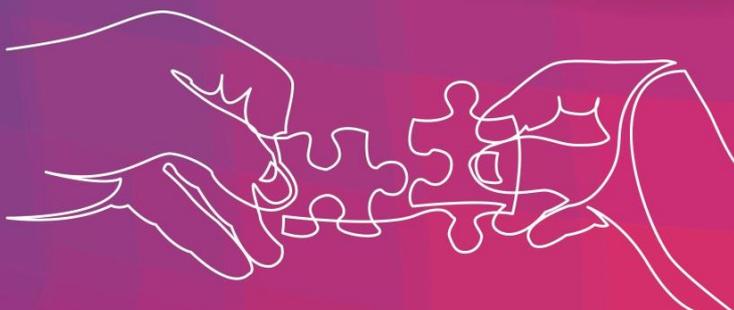
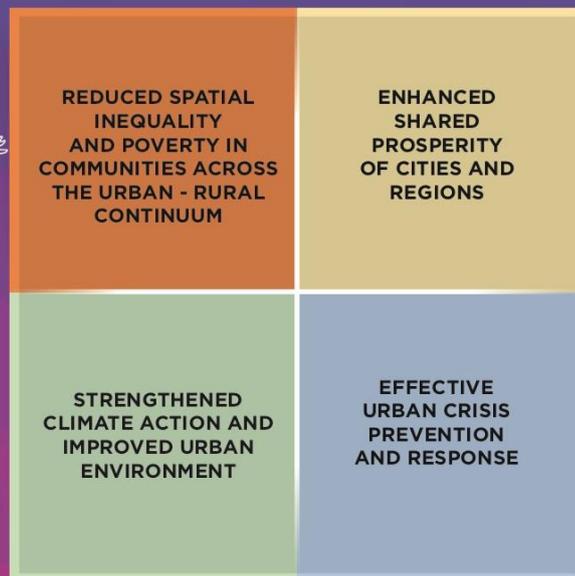


# THE STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2023



## Contents

Introduction .....	3
I. Changing for increased impact .....	4
A. UN-Habitat as a global centre of excellence and innovation .....	5
B. Global trends: challenges and opportunities of a rapidly urbanizing world .....	5
C. Becoming a “solutions agent” to deliver change.....	7
D. Leveraging partnerships .....	8
E. Delivering as one UN-Habitat: repositioning and organizational change .....	9
II. Strategic choices .....	9
A. A bold vision and a focused mission .....	9
B. An ambitious objective .....	10
C. Domains of change: strategy and scope.....	11
D. The social inclusion dimension and cross-cutting thematic areas .....	26
E. Drivers of change.....	30
F. Organizational performance enablers.....	33
III. New ways of working.....	36
A. Typology of human settlements .....	36
B. UN-Habitat presence at the city, country and regional levels .....	37
C. Integrated programming, programme planning and budgeting.....	39
D. Organizational architecture.....	40
E. Risk management.....	41
F. Performance measurement.....	42
G. Monitoring and reporting.....	42
H. Evaluation.....	43
I. Financing the Strategic Plan.....	43
Annex.....	45

## Introduction

1. In its resolution 26/3, adopted at its twenty-sixth session, in May 2017, the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) requested the Executive Director to consult and work closely with the Committee of Permanent Representatives during the preparation of a results-oriented six-year strategic plan for the period 2020–2025<sup>1</sup> and present it to the Governing Council at its twenty-seventh session. Accordingly, the present document sets out the Strategic Plan for 2020–2023, which was endorsed by the Committee of Permanent Representatives at its seventy-first regular meeting, on 6 December 2018 and subsequently approved by the UN-Habitat Assembly at its first session organized from 27 to 31 May 2019 in Nairobi.

2. The Strategic Plan for 2020–2023 repositions UN-Habitat as a major global entity, a centre of excellence and innovation. In that respect, the organization is refocusing its niche position as the “thought leader” and the go-to programme for issues pertaining to its work, setting the global discourse and agenda on sustainable urban development, driving political discussion, generating specialized and cutting-edge knowledge, shaping technical norms, principles and standards, and acting as a multiplier in the exchange of knowledge, experience and best practice in getting cities and other human settlements right.

3. Chapter 1, entitled “Changing for increased impact”, sets out the recalibrated vision, mission and sharpened focus of UN-Habitat, while highlighting the challenges posed and opportunities offered by a rapidly urbanizing world.

4. Chapter 2, entitled “Strategic choices”, details the strategic focus of UN-Habitat for the period 2020–2025, crafted around four mutually reinforcing goals or “domains of change”, namely (i) reduced spatial inequality and poverty in communities across the urban–rural continuum; (ii) enhanced shared prosperity of cities and regions; (iii) strengthened climate action and improved urban environment; and (iv) effective urban crisis prevention and response.

5. Chapter 3, entitled “New ways of working”, sets out the main points of the implementation arrangements for the Strategic Plan, full details of which are provided in companion documents to the present Strategic Plan.

6. The process of developing the Strategic Plan has taken into account General Assembly resolution 70/1, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the outcome document of the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, and the Sustainable Development Goals; the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development; the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030; the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants; and the New Urban Agenda. It has also factored in lessons learned from the implementation of the Strategic Plan for 2014–2019 and considered the internal change process currently being carried out by UN-Habitat, as well as the overall reform process of the United Nations, particularly the reform of the United Nations development system. Furthermore, the preparation of the Strategic Plan has been marked by an unprecedented inclusive and participatory process, which involved Member States, UN-Habitat staff in Nairobi and in the field, agencies of the United Nations system, and networks of partners and stakeholders.

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<sup>1</sup> The UN-Habitat Assembly recognized the importance of aligning the cycle of the strategic plan with the four-year cycle of the UN-Habitat Assembly, which has the sole mandate of approving the Plan. The next session of the Assembly will take place in 2023. Consequently, in resolution HSP/HA/1/L.4, the UN-Habitat Assembly approved the Strategic Plan for the period 2020–2023, instead of 2020–2025.

