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Implementation of the normative and operational activities of UN-Habitat, including reporting on its programmatic activities in 2023 and the implementation of subprogrammes, flagship programmes and technical cooperation activities

Highlights of normative and operational activities of UN-Habitat for the period July–December 2023**

Annex to the report of the Executive Director on normative and operational activities of UN-Habitat, including updates on the Inclusive Communities, Thriving Cities flagship programme, the Sustainable Urban Resilience for the Next Generation initiative, urban crises prevention and response initiatives and activities for the period July–December 2023 (HSP/EB.2024/6)

I. Activities towards implementation of the strategic plan 2020–2025

1. The **Subprogramme 1** on ‘Reduced spatial inequality and poverty’, has been running a broad range of activities in Latin America and the Caribbean on spatial and territorial development that align to the New Urban Agenda principles and the SDGs. Amongst others, a participatory programme framework on *Integral Urban Operations* started as a contribution to post-pandemic recovery in cities in four countries in the Central America region, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Costa Rica. The programme framework promotes changes towards sustainable urban development and well-being of the people. It developed a series of neighbourhood activities that adopt territorial approaches for multi-sectoral interventions that enhance the quality of life of people in informal settlements. Diagnosing inequalities in the region, the programme combats multidimensional poverty and segregation by generating urban data, local level urban planning, capacity building, advisory services to improve informal settlements, community participation and mobilization of project financing. In 2023 the programme was running in seven informal settlements in the partner countries and involved 29,500 people and local authorities, civil society, private sector and academia with participation of more than 2,000 actors.

2. *Inclusive Cities, Communities of Solidarity* project led the transformation of 26 public spaces in ten cities in Latin America and the Caribbean. It engaged around 300 people from local communities and from refugee and migrant communities in building safe and inclusive places to foster effective community integration that has impact on the well-being and quality of life of the targeted

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people through improved public spaces and participatory planning process. By the end of 2023, this initiative has improved the lives of approx. 162,000 people in total, including refugees, migrants, internally displaced people and local communities who can equally enjoy access to improved, safer and more accessible public spaces.

3. A milestone was achieved in securing Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) rights for the Yazidi communities in Sinjar, Iraq. The LAND-at-Scale programme of UN-Habitat in Iraq registered over 17,400 HLP claims and distributed occupancy certificates that totaled at 2,396 during 2023. Utilizing the Social Tenure Domain Model, the programme addresses informal rights and claims in areas without formal land administration. This facilitated the systematic resolution of HLP rights violations. The method involves collaboration with local authorities and consultations with communities that engage returnees and community members in both rehabilitation activities and in the verification of land occupancy rights. The approach was accompanied by recent Legal Decree by the Council of Ministers of Iraq that, for the first time in the modern history, officially recognizes the Yazidi minority's land rights.

4. At the global level, under the Global Water Operators' Partnership Alliance (GWOPA), support from UN-Habitat to water operators' partnerships reached 65,368 and 11,650 people respectively with improved water and sanitation in Kenya, Pakistan, Uganda, Somaliland and Zambia. In Ethiopia, two water and sanitation operators serving nearly 200,000 beneficiaries were supported to gain better capacities for improved services.

5. Within the **Subprogramme 2**, 'enhanced shared prosperity of cities and regions', the work on improving local revenue generation assisted governments to mobilize adequate funding and/or financing for local action to achieve the SDGs. Mobilizing finance for infrastructure development and essential local services is key for keeping pace with the anticipated urban growth by 2.5 billion people within the next 30 years. This is a critical window for public and private investment that can lay the foundations for sustainable development well into the future. Activities supported local governments in Egypt, Iraq, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan and Malawi in generating their own source revenue, improve local expenditure efficiency, and optimizing financial management capacity of authorities. The subprogramme also helped to distribute existing funding to where it can deliver the greatest impact. For instance, the programme launched digitization and creation of capacity building learning materials and courses based on tools such as the Rapid Own Source Revenue Analysis tool (ROSRA), that was made openly accessible to cities.

6. The UN-Habitat Urban Lab has been developing a *Physical Land Use and Development Plan for Moyale Town, Kenya*. Moyale is a strategic cross-border town located at the Northern part of Kenya, by the border with Ethiopia. This border town has a vibrant economy attributed to cross-border trade. It also is a strategic area for Kenya Vision 2030 and one of the key nodes of the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport Corridor (LAPSSET). Nevertheless, the city has not elevated its status to a municipality, partly due to the lack of approved Physical Land Use and Development Plan that is one of the legal criteria for municipalities in Kenya. This is limiting the quantity and quality of community services in Moyale. The Moyale Physical Land Use and Development Plan is the first plan initiated in the Marsabit County, guided by methodologies and planning principles developed by UN-Habitat drawing from the national legal framework. Activities so far include digital base map creation and data collection, socioeconomic survey, stakeholder workshops and elaboration of spatial strategies. As a result, Moyale town will attain a municipality status by mid-2024.

