate this objective.
- Believes that as part of the UN system, UN-Habitat must ensure that its work fully aligns with established human rights principles, including gender diversity, non-discrimination and inclusion of all marginalised communities. We believe that addressing human rights, gender equality and inclusivity is essential for a just and sustainable urban development. These principles are critical to build resilience, equitable and reliant cities for all and should be highly reflected in the SP [articulated in paragraph 20]

EGYPT

- Thanks for the progress made, welcomes the new version
- It is more relevant to the work on programme, also less contentious and controversial
- There are still some minor comments that will be sent in writing
- Question on next steps: when are you sending it to translation? Some new comments will come and Member States need to know next steps in order to be ready with our comments on the final draft

BRAZIL

- Takes note of the new version
- Recognises Secretariat's efforts in addressing concerns of some MS while maintaining consistency with agreed language and multilateral commitments, particularly the SDGs and the NUA
- We echo comments made by other delegations
- Understand that this is not a line-by-line negotiation
- Encourages Secretariat to apply a more consistent approach in conducting this process to avoid asymmetries in the negotiation process
- Appreciates revisions made on implementation and monitoring, which takes into account inputs provided by Member States; encourages further refinement of the section to ensure a robust and effective framework for tracking progress
- Underscores the importance of clearly defining roles and responsibilities within UN-Habitat for the implementation of the SP. To this end, we request the inclusion of a topic

on accountability of implementation within UN-Habitat; ensuring transparency and effectiveness in delivering on the SP objectives [included in paragraph 80]

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

- Thanks the Secretariat for outstanding work trying to incorporate the concerns of a large number of delegations while maintaining agreed language without meeting any lacunas of definitions
- Notes that the notion of gender equality, human rights and violence are addressed in the draft – especially related to priorities of UN-Habitat; Given that this is a strategic plan for a specified agency working on housing, this is the right approach
- Recognise the need to be consistent with the process and be in time and encourage Member States to refrain from propositions that might make us spend more time than necessary on this important document

ALGERIA

- Appreciates the Secretariat for considering Member States' views in the new draft
- Welcomes approach of being inclusive and transparent
- Commend Secretariat for new foundation and the language on people in vulnerable situations, gender mainstreaming and gender equality. This is relevant to UN-Habitat's work and its mandate
- Stress that SP elaboration should be inclusive and transparent and respect national context
- Echoes question by Egypt on next steps
- Reserves right for further comments on new amendments on the document

CHAIR:

- Secretariat should take note of concerns of Member States raised concerning the need to still improve the process
- It is important to highlight that these are informal consultations, no technical negotiations.
- Yet, some issues still remain regarding the language on human rights and gender. Effort by the Secretariat was to bring in language of the NUA. Still there are differences. Let us keep open to find ways of anticipating a way to find consensus.

SGB (Ulf Björnholm):

- One more opportunity to have another iteration: hard deadline to submit the SP for the UN-Habitat Assembly is 6 March 2025 (translation).
- The AHWG PBA on 5 March 2025 provides one more opportunity to look at new iteration to submit as pre-session doc for assembly, which also would be background doc for the Executive Board, with the opportunity to provide recommendation of the Executive Board to the UN-Habitat Assembly for adoption
- Asks Member States to send comments as soon as possible but no later than Friday noon.

PORTUGAL

- Reiterates that comments in writing should be made available to other delegations on a platform

COSTA RICA

- Reminds of the importance of circulating the document in track changes - it will ease the task ahead

Language proposed in writing during and after the meeting:

EGYPT

- Paragraph 46: to add in the end of the paragraph "and other Urbanization hardships".
[integrated with slight stylistic amendment]

requests to delete what is highlighted in red as follows:

- 1- Paragraph 20. delete "and anchored in international human rights standards".
- 2- Paragraph 31. delete "and harassment".
- 3- Paragraph 46. delete "and girls".
- 4- Paragraph 63. delete "between institutions and government" and "and aligns with international guidelines".

[all done as requested]

MOROCCO

- 1- The importance of preserving architectural heritage while respecting the specificities of each region, according to SDG 11 and its target 11.4 on strengthening efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage; [included in paragraph 40]
- 2- With regard to the implementation guidance of the axes of the 2026-2029 strategic plan, it must be carried out through actions on the sectors of housing, territorial planning and urban management, and develop a framework for managing the actions through orientations and intervention methods by specifying them by sector and intervention tools. This will apply for instance for the two first means of implementation namely, Integrated management of territorial and urban planning, management, investment and finance and Participatory, multi-sectorial governance and localization of SDGs. [introduced with slight editing as new paragraph 80]

PORTUGAL

Insertions in **bold**, deletions in [square brackets]:

17. Against this background, UN-Habitat will focus on guiding and promoting strategic planning, synergetic investment and coherent implementation to prevent urbanization from exacerbating existing inequalities, overburdening infrastructure and increasing vulnerabilities to climate and environmental risks. Therefore, in the period of 2026-2029, UN-Habitat will actively leverage its capacity as a focal point of the United Nations system on sustainable urbanization to support **Member States to adopt sustainable, people-centred, age- and gender-responsive and integrated approaches to urban and territorial development by implementing policies, strategies, capacity development and actions at all levels, based on the**

fundamental drivers of change identified on the New Urban Agenda. [territorial systems to integrate urban and rural functions into sustainable national and subnational spatial frameworks and systems of cities and human settlements This will also include promoting integrated, polycentric and balanced territorial development policies and plans.] [amended as suggested]

Comment Portugal: NUA 15c)

