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2022 FIRST SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD, 29 – 31 March 2022

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UN-Habitat Executive Board  
A better quality of life for all in an urbanizing world

# Summary of Plenary Discussions and Outcomes

*Third Daily Journal (Draft)*

DAY 3 - Thursday, 31 March 2022

## Agenda item 12: Action by UN-Habitat to strengthen protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment in the workplace.

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The Executive Director assured that adequate safeguards were in place and that appropriate actions were taken both to prevent and respond to allegations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), or sexual harassment in the workplace.

The Secretariat highlighted that a copy of the Management Letter had been provided to the Executive Board, certifying that any credible allegations of SEA during the past year were reported. UN-Habitat's corporate-level risk mitigation strategy for preventing SEA was updated and submitted.

Since the last meeting of the Board, there had been one allegation of sexual harassment against a UN-Habitat Staff member. The Executive Director reaffirmed UN-Habitat's commitment to the Secretary-General's "zero tolerance" vision for the UN.

The Secretariat informed that the UN-Habitat Action Plan to strengthen protection against SEA and sexual harassment in the workplace was submitted to the Secretary-General in June 2020. Actions taken thus far, based on the Action Plan submitted to the Secretary-General include:

- Advocacy for the 'Model Code of Conduct';
- The 'Speak Up App', which was developed as a safe medium for all staff and personnel to better understand the PSEA policy;
- A global focal point system for PSEA, which was established to provide regular touch-base meetings;
- Reminders that staff complete mandatory training on PSEA;
- HQ-based staff members who have been appointed to keep a register of cases;

- The Chief of Staff and the Director of Management, Administration and Compliance Services (MACS), who meet the staff union every month to provide a platform for staff concerns;
- Plans to increase the number of targeted training sessions;
- An appeal to Member States for expertise, JPOs or soft-earmarked funds to enable us to better advocate, monitor and develop training programmes or normative guidelines.

## Interventions

The **Chair** commended the Secretariat for the briefing and asked about how UN-Habitat monitored PSEA with respect to programmes implemented by partners in the field.

**USA** reiterated its commitment to PSEA and support for a zero-tolerance policy. USA encouraged the Secretariat to follow and act upon the report of the Secretary-General on 'Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse'. USA encouraged the Secretariat to explore how a gender lens can be incorporated into UN-Habitat's work in line with the Secretary General's report. The representative asked questions on implementing the recommendations of the Secretary General's report, with respect to training, work with partners, policy enforcement and action taken against rule-breakers.

**Sweden** welcomed the report, highlighting its importance in sustaining the credibility of the Organisation. The representative reminded the Board that zero reports does not necessarily mean zero cases.



The Secretariat noted the concerns expressed by Member States, particularly from the United States and Sweden, and promised to work on a framework for the reporting. The Secretariat reiterated the lack of resources for a dedicated staff member to coordinate and oversee this important function.

## Agenda item 13: Annual report on action by the

# Executive Director to update and improve the internal management, policies and procedures of UN-Habitat

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The Executive Director recalled that she focused her reform efforts on four broad areas: (a) enhancing the new governance structure; (b) a new strategic plan; (c) internal change process; and (d) organisational restructuring. She noted that her first term as Executive Director gave her the opportunity to highlight UN-Habitat's continued vision and the relevance of the Programme in each region, while the goal of second term is to continue with the reform process and reposition the organisation.

It was recalled that the Executive Board in the November 2021 session endorsed the "3-lens approach" which was introduced during the CPR high-level midterm review to guide the recalibration. The proposed three lenses are:

- Responding to new vulnerabilities and risks in cities
- Preparing cities' function and form to new crises and adapting to the future in terms of resilience and climate change

- Creating conditions for long-term socioeconomic urban recovery that help overcome spatial inequality and address the climate emergency

The Secretariat informed that UN-Habitat was now leading the United Nations Task Force on the Future of Cities, the Local 2030 Global Campaign, the UN System-Wide Strategy on Sustainable Urban Development, and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee framework for engagement of local governments in humanitarian operations. Once again, it was highlighted that resource constraints posed a serious problem. Specifically, the Organization noted that without general-purpose funds, UN-Habitat could not adequately fulfil its core mandate of UN systemwide coordination.

The Secretariat noted that the Executive Director had continuously engaged with UN-Habitat staff through several different means. Meanwhile, the Project Review Committee had ensured that programmes were co-created through a whole-of-house approach, meeting requirements on ESSS and evaluation, gender and social inclusion and corporate communications. The Executive Director had also delegated the review of all projects under USD 2 million to regional-level Project Review Committees.