7. The *Achieving Environmental and Socio-economic Resilience* programme in Khorog, Tajikistan, improved resilience through integrated planning that guided development and capital investments. Over the course of three years, this collaboration between UN-Habitat, the Khorog municipality, Aga Khan Agency for Habitat (AKAH) supported by funding from the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs of Switzerland (SECO), brought about a sustainable, resilient, vibrant, and inclusive planning vision for Shakhrofar, the planning authority responsible for guiding Tajikistan's urbanisation process. The spatially informed Capital Investment Plan resulted in a clear direction and sequencing of investment priorities that enabled donor organisations to implement interventions dealing with accessibility and inclusion, urban regeneration, and risk management and resilience.

8. During the SDG Action Weekend on 16-17 September 2024 that preceded the SDG Summit held on 18 September 2024, the *Local2030 Coalition* was presented as a joint High Impact Initiative of the UN system. The Local2030 Coalition, including the SDG Cities flagship programme's approach and tools, was chosen as one of twelve High Impact Initiatives of the UN System on the grounds of its ability to transform the SDGs into local reality, in coherence with national frameworks and with communities' priorities and by placing territories and communities at the centre of sustainable development, including financing flows. The UN High Impact Initiatives use three main action

areas: Advocacy, local level action, and monitoring and reporting. The SDG Action Weekend secured support to the High Impact Initiative from national governments, local and regional governments, UN entities, and partners of the Local2030 Coalition, including confirmation of continued support to the Local2030 Knowledge Hub in Italy, continued host country support to the Secretariat of the Local2030 Coalition in Bilbao, Spain, and growing interest from the UN System entities to join the Local2030 Coalition. Several foundations and philanthropies confirmed their interest in working with the Coalition. These commitments emerging from the launch of the High Impact Initiative informed the work plan for the Local 2030 Coalition. Other achievements during the reporting period include new partnership prospects with a major donor partner, with several universities and local government networks.

9. During the reporting period, the **Subprogramme 3** on ‘strengthened climate action and improved urban environment’ increased its project funding volume under the *RISE UP – Resilient Settlements for the Urban Poor* flagship programme that secured funding from the Adaptation Fund for Ghana, Cote d’Ivoire, Sri Lanka, Mongolia, and Lao. Additionally, two global projects helped to roll-out a standardized approach for scaling up the RISE UP portfolio while integrating elements of the SURGe Initiative. Opened by the UN Secretary-General, the Executive Director co-chaired the first *Local Climate Action Summit* at COP28 together with the COP28 Presidency and Bloomberg Philanthropies. This was attended by Heads of States, Heads of Governments and over 250 mayors. COP28 also hosted the *Second Ministerial Meeting on Urbanization and Climate Change*, attended by over 1,000 participants, 60 ministers and vice ministers, and 200 sub-national government representatives.

10. Under the **Subprogramme 4**, ‘effective urban crisis prevention and response’, the Inclusive Cities, Communities of Solidarity project in Latin America and the Caribbean developed an *Urban Inclusion Marker* as a tool to support decision-making and policy development by local authorities. This improved integration and solidarity amongst communities. Based on the New Urban Agenda principles and the SDGs, the inclusion marker is a georeferenced composite index that allows measuring the aggregate level of inclusion of a city and its potential contribution to the level of spatial, social, economic, and cultural integration of inhabitants. The marker comprises of three pillars of analysis: Equitable distribution of resources; socioeconomic conditions; and inclusive governance. By the end of 2023, the Urban Inclusion Marker has been implemented in several cities in Latin America and the Caribbean: Barranquilla, Cucuta, Bucaramanga and Villa del Rosario in Colombia, in Quito, Ecuador, and in Lima, Peru, helping these cities to measure and enhance the levels of urban inclusion. Especially in Quito, Ecuador, a City Observatory was established to monitor the level of inclusion using the marker indicators and tools. Moreover, the marker uses an online viewer that allows access to geographic information for decision-makers and other stakeholders without expertise in the use of Geographic Information System software. The data and information sharing platform of the Urban Inclusion Marker was positively received during the Global Refugee Forum in December 2023 and at the Global Observatory of Sustainable Proximities, setting positive scenarios for adoption in other cities.

11. *Building Urban Climate Resilience in South-Eastern Africa* project completed its activities that addressed the heightened vulnerability to natural disasters, particularly severe tropical storms and cyclones in South-East Africa that have resulted in destruction of homes, casualties, and over 20,000 displaced people across Madagascar, Mozambique and Malawi. In Mozambique, the project put in place early warning systems and provided 39,635 people in Chokwe with resilient basic services and infrastructure. Capacity building initiatives were undertaken to empower local communities in assessing and addressing climate-related challenges. In Malawi, the project promoted disaster-proof techniques for safer schools, hospitals and housing. Two evacuation centres were built in Zomba, along with pioneering urban solutions.