GERMANY

- The Strategic Plan should outline clearly and explicitly that **human rights, gender equality, and non-discrimination** are fundamental to achieve sustainable urban development and squarely fall within UN-Habitat's mandate. [paragraph 20]
- UN-Habitat's strategic plan must align with **internationally agreed language**, particularly that of the **New Urban Agenda**.
- GER strongly advocates for the inclusion of terms in the strategic plan that explicitly **address the needs of vulnerable urban communities and marginalized groups**. Key terms such as "gender-based violence" and "marginalized communities" are internationally recognized and firmly established in the New Urban Agenda and other UN frameworks.
- If no consensus can be reached on the above-mentioned terms, we propose **adding "in all their diversity"** in paragraphs addressing the needs of women, girls, and other marginalized groups. [included in paragraph 46]
 - For example in paragraph 31: "*Well-designed networks of accessible, green and high-quality public spaces, accessible to all and free from crime and sexual harassment – in view of the urgent need to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence and harassment against women and girls in all their diversity – along with safe and equitable mobility systems, are key to promoting inclusive prosperity.*" [amended as suggested]
- GER acknowledges the importance of ensuring that **Member States support the strategic plan and adopt it** during the continued UN-Habitat Assembly in May. To achieve this, broad consensus is needed. However, this should not come at the expense of fundamental principles such as human rights, gender equality, and inclusivity, which are essential to sustainable urban development and must remain integral to the plan's narrative.
- GER underlines the need to **include reference to UN wide sector strategies related to UN Habitat's** core mandate such as the UN Systemwide Strategy on Sanitation and Water. Financial scarcity increases the need for cooperation and coordination to leverage synergies across UN agencies. [included in paragraph 73]

EUROPEAN UNION

Insertions in **bold**, deletions in [square brackets]:

16. Urbanization presents both a challenge and a significant opportunity for achieving sustainable development. When guided by proper spatial planning and managed and developed sustainably, cities and human settlements – along with their systems – can drive innovative solutions to address housing shortages, access to land, and basic services, taking the territorial dimension of sustainable development into account. To achieve [this] **economic transformation for advancing the potential of countries to conceive and implement sustainable urban and territorial development policies**, all territorial scales need adequate infrastructure and effective institutions that underpin productive and equitable economies, leaving no one behind. [amended as suggested]

21. Addressing the global housing crisis and challenges related to poverty, climate change, and humanitarian crises is key to ensuring that cities and human settlements evolve into sustainable, equitable, resilient spaces and communities where no one is left behind. **Analysing challenges and opportunities** within the broader context of sustainable urban and territorial development, UN-Habitat will focus on the opportunity to address these global challenges above through adequate housing, land, and basic services for all, including the transformation of informal settlements and slums. [amended as suggested]

76. This engagement, in turn, will help **the Member States** to mobilise resources for their own [work] **urban and territorial action** [of the Member States themselves], especially in response to the demand in developing countries and countries most in need. Beyond traditional donors, UN-Habitat will closely collaborate with multilateral development banks, international financial institutions and the private sector, leveraging its strategic focus **to promote and advance sustainable urban development**. [amended as suggested]

ALGERIA

Insertions in **bold**, deletions in [square brackets]:

12. There is a growing convergence of crises impacting urban areas. Urban centres worldwide, especially in developing countries, often have characteristics that make them and their inhabitants especially vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change and other natural and human made hazards, including earthquakes, extreme weather events, flooding, subsidence, storms, including dust and sand storms, heatwaves, water scarcity, **desertification** and droughts, water and air pollution, vector-borne diseases and sea level rise. Disasters cause \$300 billion in damages to infrastructure globally each year, with cities accounting for a significant portion of this loss. Their effects exacerbate existing inequalities and place immense pressure on urban systems, particularly in informal settlements, where infrastructure is often poor. [amended as suggested]

Comment by Algeria: Desertification, as much as droughts, forces displacements and causes internal migration.

14. As repeatedly acknowledged at the United Nations Conferences related to Human Settlements, notably in the Vancouver Declaration (1976), Habitat Agenda (1996), and New Urban Agenda (2016), effective human settlement strategies are essential for promoting inclusion, social equity and economic growth, and

human settlements are inseparable from national development. The transformative potential of urbanization lies in its ability to address spatial and social inequality, foster economic opportunities for all, create access to essential services without discrimination or exclusion, and build resilient communities across the rural-urban continuum. **Specifically, for the period of 2026-2029, UN-Habitat will focus on the tremendous opportunity to address the mentioned challenges through adequate housing, land and basic services for all and the transformation of informal settlements and slums.** [amended as suggested]

Comment: Algeria support the maintaining of this insertion. It aligns with strategic focus.

39. The interlinkages between climate change, environmental degradation, and the current global housing crisis create obstacles to effective climate adaptation and mitigation. Housing and infrastructure provisions that encourage urban sprawl and increased reliance on motorised transport lead to traffic congestion, declining green cover, and exacerbate air pollution, with detrimental effects on human health, the environment and climate change mitigation. A deficit of adequate housing aggravates the human cost of weather-related disasters and can hinder adaptation to the environmental effects of climate change - such as drought and [aridification] **desertification**, wildfires, pollution and floods - on people in vulnerable situations, especially in informal settlements and slums. [amended as suggested]

44. The means of implementation (Mol) are instruments for seeking outcome that jointly serve to attain the global impact through the strategic focus (adequate housing, land, and basic services **for all**). Two substantive and three supportive Mol have been formulated in the draft SP. To be effective and efficient, they must be used coherently in horizontal (among the Mol) and vertical (headquarters – field) collaboration. [amended as suggested]

Comment: Algeria supports keeping this insertion to be coherent with the rest of the text. All the strategic plan is build on equity and inclusiveness, basic services should be provided to all.