Furthermore, the donor reporting rate had improved from 62% in 2020 to 78% in 2021. To keep donors updated, the Urban Impact newsletter was published four times a year. The Executive Director also embarked

on a critical review of priority outstanding project grants dating back to 2015.

During the past year, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the Programme had seen substantial operational growth. Implementation rates largely improved over the prior year, notably in partnership agreements, where the rate of implementation is up 50%.

Heeding guidance from the Executive Board, the Executive Director would be establishing a Budget Steering Committee to achieve corporate goals and targets for the Programme. In 2022, the Executive Director will establish the Project Support Cost (PSC) and Cost Recovery Policy as recommended by the Board of Auditors.

## Interventions

**USA** reiterated the role of the Executive Board as the lead Governing Body. They requested more information on the internal change process, as well as the first draft of the Programme Support Cost Policy.

**Cameroon** followed up on the monitoring and evaluation of the New Urban Agenda (NUA) and requested that it be extended to other countries.





**Kenya** supported the fourth pillar of the reform on implementing and supporting NUA. She confirmed secondment of two staff to be assigned to the UN-Habitat Kenya Country office.

**Angola** took note of the call for Member States to honour contributions to the work of UN-Habitat. Having had high-level representation at the session in the form of the presence of the Minister of Public Works and Territorial Planning, Angola is committed to honour the Country's contribution.

**DR Congo** congratulated the Executive Director on measures she had taken to improve the Organization's performance. The representative, however, also

expressed concerns about challenges faced by the subregional office.

**Yemen** confirmed that the Country was making all efforts to restore peace in the Country. They also requested an update on UN-Habitat Yemen country programme.

**Cameroon, Kenya, Angola, DR Congo, Egypt and South Sudan** commented on the Annual Report and efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization. They expressed concern at the impact of the internal restructuring on the performance of the Regional Office for Africa (ROAS) and recommended that ROAf be strengthened.

**Agenda item 14 :**  
**Progress made in the  
implementation of the  
working methods of the  
Executive Board  
pursuant to its decision  
2020/6, and on the basis**

of a survey conducted by the secretariat following the request by the Executive Board at its second session of 2021 to evaluate the effectiveness of that session so as to further improve the process and outcome of future sessions, including discussions on the schedule of future sessions of the Board

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The Executive Director recalled the functions of the Executive Board as set out in Rule 5 of the Rules of Procedure. In line with that and following the second

session of 2021, UN-Habitat facilitated the preparation of the survey with the aim to evaluate the effectiveness of that session and explore ways to further improve both the process and outcome of future sessions. The Executive Director reaffirmed her commitment to supporting governing bodies in their work.

The Secretariat confirmed that that the survey response rate was 23.3 per cent. The survey focused on six structured sections namely:

- The alignment of the functions and competence of the Executive Board with the provisional Agenda of the sessions of the Board;
- Pre-session documents;
- Briefing by the Executive Director;
- The number of sessions per year of the Executive Board;
- Preparations and implementation of the 2021 second session of the Executive Board;
- Other items.



The overview of the results showed that, overall, the functions and competence of the Executive Board were viewed as being aligned with the provisional agenda of the sessions of the Board, guided by the Bureau. The Secretariat is considered to be adhering strongly to the rules of procedure that guide the provision of pre-session documents. Briefings by the Executive Director were viewed as informative, and respondents felt that they should remain as an active tool of dialogue.

The survey respondents' choice of meeting modality (online or hybrid) rested largely on two factors: the COVID-19 situation and cost implications for the Programme. Respondents also suggested that determination of the appropriate duration of sessions and the allocation of time for statements and deliberation of key matters could be improved.

# Cycle of preparation of the annual draft work programme and budget of UN-Habitat

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The Secretariat recalled that the first session of UN-Habitat's Executive Board was usually held between February and June for organisational purposes. The Secretariat proposed the month of April as the most suitable time for the alignment of the Executive Board session in light of the budgetary decisions and discussion that emanate from the New York. In addition, UN-Habitat suggested that adequate space should be left between each meeting to allow for the preparation of documentations.

## Interventions

**USA** recalled that in decision 2020/6, the Executive Board requested that a survey be conducted no later than 10 days after each meeting and expressed concern that it was the first time the survey had been conducted since that decision. USA indicated that despite the low response rate, the results indicated that the Executive Board functioned well. The representative noted that the Executive Board should remain flexible on the length of

the sessions providing adequate time for discussions in a 3-day session rather than a 2-day session.

