

## **Summary of the eight meeting of the Ad-Hoc Working Group on programmatic, budgetary, and administrative matters of the Executive Board held virtually on Monday 28 September 2020 from 14:00 am to 16:00 East Africa Time (EAT)**

Chair: H.E Ms. Julia Pataki, Permanent Representative of Romania to UN-Habitat

Co-Chair: H.E Ms. Saqlain Syedah, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to UN-Habitat

The meeting considered the following items:

### **1. Implementation of the strategic plan for the period 2020-2023: the draft capacity building strategy for implementation of Sustainable Development Goals and New Urban Agenda;**

- i. The Chair briefly recalled that in May 2019, the first session of the UN-Habitat Assembly adopted Resolution 1/3 on enhancing capacity-building for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the urban dimension of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. During its resumed meeting held in November 2019, the Executive Board requested the Executive Director to finalize the strategy in 2020.
- ii. The Chair further noted that at its first session of the year 2020, the Executive Board requested the Executive Director to further update the Executive Board on the development of the draft strategy at its second session of 2020 for possible approval at that session under Agenda item 8 of the provisional Agenda.
- iii. The Chair recalled that preliminary discussions were held on the draft capacity building strategy (the Strategy) during the meeting of the Ad-Hoc working group held on 4 March 2020. The Chair noted that the Secretariat circulated again on 22 September 2020 the [summary of discussions of the meeting of the Ad-hoc working group on programmatic, budgetary and administrative matters held on 4 March 2020](#).
- iv. The Chair noted that the Strategy as set out in document [HSP/EB.2020/13/Add.1](#), which is to be presented for consideration by the Executive Board at its second session, was circulated to Member States on 22 September 2020.
- v. The Secretariat briefed the Ad-Hoc working group on the Strategy. The full presentation by the Secretariat can be accessed [here](#).

#### **The briefing highlighted the following:**

- a. The 2 main objectives of the Strategy are to fill institutional and operational gaps within UN-Habitat for greater impact and better coordination, coherence and monitoring of results, and to improve delivery of capacity building services to Member States, local governments and other key urban stakeholders for greater impact and resource efficiency.
- b. The Strategy will (i) fill in capacity gaps to ensure sustainable urbanization, (ii) answer to the increasing demand for capacity building support by the United Nations and (iii) bring an appropriate response to UN-Habitat's internal capacity building challenges.
- c. The UN-Habitat Assembly, during its first session held in May 2019 identified gaps in capacity building for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and by the adoption of Resolution 1/3, ensured that capacity building becomes a cross cutting function within UN-Habitat.
- d. The principles of the Strategy are: consistent review of capacity building needs; prioritization for impact and scale, contextualization, strategic partnerships and coalitions, capacity-building as a cross-cutting function throughout UN-Habitat's work, corporate standards and quality assurance, innovations for efficient and

- effective capacity building.
- e. Respect for Human Rights, inclusiveness and sustainability are the values reflected in the Strategy.
- f. Outcomes are expected for people and their organizations; for UN-Habitat excellence in delivery of services and for UN-Habitat institutional environment.
- g. The target groups of the Strategy are UN-Habitat's offices and staff, national and local governments, key stakeholder groups, intermediate cities and towns and cities in fragile environments.
- h. The implementation of the Strategy will enable the following key strategic actions :
  - a) Institutional anchoring of capacity building as a cross-cutting function, b) Integration into programming and quality assurance, c) Promote innovation and new technologies for capacity building, d) Stakeholders engagement and partnerships, with a focus on academic and training institutions, e) Financing for capacity building.
- i. The following actions would be needed for the implementation of the Strategy: development of a yearly implementation plan, prioritization of activities: catalogue of services, common country analysis / UN sustainable development cooperation frameworks, and allocation of budget and staff.