## I. Changing for increased impact

7. Sustainable urbanization is central to the realization of the global development goals as set out in a suite of global agreements signed in 2015 and 2016, including, most importantly, General Assembly resolution 70/1, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the outcome document of the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, held in New York from 25 to 27 September 2015, and the Sustainable Development Goals; the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development; the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, adopted at the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction; the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; General Assembly Resolution 71/1, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants; and General Assembly resolution 70/256, the New Urban Agenda, the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III).

8. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) Strategic Plan for the period 2020–2023 focuses on the commitment and contribution of UN-Habitat to the implementation of those global development agendas, in particular the pledge in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to leave no one behind. Through its normative and operational work, as well as its coordination and focal point roles in the United Nations system, UN-Habitat aims to advance sustainable urbanization as a driver of development and peace, to improve living conditions for all.

9. The Strategic Plan aligns UN-Habitat with the United Nations reform agenda, which includes (i) reform of the peace and security architecture, including a strong emphasis on the humanitarian, development and peace nexus; (ii) reform of the development system, in particular the remodelled resident coordinator system and the shifting of focus to more integrated action at the country level; and (iii) management reform, emphasizing the need for organizational coherence, transparency, efficiency, agility and accountability, while articulating the unique value proposition of UN-Habitat within the United Nations system.

10. The Strategic Plan creates a strong narrative of change, clearly setting out the relationship between sustainable urbanization and the broader overall notion of sustainable development. It is focused on creating a positive impact and outcomes for those currently being left behind, including women and youth, in cities and other human settlements. It is only through a clear, transformative strategy, partnerships and a fresh and innovative vision of development that it is possible to respond effectively to persistent and new development problems, including extreme poverty, socioeconomic inequality, slums, social exclusion and marginalization, gender-based discrimination, humanitarian crises, conflict, air pollution, climate change and high unemployment, all of which are increasingly concentrated in urban areas. A holistic approach towards an urbanizing world, connecting cities and other human settlements, taking into consideration all segments of society, can help to advance sustainable solutions for the benefit of all.

11. The Strategic Plan lays out a recalibrated vision and mission, with a sharpened focus. UN-Habitat proposes to serve Member States, subnational and local government, and other key urban actors in the pursuit of four mutually reinforcing and integrated goals or “domains of change”, as follows:

- (a) Reduced spatial inequality and poverty in communities across the urban–rural continuum;
- (b) Enhanced shared prosperity of cities and regions;
- (c) Strengthened climate action and improved urban environment;
- (d) Effective urban crisis prevention and response.

12. The inclusive realization of the above outcomes depends on the incorporation of the social inclusion dimensions discussed in section II.D below and cross-cutting thematic areas (human rights;

gender; children, youth and older persons; disability) and is supported by a number of specific drivers of change and organizational performance enablers. Transformative change can only take place through a paradigm shift. UN-Habitat is fully cognizant of that fact and, in keeping with its role as a focal point in sustainable urban development and human settlements, proposes a clear framework that will enable it to achieve that change through the following action:

- (a) Repositioning UN-Habitat as a centre of excellence and innovation;
- (b) Taking into account regional and global urbanization trends;
- (c) Focusing on customizable solutions, taking into consideration the diverse situations pertaining in different communities and countries;
- (d) Leveraging partnerships with local and regional government, sister United Nations entities, the private sector and other development actors and stakeholders;
- (e) Significantly enhancing integrated delivery through more effective collaboration between its liaison offices, regional offices, country offices and headquarters.

13. UN-Habitat recognizes and targets the specific rights of women, children, youth, older people and persons with disability through each domain of change. To achieve that, all the work carried out by UN-Habitat is underpinned by a human-rights-based approach, which ensures that those furthest behind are targeted first.

14. In addition, the implementation of the Strategic Plan will require organizational change and a new model for financial sustainability to ensure that the resources at the disposal of UN-Habitat are commensurate with its mandates and role.

#### **A. UN-Habitat as a global centre of excellence and innovation**

15. The Strategic Plan repositions UN-Habitat as a major global entity, a centre of excellence and innovation. In that respect, the organization is refocusing its niche position as the “thought leader” and “go-to” programme for issues pertaining to its work, setting the global discourse and agenda on sustainable urban development, driving political discussion, generating specialized and cutting-edge knowledge, shaping technical norms, principles and standards, and acting as a multiplier in the exchange of knowledge, experience and best practice in getting cities and other human settlements right. Working in collaboration with research institutions, UN-Habitat is exceptionally positioned and equipped to play that role.

16. A focus on normative work repositions the organization in the framework of the reform of the United Nations development system by emphasizing its unique value and demonstrating its readiness to contribute in a meaningful manner to the identification of national and regional problems, challenges and opportunities.

17. As a centre of excellence and innovation, UN-Habitat also advocates sustainable solutions through demonstration, pilot and innovative operational projects that can be adapted and taken to scale by countries and other partners, while ensuring that normative outcomes inform transformative operational solutions and, in turn, field operations influence normative work. By catalysing networks of partners, including local authorities and policymakers, in leading the implementation of cutting-edge solutions at scale, UN-Habitat will be able to bring about transformational change for the benefit of millions of people globally, ensuring that no one and no place is left behind.

#### **B. Global trends: challenges and opportunities of a rapidly urbanizing world**

18. Urbanization is one of the global megatrends of our time, unstoppable and irreversible. In 30 years from now, two-thirds of the world’s population is likely to live in urban areas. Ninety per cent of urban growth will occur in less developed regions, such as East Asia, South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, at a rapid pace and in situations in which capacity and resources are most constrained and development challenges most intense. Urbanization in those parts of the world is largely unplanned,

fuelling the continuous growth of informal or slum settlements. Unchecked and unplanned urban sprawl and inequality are universal concerns, both within cities and across territories. Over the past 20 years over 75 per cent of the world's cities have grown more unequal. Although the world has made significant progress in reducing poverty since 2000, inequality is rising in the cities of both the developing and developed world. Today, the gap between the rich and the poor in most countries is at its highest level in 30 years; the global top one per cent of earners have captured twice as much of that growth as the 50 per cent poorest.<sup>2</sup> In developing countries, slums and informal settlements, which currently accommodate close to 1 billion people, are the physical manifestation of urban poverty and inequality. In 2015, some 2.3 billion people worldwide still lacked access to basic sanitation services<sup>3</sup> and 2.1 billion people lacked access to clean drinking water.<sup>4</sup> Fewer than 35 per cent of the cities in developing countries have their wastewater treated.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, today, 1.6 billion people globally live in inadequate housing,<sup>6</sup> often with no security of tenure.