In view of comments made, the Chair suggested that the upcoming Bureau review and assess how the survey is structured and conducted.

**Poland** recalled the efforts to restructure the Governing Bodies of UN-Habitat with the objective of enhancing communication, transparency and understanding of the Organization. They also highlighted the need to streamline UN-Habitat's Governing Bodies to ensure cost efficiency.

The Secretariat clarified that the survey was not about how UN-Habitat did its work but rather it was member States who wished to know how well they were governing the Organization. The Secretariat further clarified that following the decision on survey the Organization immediately send questions to, inter-alia, the Chair and the Bureau and the consultations on the questions went on for a while before a final agreement and subsequent to which the survey was sent out to Member States. In addition, the Organization had to extend the deadline due to the low response rate from Member States. In the end, only 24 countries responded.

Informal consultations on draft decisions were held at the end of the morning plenary discussions. The plenary session resumed at 5:30pm.

# Agenda item 15: Consideration and adoption of the outcomes of the session, including the provisional agenda for the second session of 2022.

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The Executive Board adopted the provisional Agenda for its next session to be held for two or three days between 15 – 17 November 2022 subject to availability of funds.

The following decisions were adopted by the Executive Board:

1. **Decision 2022/[A]:** Draft work programme of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and draft budget of the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation for 2023, and financial, budgetary, and administrative matters of UN-Habitat
2. **Decision 2022/[B]:** Implementation of the normative and operational activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme



3. **Decision 2022/[C]:** Methods of work of the Executive Board and the work plan of the Executive Board for 2022
4. **Decision 2022/[D]:** Election of officers of the Bureau of the Executive Board for the term 2022–2023

The Chair congratulated all Member States for their hard work and inputs.

## Agenda item 16: Election of officers of the Bureau

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The following members nominated by their respective regional groups were elected:

Chair: Brazil

Vice-Chairs: Kenya, Poland, Pakistan

Rapporteur: France

# Agenda item 17: Other matters

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**Turkey** highlighted a growing need for Member States to support UN-Habitat both financially and non-financially. Turkey will continue contributions as appropriate and where needed and align national and municipal projects with UN-Habitat. Turkey highlighted the UN-Habitat 'Waste Wise Cities' initiative to address the increasing global waste management crisis and reiterated its support. Turkey stands ready to cooperate with Member States and UN-Habitat on this field.

**The Habitat Professionals Forum (HPF)** expressed their gratitude for the efforts made by professionals to support UN-Habitat strategic actions. The representative informed that that HPF is developing a Just Recovery Roadmap document offering guiding principles on how to build resilience, respond, and recover during and after the pandemic, focusing on the new themes of digitalization, localization, standardization, new regulations, and the localization of sustainable development.

HPF noted that participated in the PGA Advisory Committee on Sustainable Urbanization last November 2021 and is looking forward to contributing to the upcoming High-Level Meeting.

# Agenda item 18: Closure of the session

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The Executive Director expressed her gratitude and utmost appreciation to H.E. Mr. Marek Rohr-Garztecki, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Poland and Chair of the Executive Board, the 2021-2022 bureau members, H.E. Ms. Saqlain Syedah, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Chair of the ad hoc working group on programmatic, budgetary, and administrative matters and H.E. Mr. Patrick Eloff, Permanent Representatives of the Swiss Confederation and Chair of the ad hoc working group on stakeholder engagement policy for their wisdom, leadership and invaluable contribution to UN-Habitat particularly during the challenging COVID-19 period.

The Executive Director further extended her appreciation to the members of the Executive Board who engaged to elevate the mandate of UN-Habitat and provide their inputs related to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda towards the achievements of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Executive Director reaffirmed her commitment to ensuring that the use of different funding resources is aligned with the intergovernmental and normative functions of the Programme especially with the rapid rate of urbanization around the world. As a result of this,

the High-Level Meeting in New York will be an opportunity for all Member States to work together to address the challenges of urbanization and advocate for UN-Habitat critical mandate.

In his closing remarks, the outgoing chair thanked Member States for their support during his tenure and expressed his gratitude to the Executive Director for her unwavering dedication to the mandate and task at hand of accelerating the sustainable urban agenda. On this note, the chair closed the 2022 first session of the Executive Board.



**Credits:**

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