## **The discussions highlighted the following:**

- a. The representative from Serbia noted that the Secretariat should in its presentation (i) emphasize more on the added value of the Strategy on UN-Habitat's ability to deliver its mandate and (ii) highlight its tangible impact on the implementation of the NUA and SDGs. It was further noted that the Secretariat should illustrate how the Strategy will allow UN-Habitat to address globally the challenges related to urbanisation. In this respect, it was recommended to use more accessible language in the Strategy.
  - b. The representative from DRC Congo noted that the Strategy referred to the implementation of SGD 11, 14 and 15 and to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and enquired how the Strategy would improve the implementation of the NUA and SDGs considering that UN-Habitat is not yet repositioned as a Centre of Excellence.
  - c. The representative from Brazil reiterated its support to the Strategy as sponsor of Resolution 1/3 adopted by the UN-Habitat Assembly and recalled that its implementation is crucial for UN-Habitat to better deliver its mandate.
  - d. The representative from Romania invited the Secretariat to provide concrete examples of requests related to capacity-building and to demonstrate how the Strategy would address such requests.
  - e. The representative from Egypt recalled the importance of adopting the Strategy during the upcoming session of the Executive Board in 2020 to enable the full implementation of the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan. It was further noted that the Strategy should relate to concrete aspects of the programme of work and its impact on the ground should be more evidenced-based. It was also suggested that the Secretariat could update frequently the Ad-hoc working group on the implementation of the Strategy even after its possible adoption by the Board in October 2020.
- vi. The Secretariat took note of the comments raised by Member States and recalled that the draft of the Strategy itself was more concrete and detailed than the presentation. The Secretariat emphasized that the yearly implementation plan would help to prioritize support and capacity development online and offline and would also be an important tool for the implementation of the Catalogue of Services. It was reiterated that the Strategy does not advocate for a generic approach but for developing very precise ideas and concrete tools in order to support its implementation in very specific contexts, with concrete results. The Secretariat provided the example of a crash course on the implementation of the NUA which is a generic tool that will be launched during Urban October.
- vii. The Secretariat further emphasized that UN-Habitat in its implementation of the Strategy should be as strategic as possible within the existing available resources, noting that the UN-Habitat capacity

building unit is a small team which provides valuable support to programme development within the Agency. The team notably supports different sections of UN-Habitat, including the Country and Regional offices, in coordination with the data unit.

- viii. The Secretariat took note of the concerns of Member States ensured that a draft implementation plan will be shared before the Executive Board to illustrate priorities of concrete and detailed services.

## 2. Implementation of the strategic plan for the period 2020–2023: the draft Accountability framework.

- i. The Chair briefly recalled that in May 2019, the first session of the UN-Habitat Assembly adopted Resolution 1/1 on the UN-Habitat strategic plan for the period 2020–2023.
- ii. Paragraph 3 (a) of Resolution 1/1 further requested the Executive Director, to submit for approval to the Executive Board an accountability framework, needed to support the implementation of the strategic plan for the period 2020-2023. The Chair noted that during its meeting held in November 2019, the Executive Board in paragraph 7 of its decision 2019/1, requested the Executive Director to submit for approval by the Executive Board at its first session of 2020 an accountability framework along with mechanisms for assessing the implementation of the framework.
- iii. The Chair recalled that because of the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the first session of the Executive Board for the year 2020 was held online with a revised provisional Agenda. At that same meeting, the Executive Board agreed in its Decision 2020/2 to consider the draft accountability framework at its second session of the year 2020.
- iv. The Chair recalled that Document [HSP/EB.2020/24](#) entitled ‘Organizational and personnel accountability within the United Nations Human Settlements Programme: implementing the accountability framework of the United Nations Secretariat’ was circulated through an electronic link with Member States on 22 September 2020 and will be presented before the second session of the Board on 27-29 October 2020 for consideration and possible adoption.
- v. The Secretariat briefed the Ad-Hoc working group on the draft accountability framework. The full presentation can be accessed [here](#).

### **The briefing highlighted the following:**

- a) The United Nations Secretariat developed an Accountability Framework pursuant to the General Assembly resolution 63/276. UN-Habitat, as part of the United Nations Secretariat, operates under the UN Secretariat accountability framework. The General Assembly resolution 64/259 defines accountability as “*the obligation of the Secretariat and its staff members to be answerable for all decisions made and actions taken by them and to be responsible for honouring their commitments, without qualification or exception.*”
- b) The different dimensions of accountability components contained in the definition of accountability are as follows:
  - Institutional accountability: UN-Habitat organizational and personnel accountability is founded upon the mission and mandates of the Programme, as approved by the governing bodies and in accordance with the provisions and principles of the Charter. UN-Habitat is accountable to its governing bodies through the Executive Director,
  - Programmatic accountability: UN-Habitat programmatic accountability is defined through its strategic plans and its approved annual programme of work. The Executive Director is accountable and responsible for all the activities of UN-Habitat, as well as its administration.