19. It is clear that climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing cities, as is set out in detail in the Paris Agreement. Cities account for between 60 and 80 per cent of energy consumption and generate as much as 70 per cent of human-induced greenhouse gas emissions, primarily through the consumption of fossil fuels for energy supply and transportation. Climate change projections predict significant impact on human development progress within the coming few decades. Urgent and radical action to transform urban systems to contribute to limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius is required well before 2030. Urban areas also absorb significant climate risks and must be prepared to withstand the climatic extremes of global warming, which are currently predicted at 3 to 4 degrees Celsius.

20. The current economic model of investment, consumption and growth also drives the exploitative extraction of the planet's natural assets. Urban development is increasingly occupying land that was previously used for forestry or food production, while at the same time the demands of the growing population for products such as food, timber items and biomass for heating is increasing. Urbanization has not yet completed a full transition away from fossil-fuelled energy, resulting in extensive air pollution, which damages the health of vulnerable groups, in particular children and the elderly. The shift to a greener and more resource-efficient economy is still in its nascent stages.

21. Migration adds further complexity to the issues facing cities and other human settlements. There are 763 million internal migrants and 244 million international migrants globally.<sup>7</sup> That means that every seventh person in the world is a migrant. Most of these migrants are found in urban areas. Refugees and internally displaced persons in particular require special attention in the overall context of sustainable urbanization. Today there are 25.4 million refugees and 40 million internally displaced persons who have fled conflict and crisis, the majority of whom are not in humanitarian camps, but seek refuge in cities.<sup>8</sup>

22. Gender-based discrimination persists in many parts of the world and challenges associated with children, youth, older people and people with disability are growing. As the world witnesses an increased feminization of poverty, women make up a large proportion of the informal employment sector in cities and are disproportionately affected by limited skills and limited access to safe places of work, education, resources and technology.

23. Poverty, humanitarian crises and conflict are becoming increasingly urban phenomena. Rural areas do not benefit from overall growth, feeding a continuous rural–urban migration.

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<sup>2</sup> *World Inequality Report* (2018). Available at <https://wir2018.wid.world/>.

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF and WHO (2017). *Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene: 2017 Update and SDG Baselines*.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> UN-Habitat press release, 2 Oct. 2017. Available at <https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/10/567552-affordable-housing-key-development-and-social-equality-un-says-world-habitat>.

<sup>7</sup> IOM (2017), *Global Migration Trends Factsheet*. Available at <http://gmdac.iom.int/global-migration-trends-factsheet>.

<sup>8</sup> UNHCR press release, 19 June 2018. Available at <https://www.unhcr.org/afr/news/stories/2018/6/5b222c494/forced-displacement-record-685-million.html>.

24. In sum, the challenges posed by the current model of urbanization have global ramifications that, if not addressed adequately, could jeopardize the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

25. Despite the challenges, urbanization is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for change at all levels and for all types of human settlements, from small rural communities, villages and market towns to medium-sized cities and huge metropolises. Research now shows that urbanization can have a positive catalytic impact on development and is able to deliver improved living conditions to the groups furthest behind. Cities and towns can help to drive the sustainable agenda across social and cultural change, environmental protection and economic growth as the principles of the circular economy are embraced. Contributing some 80 per cent of global GDP, cities function as catalysts, driving innovation, consumption and investment worldwide, making them a positive and potent force for addressing issues related to poverty, social exclusion and spatial inequality, shared prosperity, climate and the environment, and various forms of crisis. Most importantly, sustainable urban transformation presents an opportunity to work with all types of actors and communities, particularly those traditionally excluded from such processes.

26. The implementation of the Strategic Plan will provide pathways to accelerate that transformation towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. If we get our cities right, as is the overarching aim of the New Urban Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 11, to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, it will be easier to attain other development goals and targets and achieve meaningful progress in realizing gender equality and the inclusion of youth. However, that will require creativity, human and financial capital, and joint efforts at the local, national, regional and global levels in countries at every stage of development.

### **C. Becoming a “solutions agent” to deliver change**

27. With a focus on achieving its four interconnected and mutually reinforcing goals or domains of change – spatial inequality and poverty; shared prosperity; climate action and urban environment; and crisis prevention and response – UN-Habitat is well positioned to help cities and countries to confront even the toughest urbanization challenges, and to take advantage of the opportunities that urbanization offers to maximize positive contributions to overall sustainable development. The UN-Habitat contribution to the global urban development agenda is derived from its knowledge and expertise, and its ability to provide innovative and evidence-based urban solutions that are both normative and operational. Its convening power, its capacity to influence long-term change and its ability to leverage partnerships all contribute to its added value and implementation capabilities.

28. Anchored in its core values of excellence, efficiency, accountability, collaboration and impact, UN-Habitat is embracing a solutions-oriented culture, based on decades of experience and understanding of what works effectively in cities and human settlements. That means moving from a project-focused approach to a broader culture of supporting cities and countries in delivering systematized and locally adapted solutions that are integrated across the four goals, and which apply and leverage the knowledge gained from its own experience, as well as from the experience of others. Those solutions will contribute to the respect and fulfilment of the rights of women, youth and marginalized groups.

29. In that context, UN-Habitat implements the United Nations system-wide human-rights-based approach,<sup>9</sup> which means that all programmes should further the realization of human rights, all cooperation and programming should be carried out in line with human rights standards and principles, and development cooperation should contribute to the capacity of duty bearers to meet their obligations and the capacity of rights-holders to claim their rights.

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<sup>9</sup> "The Human Rights-Based Approach to Development Cooperation: Towards a Common Understanding among UN Agencies. Available at <https://hrbaportal.org/the-human-rights-based-approach-to-development-cooperation-towards-a-common-understanding-among-un-agencies>.