II. Activities on gender, human rights and social inclusion

12. UN-Habitat strengthened its integration in the *UN Systemwide Human Rights Mechanisms*, for example by supporting its country offices to share important successes and lessons learnt in the context of the *Universal Period Review*, thus improving delivery as One UN. UN-Habitat's tools and approaches, including for participatory urban planning and the participation of women and those at risk of being marginalized continued to support partners in achieving their goals towards sustainable urban development for all. UN-Habitat has also promoted coherence between human rights standards and technical approaches in its mandated areas, particularly land, housing and water and sanitation.

13. Currently only 5% of the world's cities are led by women. *Women-Led Cities* is a global initiative by UN-Habitat and UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) working with the private sector, IFIs and philanthropies. Initiated under the SDG Cities flagship programme, the Women-Led

Cities' objective is to systematically promote women's leadership and gender responsive investment in cities, to make them inclusive, accessible, safe, and sustainable. It addresses gender inequality and increases opportunities for women by: (1) promoting and empowering women leadership from grassroots to local councils to mayor roles; (2) improving safety and access to basic services for women in the city; and (3) supporting women entrepreneurship and equal work rights. Women-led Cities is a unique partnership between women stakeholders, including women business leaders and women mayors worldwide.

14. The *Youth-Led Response to COVID-19 in Informal Settlements* publication presented the case study of youth-led community response to the spread of COVID-19 in the informal settlements of Nairobi, Kenya, focusing on Mathare – the second largest slum in Nairobi. The Youth-led COVID-19 Emergency Response Coalition, formed in March 2020 by youth and UN-Habitat, operated for nearly two years. From Kenya, the coalition expanded to East Africa and later Latin America. The publication is a testament to youth's capacity for global pandemic and disaster response. The program facilitated over 2.5 million hand washes through youth-operated stations, distributed 20,000 reusable masks made by women in informal settlements, and conducted a COVID-19 prevention campaign using murals and street art.

15. In October 2023, UN-Habitat inaugurated the *Baidoa Youth Hub* in Somalia. The centre is a joint establishment between UN-Habitat, the Ministry of Youth and Sports of South-West State of Somalia, supported by the Government of Sweden. Established on the model of UN-Habitat's One Stop Youth Resource Centres, the Hub utilizes an integrated approach to youth development by providing youth with safe spaces where they can meet and access information and resources critical to youth-led development in urban settings, including training programs in employability and livelihoods, democracy and peacebuilding, health and wellbeing, and sports and recreation. Somalia is urbanizing rapidly with a distinctive aspect of the significant youth dominance in the demography, comprising an estimated 27 percent of adolescents and young adults aged 15 to 29. Empowering the youth to break free from the poverty, unemployment, marginalization, gender discrimination, and political exclusion is among the core development challenges of Somalia.

III. Technical support and collaboration on data and knowledge

16. UN-Habitat with the support of the European Commission and other partners continued supporting countries to apply the global urban, city and rural definition commonly referred to as 'degree of urbanization' (DEGURBA) methodology. By the end of 2023, the initiative has reached 75 countries covering around 1200 cities. This has also increased the global coverage for the SDG 11 spatial related indicators. Due to the successful first round of the DEGURBA project, the European Commission extended additional funds to UN-Habitat, UNFPA and UNICEF to implement a second phase which is running from 2023 to 2026 and will implement DEGURBA methodology in an additional 65 countries. This will enable more meaningful geographic comparisons and monitoring of key social, economic, and urban development indicators. UN-Habitat is also working with the UN Population Division to produce new estimates for the next edition of the World Urbanization Prospects using the DEGURBA categorizations.

17. UN-Habitat's support to countries to apply the *Global Urban Monitoring Framework* has reached a total of 85 cities and 43 countries by 2023. This roll-out has contributed to the production of data to facilitate reporting on the New Urban Agenda, the SDGs – especially SDG 11 – and contributions to the World Cities Report of UN-Habitat and various Voluntary Local Reviews on the progress achieved on the implementation of the SDGs at the local level.

18. UN-Habitat is advancing on the roll-out of the *Quality of Life* initiative, supported by the national Quality of Life Program Centre of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The reconceptualized 'quality of life' tracker for cities has been developed to be globally relevant and locally applicable index to monitor quality of life in cities. The index is well aligned with the Global Urban Monitoring Framework and will be piloted in different urban contexts to assess its potential for monitoring quality of life at the global and local level.