- Resource accountability: UN-Habitat managers and staff members are accountable for the effective management of the human, financial, physical, information and contractual resources entrusted to them. Managers are accountable to the Executive Directors on the use of resources.
  - Staff accountability: Staff are accountable for exercising their authority and achieving agreed results as outlined in their individual performance appraisals. Staff are accountable to the managers on their performance.
- c) The accountability framework is articulated around 5 pillars:
1. **Results:** high-quality, timely and cost-effective;
  2. **Delivery:** Fully implementing and delivering on all mandates to the Secretariat;
  3. **Reporting** Truthful, objective, accurate, timely
  4. **Stewardship:** Responsible use of funds and resources;
  5. **Performance:** System of rewards and sanctions; key role of the oversight bodies
- e) The accountability framework is articulated around 5 principles:
1. **Integrity:** Maintaining a sense of duty and purpose to uphold the values of the United Nations and to act with honesty and with the best interest of the Organization in mind;
  2. **Transparency:** Making timely information relating to the activities of the organization accessible to all stakeholders;
  3. **Decentralization:** Delegating authority at all levels of management, to bring decision-making closer to the point of delivery, while ensuring transparency and accountability;
  4. **Simplicity:** Establishing a policy framework that is fit for purpose and easy to understand, interpret and apply;
  5. **Diversity:** Accommodating a global organization with a culturally and geographically diverse, gender-balanced, international and multitalented workforce, through an effective and easily accessible policy framework.
- f) The instruments of the accountability framework are:
1. The Charter of the United Nations;
  2. The Programme mission and mandates: GA resolutions 3327, 32/162, 56/206 2. New Urban Agenda 3. SDGs (SDG11);
  3. Strategic and programme planning and budgeting 1. Quadrennial strategic plan 2. Annual Programme of Work and Budget;
  4. Results and Performance: Institutional Performance 2. Leadership Performance 3. Individual Performance;
  5. Internal Controls Systems: 1. Rules, Regulations 2. Policies, Procedures 3. Delegation of Authorities. 4. Enterprise Risk Management 5. IPSAS 6. SAP Umoja.
  6. Oversight functions: United Nations Joint Inspection Unit (UNJIU), the Office of Internal oversight Services (OIOS), the United Nations Board of Auditors (UNBOA)
  7. Ethical standards and integrity :1. Office of Ethics 2. Regulation and Rules that Define the Ethical Standards 3. Conflict of Interest Policies 4. Financial Disclosure Programme 5. Protection from Retaliation 6. Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

- g) The actors in the implementation of the accountability framework are the UN-Habitat Governing bodies, the Secretary-General and the United Nations Secretariat, the Executive Director and the Programme Secretariat and Programme personnel.
- h) The assessment and monitoring of accountability is ensured via:
  - 1. The Executive Board: review of, among other things, the annual report on the implementation of the Programme's strategic plan, the progress report on its financial status, the report on staffing and the report on recruitment, equitable geographical distribution and gender parity;
  - 2. The Annual review and strengthening of Secretariat accountability by the Secretary-General and the General Assembly;
  - 3. The Management review by the Joint Inspection Unit: In 2021, the Joint Inspection Unit is scheduled to conduct an independent review of the management and administration of UN-Habitat;
  - 4. The Annual external audit by the Board of Auditors;
  - 5. The Annual internal audits, investigations, inspections and evaluations by the Office of Internal Oversight Services;
  - 6. Continuous monitoring by the Business Transformation and Accountability Division of the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance;
  - 7. Independent evaluations: Independent Evaluation Unit established in January 2012.
  - 8. Continuous oversight of the accountability system and risk management processes: a risk oversight and accountability committee at the senior management level;
  - 9. Certification of internal controls: Certification of the adequacy of the internal control system from 2021;
  - 10. In-house focal point for conduct and discipline.

## **Member States took note of the briefing by the Secretariat.**

- vi. The representative from Serbia took the opportunity to raise an issue related to the reference to Kosovo in some of recent UN-Habitat's publications and recalled that any reference to Kosovo in United Nations documents and United Nations websites, whether to the territory, institutions or population, is to be understood in full compliance with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo. The Secretariat took note of the concern from the representative of Serbia.

## **4. Any other matters**

- i. The Chair recalled that in addition to this meeting, another meeting of the Ad-Hoc working group will be scheduled mid-October 2020 to give the opportunity to the Secretariat to brief Member States on the interim financial status of UN-Habitat and to present to the Ad-hoc working group, the ACABQ report on the draft work programme and budget of UN-Habitat for the year 2021, which will be presented to the Executive Board at its upcoming second session.
- ii. The date of that meeting will be communicated by the Secretariat once the date of receipt by UN-Habitat of the ACABQ report has been communicated by that Committee. The date of the meeting should not conflict with the 7<sup>th</sup> annual subcommittee meeting of the Committee of Representatives of UNEP scheduled from 12 to 16 October 2020.

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