## D. Leveraging partnerships

30. It is important to emphasize that no institution alone can ensure that countries make significant progress towards achieving the global urban development agendas. Similarly, no single organization can ensure that cities are effectively establishing a path of prosperity and sustainable development. UN-Habitat, in its role as a focal point, will call upon all development actors and stakeholders, including local and regional government, civil society, the private sector and academia at every level, to work in concert to assist it in implementing its Strategic Plan.

31. The past decade has seen a tremendous surge in stakeholders engaging with UN-Habitat in various areas of development, including through UN-Habitat effective efforts to ensure high levels of stakeholder participation in Habitat III and growing levels of participation in the World Urban Forums. Reinforcing that trend, future partnerships will be aligned with the four goals of UN-Habitat – its drivers of change – and its social inclusion dimensions, and will be well managed and effective. In certain partnerships, UN-Habitat will take the lead; in others, it will bring its expertise to efforts led by others, providing support and adding value. Emphasis has already been placed on relationships with other United Nations entities at the country, regional and global level, including the United Nations regional economic commissions. These are key partners in reaching out to Member States, cities, local governments, civil society, the private sector and other urban stakeholders working towards the effective implementation of and follow-up to the New Urban Agenda and the urban and human settlement dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in each region.

32. UN-Habitat will continue to expand its collaboration with international and regional development banks to ensure coherence of policy support and the alignment of large-scale urban investments with the principles of sustainable urbanization. An important effort is required to rethink engagement with the private sector to leverage investment in sustainable urbanization and to promote more appropriate models of development.

33. UN-Habitat will continue to strengthen its engagement with communities by placing those currently left furthest behind at the centre of its work, and harnessing local expertise through close collaboration with informal workers, slum dwellers, people with disabilities and women living in poverty in both rural and urban centres. UN-Habitat will increase its engagement with grassroots women's groups and youth-led organizations to ensure that its work is benefiting all segments of society.

- (a) The Strategic Plan for 2020–2023 harnesses the role of UN-Habitat as a focal point in sustainable urban development and human settlements<sup>10</sup> to accelerate progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda so as to achieve the urban dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals. In that respect, UN-Habitat will build innovative approaches towards achieving the following:
- (b) Developing and implementing a United Nations system-wide strategy and collaborative framework for sustainable urbanization;
- (c) Coordinating the follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda, ensuring contributions from all actors, including local, regional and national governments, academic institutions, United Nations agencies, civil society, the private sector and other key constituencies;
- (d) Developing and disseminating evidence-based guidance and capacity support to Member States to achieve the urban dimensions of global agendas, drawing on the UN-Habitat Action Framework for Implementation of the New Urban Agenda;

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<sup>10</sup> In the Quito Declaration, Governments noted the importance of the role of UN-Habitat as a focal point for the development of sustainable urbanization and human settlements, including in the implementation, follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda and related Sustainable Development Goals.

- (e) (d) Supporting the mainstreaming of sustainable urban development in global development frameworks and localizing the Sustainable Development Goals by mobilizing all relevant actors.

## **E. Delivering as one UN-Habitat: repositioning and organizational change**

34. UN-Habitat is more than just a collection of liaison, country and regional offices. It is a collaborative global institution with a single unifying mandate. The new Strategic Plan and the organizational changes which accompanying it aim to ensure that all the organizational units of UN-Habitat work in a fully integrated manner. The focus is on maximizing interaction between normative and operational work, at both the regional and global level, leveraging change across the four interconnected domains of change, aiming for direct impact for those most in need. Regional strategies and country programmes, while responding to the felt needs and demands of Member States, will be fully aligned with the overall objectives and goals of the Strategic Plan.

35. UN-Habitat will focus on the areas of expertise where it has the greatest comparative advantage, as a thought leader and a centre of excellence. At the same time, it will act as a catalyst to provide multi-scalar, integrated, multisectoral and multi-stakeholder urban development and human settlement solutions, leveraging the actions of others, and connecting goals and targets across the Sustainable Development Goals.

36. UN-Habitat will adjust its organizational arrangements to reflect the regional diversity in urbanization trends and challenges, and to align itself with the rationalization of the United Nations development system and its recent broad reform. The nature of the support provided by UN-Habitat will be guided by the diversity of urbanization-related challenges and country-specific demands and capacity.

37. For UN-Habitat to expand its focus from project implementation to a broader objective of scaling up its work and leveraging longer-term impact, it needs to become more outward looking, with a stronger emphasis on partnerships and a strategic influence on the actions of others through knowledge-based advocacy.

38. Furthermore, delivering as “one UN-Habitat” requires reform of internal procedures and systems, improving the internal budget process and enhancing human resource management, as set out below in the section on organizational performance enablers. Organizational changes will also need to ensure that programmes and services are delivered in a manner that is efficient and effective, evidence-based, and which allows for continuous learning globally.

39. The Strategic Plan recognizes that an important institutional challenge for UN-Habitat is ensuring that its resources are predictable, sustainable and commensurate with its roles and responsibilities. That requires a new framework for financial sustainability that increases revenues, cuts inefficient expenditure, builds financial capacity and aligns resources with the four goals. A new business model will support the Strategic Plan.

## **II. Strategic choices**

### **A. A bold vision and a focused mission**

40. The UN-Habitats vision of “A better quality of life for all in an urbanizing world” is bold and ambitious; it is a vision that challenges UN-Habitat and its partners to enhance national and international efforts geared towards addressing the challenges of urbanization. It reflects both an aspirational ideal and a real need. UN-Habitat sees urbanization as a process that can transform territories, connecting human settlements across the urban–rural continuum, including small market towns, medium-sized cities and primary urban centres, and ensuring access to adequate and affordable housing, basic services and infrastructure for all. UN-Habitat will work to promote urbanization as a positive transformative force for people and communities, reducing inequality, discrimination and poverty.

41. The UN-Habitat mission statement is “UN-Habitat promotes transformative change in cities and human settlements through knowledge, policy advice, technical assistance and collaborative action to leave no one and no place behind”.

42. Over the past few years, UN-Habitat has been refining its approach to strategically integrating normative and operational work, building on its Strategic Plan for the period 2014–2019 and the increasingly strong evidence that sustainable urbanization is an accelerator for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. It has adopted a more strategic and integrated approach to addressing the challenges and opportunities of twenty-first century cities and other human settlements. Its mission statement reflects that paradigm shift. It also embodies the four main roles of the organization, which can be summarized as: think; do; share; partner.

43. **Think:** The normative work, including different forms of knowledge-building, ground-breaking research and capacity-building, enables UN-Habitat to set standards, propose norms and principles, share good practice, monitor global progress and support subnational, national, regional and intergovernmental bodies in their formulation of policies related to sustainable cities and other human settlements.

44. **Do:** The operational work takes various forms of technical assistance, drawing on the unique expertise of UN-Habitat in the area of sustainable urbanization and crisis response. UN-Habitat uses its highly specialized technical cooperation component to execute human settlement projects in order to provide value-added and tailored support to Member States in implementing policies, strategies, best practice, norms and standards.

45. **Share:** In its focal point and catalytic role, UN-Habitat will, through advocacy, communication and outreach, mobilize public, political and financial support and increased collaborative action at all levels to inspire qualitative change in national development plans, policy frameworks, development practice and investment choices for sustainable urban development at the local, national and global level.

46. **Partner:** To achieve enduring results in addressing the challenges of urbanization, UN-Habitat will need to work collaboratively with a multitude of partners, leveraging multiple resources. The implementation of the Strategic Plan for 2020–2023 will be supported by the United Nations and Stakeholders Collaborative Implementation Frameworks, a document which has been developed by UN-Habitat in response to the need to work within the broader United Nations system through a more coherent system-wide approach to development and on which it is currently consulting Member States.

## **B. An ambitious objective**

47. Inspired by the UN-Habitat vision and mission, the overarching objective for the Strategic Plan is to advance sustainable urbanization as a driver of development and peace, to improve living conditions for all.

48. That objective is consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals’ principle to “leave no one behind”; with Goal 11 on making cities and other human settlements inclusive, resilient and sustainable; and with the principles and commitments of the New Urban Agenda.

49. That ambitious objective also reflects the UN-Habitat aim to develop and implement integrated programmes with a view to achieving greater impact. The organization will therefore be “people-focused” and will spearhead interventions that are holistic rather than sectoral, transformative rather than fragmentary and which link urbanization and human settlements with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the humanitarian–peace–development nexus, as proposed under the Secretary-General’s United Nations reforms.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> <https://reform.un.org/content/development-reform>.

50. From implementing its Strategic Plan for 2014–2019, UN-Habitat learned that it was important to anchor its strategic plans in a robust theory of change, and that the results framework should be strong in order to guide programming effectively towards planned results and foreseen impact.

51. In that regard, the process of formulating the new Strategic Plan was strongly guided by a theory of change approach, which allowed for the following:

- (a) Moving the strategic focus from a means-based approach to an ends-based approach, and from a process-oriented approach to a results-based approach;
- (b) Connecting to the global agendas, in particular the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Sendai Framework, the Paris Agreement, the New York Declaration and the New Urban Agenda;
- (c) Re-elaborating the narrative of sustainable urban development and rethinking the way in which the sustainable urban development agenda should be implemented;
- (d) Introducing a set of drivers of change and organizational performance enablers;
- (e) Enhancing the role of advocacy and communication to influence policy;
- (f) Strengthening the role of partnerships towards scaled-up impact, particularly with local and regional governments and other key constituencies;
- (g) Introducing a coherent approach to innovation to support the work of UN-Habitat and its partners;
- (h) Implementing the custodial role of UN-Habitat in defining and monitoring the urban indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals, and as a focal point for sustainable urbanization and human settlements, supporting the follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda.

### **C. Domains of change: strategy and scope**

52. To achieve its objective to advance sustainable urbanization, UN-Habitat must make progress in its four interlinked domains of change. These domains overlap and are mutually reinforcing; how we achieve outcomes in one domain has implications for others. The domains of change are as follows:

- (a) Reduced spatial inequality and poverty in communities across the urban–rural continuum;
- (b) Enhanced shared prosperity of cities and regions;
- (c) Strengthened climate action and improved urban environment;
- (d) Effective urban crisis prevention and response.

53. These domains are underpinned by the social inclusion dimensions of human rights; gender; children, youth and older persons; and persons with disability . They seek to redress long-standing discrimination against, and continued marginalization of, these and other excluded groups. At the same time, they harness the role of these groups, particularly women and youth, as key actors of social transformation.

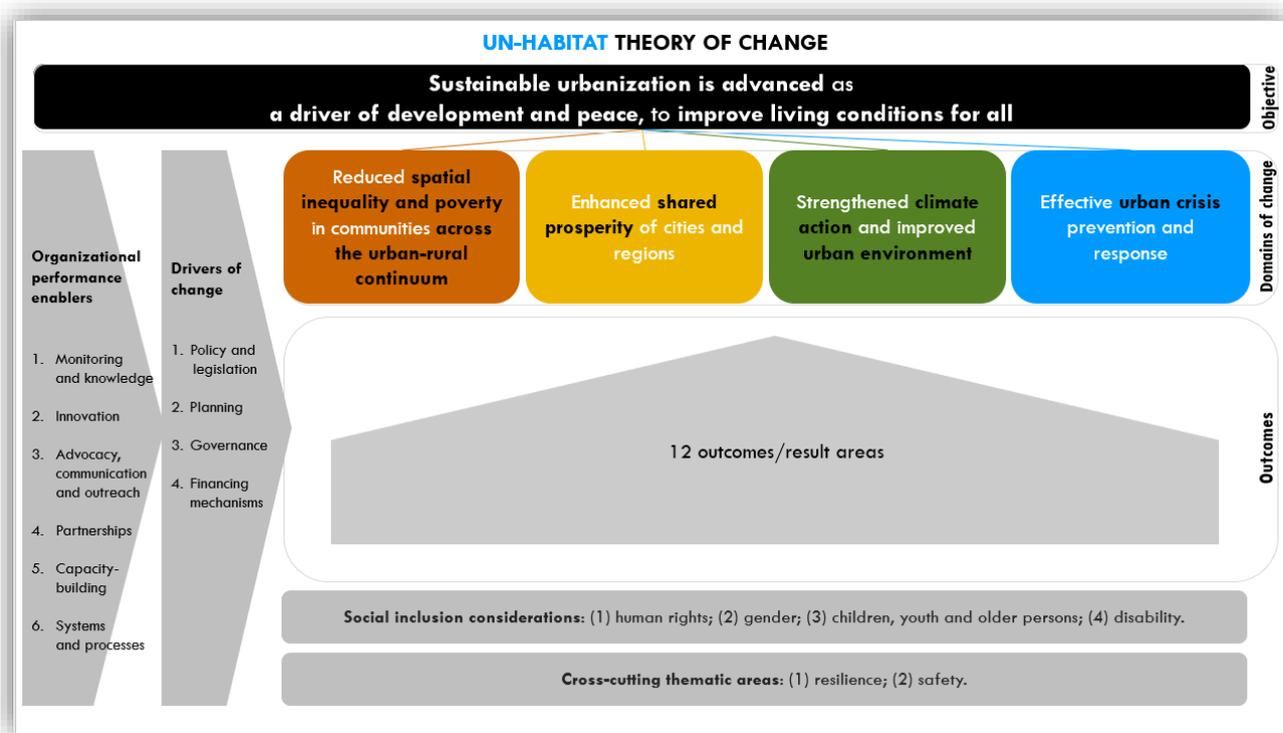
54. They also reflect the three transformative commitments of the New Urban Agenda, which are as follows:

- (a) Sustainable urban development for social inclusion and ending poverty;
- (b) Sustainable and inclusive urban prosperity and opportunities for all;
- (c) Environmentally sustainable and resilient urban development.

55. The theory of change required for UN-Habitat to achieve the objectives set out in its Strategic Plan is shown in figure 1.<sup>12</sup>

56. The four goals and their respective outcomes will be regularly tracked using robust indicators (with baselines and targets for each year during the period covered by the Strategic Plan) and milestones in the results framework and performance measurement plan.

**Figure 1 : UN-Habitat theory of change for the Strategic Plan for the period 2020–2023**



### Domain of change 1: Reduced spatial inequality and poverty in communities across the urban–rural continuum

57. Sustainable development cannot be achieved without addressing the basic human rights of the millions of marginalized urban dwellers living in poverty and subject to marginalization. That can be done in a variety of ways, including by expanding access to adequate housing, clean drinking water, sanitation, domestic energy, transport, health care, education and public space, with safety and security as key factors to ensure the achievement of truly equal and inclusive cities and human settlements. Inequality also persists within poor communities, as women, youth and persons with disability often suffer intersectional discrimination, which leads to further marginalization.

58. Poverty and marginalization intersect and are often concentrated in specific locations. Spatial inequality (defined as the concentration of disadvantage in a specific location) manifests in the different experiences and opportunities that people may have, and the rights that they can exercise, between regions, across the rural–urban continuum or within the same city. Spatial inequalities in cities perpetuate other forms of social, economic, political or cultural inequality. That may then be further diversified, based on a person’s socioeconomic background, race, migration status, age, gender and abilities. Unequal access to land, adequate and affordable housing, employment opportunities, basic and social services, mobility and public transport, and public space are key aspects of spatial inequality, often characterized by physical segregation. That has an impact on poverty levels

<sup>12</sup> See the annex to the present document for the full theory of change.

and opportunities for upward mobility. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, living in a deprived neighbourhood can have an impact on the education, health and work prospects of both children and adults, further deepening inequalities, even across generations.<sup>13</sup> That cuts across most of the Sustainable Development Goals and their associated targets, as highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General on Progress on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (2018).<sup>14</sup> The New Urban Agenda, as an accelerator to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, also includes many of those elements, in particular the need to fight poverty and to promote urban prosperity and ecological and resilient cities.

59. Furthermore, in order to reduce spatial inequalities and eradicate poverty, planned urban growth must be accompanied by effective urban renewal through in situ upgrading and urban regeneration. Such efforts would also offer the benefit of preserving cultural heritage and helping to build a sense of identity and belonging in cities.

60. The first domain of change thus translates into three key outcome areas to which UN-Habitat, working with partners, can contribute. These are as follows:

- (a) Increased and equal access to basic services, sustainable mobility and public space;
- (b) Increased and secure access to land, and adequate and affordable housing;
- (c) Effective settlement growth and regeneration.

***UN-Habitat's niche position:***

*In this domain of change, UN-Habitat will consolidate its vast experience in the area of basic services, housing and slum upgrading, land, urban mobility and public space. The International Guidelines on Decentralization and Access to Basic Services for all<sup>1</sup> and the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning<sup>1</sup> are essential frameworks for guiding outputs within this domain. Building on those frameworks, other normative guidance and the extensive experience of UN-Habitat in implementing field projects in the areas of public space, sustainable mobility, water and sanitation, basic social and physical infrastructure and energy, efforts in those areas will be scaled up. The expanded focus on effective settlement growth and regeneration is in response to explicit demands for UN-Habitat support by Member States, local authorities and other partners, and will use the experience of UN-Habitat with planned city infills, urban renewal and in situ upgrading, including in heritage areas. The outcomes in this domain of change represent the core business of UN-Habitat. However, in exercising its focal point role, it will also collaborate with a number of other United Nations coordination bodies, including UN-Water, UN-Energy, Sustainable the Energy for All initiative and the Sustainable Mobility for All initiative; other United Nations entities, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); and many non-governmental partners and stakeholders and private-sector partners.*

61. The notion of “increased and equal access” is based on the premise, set out in the Sustainable Development Goals, of “increased equality of outcome”. All UN-Habitat programmes will therefore prioritize groups that do not currently have equal access to basic services, sustainable mobility and public space, and provide interventions that allow substantive equality of outcome, counteracting different forms of exclusion.

<sup>13</sup> OECD (2018), *Divided Cities: Understanding Intra-Urban Inequalities* (Paris). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264300385-en>.

<sup>14</sup> A/73/83–E/2018/63.

### **Outcome 1: Increased and equal access to basic services, sustainable mobility and public space**

*Contributes to Sustainable Development Goals 1, 3, 4, 6, 9, 10 and 11; specifically targets – basic services: 1.4 (1.4.1), 3.b (3.b.2), 4.a (4.a.1), 6.b (6.b.1), 11.1, 11.5 (11.5.2) and 11.6 (11.6.1); sustainable mobility: 9.1 (9.1.2), 11.2 (11.2.1); public space: 11.7; social, economic and political inclusion: 10.2; and equal opportunity: 10.3.*

*Contributes to paragraphs 29, 30, 34, 37 and 74 of the New Urban Agenda.*

*Key United Nations collaborators: UNICEF, UN-Women, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.*

62. All cities and human settlements, regardless of size, require adequate basic and social services accessible to all: access to water, sanitation, waste management, energy, technology, health care and education. To be productive and inclusive, cities also require safe and sustainable mobility. The availability, distribution, access and quality of public space is also recognized as an important element to reduce inequality, generate local economic activities and promote social cohesion and a sense of identity. Given their importance in achieving sustainable urban development, all these elements should be reflected in national urban policies and sectoral plans, and ultimately translated into concrete physical interventions. UN-Habitat will therefore work with a wide range of stakeholders towards this outcome, including all levels of government, civil society, communities, and the formal and informal private sector, through both normative and operational work. That work will include policies that are sensitive to gender, age and disability; plans and legislation for public space provision and mobility solutions; legislation for improved safety in public spaces through stakeholder engagement; and inclusive participatory slum upgrading that improves access to basic services, mobility and public spaces.

63. UN-Habitat is well equipped to support Member States in their commitment to reducing waste generation by reducing, reusing and recycling waste, and will combine its long-standing work in urban basic services with an increasing emphasis on the need to reduce waste and recycle various components in an efficient and sustainable manner. UN-Habitat will continue to produce knowledge products and best practices that cover the use and recycling of solid waste, and to provide guidance to countries on sustainable water, wastewater, sanitation and waste management, urban mobility and energy systems. UN-Habitat is also engaged in supporting low-carbon plans and development strategies, and will scale up the advisory and technical services that it offers to countries and their local governments in that respect.

64. Outcome 1 is critical for UN-Habitat and requires greater emphasis. UN-Habitat will lead the work on improved policies, plans, designs, sharing of practices, and laws and regulations in order to provide increased and improved access to basic services, sustainable mobility and more inclusive public spaces. More effective data collection and monitoring of the availability and quality of basic services and public space, including data collection and reporting systems on violence against women in public spaces, also require specific attention.

### **Outcome 2: Increased and secure access to land, and adequate and affordable housing**

*Contributes to Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 5 and 11; specifically targets 1.4 (1.4.2), 2.3, 5.a (5.a.1 and 5.a.2) and 11.1 (11.1.1).*

*Contributes to paragraph 35 of the New Urban Agenda.*

*Key United Nations collaborators: World Bank and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.*

65. Land and property are an important domestic revenue source for local government, which can be captured to invest in expansion and improvement of basic services and infrastructure. Yet land

management is rarely integrated with spatial plans or policies. Security of tenure is an important element of good land management, as it allows households and communities not only to improve their own living conditions, but also to use land as an asset to lift themselves out of poverty. Insecurity of tenure affects female-headed households, and those who are otherwise marginalized, in particular. Customary and indigenous land rights are especially important considerations and will be addressed under this outcome area.

66. This outcome area will also build on the Global Housing Strategy adopted by the Governing Council at its Twenty-Fourth Session, promoting the commitment of Member States to the full and progressive realization of the right to adequate housing as provided for in international instruments, the Habitat Agenda: Goals and Principles, Commitments and the Global Plan of Action, and the New Urban Agenda. That will be expanded to focus on the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 11.1, which is a target to achieve cities without slums by 2030. UN-Habitat will continue to provide diverse solutions and a programmatic approach as part of that process in order to prevent forced evictions.

67. Adequate and affordable housing also requires integrated responses and concerted actions that connect planning, financial mechanisms and regulatory frameworks, focusing on both owner markets and rental markets. Housing and slum upgrading play a fundamental role in economic development and poverty reduction, which contribute to equitable, gender- and age-responsive socio-spatial development, placing housing at the centre of the sustainable urban development agenda as an effective equalizer for shared prosperity and growth.

68. This is a critical outcome for which UN-Habitat will take the lead within the United Nations system, working closely with partners focused on housing and those investing in land management towards advocacy, knowledge production, and policy and capacity development, in addition to field projects.

### ***Outcome 3: Effective settlement growth and regeneration***

*Contributes to Sustainable Development Goals 4, 6, 11 and 16; specifically targets 4.a, 6.b (6.b.1), 11.1 (11.1.1), 11.3, 11.6, 11.7, 11.a and 16.7 (16.7.2).*

*Contributes to paragraph 38 of the New Urban Agenda.*

*Key United Nations collaborators: UNESCO, the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the World Bank.*

69. It is important that urbanization models and urban planning and design allow for socially and physically integrated urban growth. Migration and population increase contribute in approximately equal measure to urban growth. The dynamics of settlement growth should therefore ensure that migration works for cities and that cities work for migrants, irrespective of their status. Urban cores, peri-urban areas and suburban settlements can accommodate growth through a mix of strategies, such as densification, mixed-use development, affordable housing, improved connectivity, increased access to public space and a diversity of employment opportunities, and those should be underscored by inclusive governance arrangements that promote socially cohesive urban communities.

70. Protection and revitalization of cultural heritage must be central to those efforts, and can also contribute to strengthening identities and providing a sense of belonging, integrating both host communities and newcomers, including migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons. The New Urban Agenda identifies culture as a priority component of urban plans and strategies, and makes an explicit call for the integration of culture in the adoption of planning instruments, including master plans, zoning guidelines, building codes, coastal management policies and strategic development policies.

71. This is a growth area for UN-Habitat, building on its extensive experience with planned city infills and urban renewal projects. UN-Habitat will strengthen its support for the development of policies, plans, gender- and age-responsive local and community planning and design processes,

guidelines and capacity development for local authorities, and will also enhance its engagement with the private sector.

## Domain of change 2: Enhanced shared prosperity of cities and regions

72. In the current global economy, urbanization contributes a disproportionately high share of GDP. Well-planned and properly managed urbanization can generate wealth, maximizing the benefits of economies of scale and agglomeration, allowing for integrated territorial development and connecting rural and urban development. Genuinely inclusive, well-connected and prosperous cities promote collective well-being and fulfilment for all. Achieving balanced territorial development and overcoming inequalities requires combining economic growth strategies with socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable development. Prosperous cities are, more often than not, located in prosperous regions. Efficient and adequate regional planning is essential for cities to rethink their comparative advantage and better reposition themselves within their surrounding areas to increase the likelihood of generating decent jobs and livelihoods across the region.

73. This domain of change translates into the following three key outcome areas in which UN-Habitat, working with partners, can contribute:

- (a) Improved spatial connectivity and productivity of cities and regions;
- (b) Increased and equitably distributed locally generated revenues;
- (c) Expanded deployment of frontier technologies and innovations for urban development.

### **UN-Habitat's niche position**

*In this domain of change, in particular Outcome 1, UN-Habitat will need to grow in terms of both knowledge and expertise. The expanded focus on connectivity and regional planning is determined by several studies that demonstrate the strong connection between urban and regional planning as a way to promote shared prosperity. Working with strategic partners, such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the World Bank and others, UN-Habitat will support efforts by government authorities at different levels to develop policies, frameworks and actions to boost the productivity of cities and regions through an integrated territorial development approach. Working with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the International Labour Organization, IOM, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and other organizations, UN-Habitat will promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all, particularly women and youth, through specific policies and actions.*

*Outcome 2 requires UN-Habitat to cooperate with regional development banks, local and regional governments and their associations, UNDP, the World Bank, the European Union, financial institutions, foundations and academia. From an organizational perspective, the niche position of UN-Habitat focuses on providing technical support to local, regional and national authorities to formulate and implement policies and strategies to increase local revenue and ensure an equitable allocation thereof. UN-Habitat will continue to consolidate its considerable experience in this area.*

*Outcome 3 represents an expanded focus. In exercising a focal point role, UN-Habitat will collaborate with various entities, such as the United Nations Innovation Network, United Nations agencies, technology companies, "smart city" associations, innovation hubs and academia. UN-Habitat will thus adapt and expand innovative technical solutions for improved quality of life in cities.*

### **Outcome 1: Improved spatial connectivity and productivity of cities and regions**

*Contributes to Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 8, 9, 11, 12 and 14; specifically targets 2.3, 2.4, 2.a, 8.2, 8.3, 8.5, 11.2 (11.2.1), 11.3 (11.3.1) and 11.a.*

*Contributes to paragraphs 49, 51 and 52 of the New Urban Agenda.*

*Key United Nations collaborators: UNDP, UNIDO, ILO, IOM.*

74. The spatial organization of cities and regions, accessibility and design of urban space, and the integration of different scales of cities and human settlements, from small and medium-sized towns and cities to large metropolises, can significantly enhance the contribution made by urbanization to productivity and inclusive economic development. For that to occur, however, connectivity across urban networks, between cities and their surroundings, peri-urban and rural areas, must be strengthened. That requires a country-wide – and sometimes cross-border – approach to development, with reinvigorated urban and rural territorial planning. National urban policies, effectively implemented and with the appropriate legal frameworks and technical and financial support in place, can ensure that prosperity is shared across cities and regions. Adequate territorial planning can strengthen the capacity of small and medium-sized cities to provide win-win situations for regions, as it can reduce pressure on primary cities and help rural populations to access information, goods, services and other resources that are needed for improved opportunities and increased productivity. At the urban scale, spatial development frameworks, city-wide strategies and local plans are key tools to ensure improved spatial connectivity and productivity, as the first step to integrating and proposing strategies to promote better-connected and more inclusive cities. Well-planned cities can maximize the urban form while leveraging economies of agglomerations that – supported by good connectivity and adequate serviced land – can boost productive activities and generate jobs.

75. In the area of the blue economy, cities bordering oceans, lakes and rivers have historically played a critical role, not only in bringing prosperity to communities living alongside the water, but also in influencing local, national and international development. UN-Habitat is able to lead the normative debate on how towns and cities can optimally leverage the blue economy for prosperity and development towards achieving the urban dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals.

76. New governance arrangements across existing administrative boundaries and sectors are needed to reinforce institutional coordination at all levels. Metropolitan governance structures and collaboration mechanisms are critical for addressing urban sprawl and other negative externalities that cause spatial and socioeconomic segregation, as well as environmental and natural resource degradation.

77. UN-Habitat technical support in this area will focus on increasing the comparative advantage of cities to maximize their productive potential, addressing negative externalities such as pollution and congestion, enhancing mass transit options and providing efficient, reliable services, making cities more competitive and innovative and, in turn, maximizing productivity gains.

## **Outcome 2: Increased and equitably distributed locally generated revenues**

*Contributes to Sustainable Development Goals 8, 11 and 17, and specifically target 17.1.*

*Contributes to paragraphs 67 and 75 of the New Urban Agenda.*

*Key United Nations collaborators: UNCDF and IOM.*

78. Local authorities across the world have a fundamental mandate to deliver basic services and public goods. However, they face huge challenges in doing so. Cities in developing countries, in particular, cannot reconcile available financial resources and increasing levels of municipal expenditure. That financial gap is further aggravated by the rapid growth of their populations, which creates an ever-increasing demand for public services and for funding for the construction and maintenance of new public infrastructure.

79. While there is clearly a need for greater and more efficient sharing of financial resources between central and local government, potential local sources of revenue generation currently available to local authorities should also be fully exploited. Those include, for example, user fees, tax increment financing, land value finance and debt instruments, such as bonds and loans. In addition, community-based financing funds and local economic development strategies may lead to long-term socioeconomic transformation. Domestic resource mobilization is critical to the achievement of the

Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda. Improving municipal finance is key to that, along with facilitating access to local development funds and fiscal decentralization instruments.

80. Working with development partners, public finance and management organizations, universities and the private sector, UN-Habitat is well positioned to assist local authorities in enacting the institutional and legal reforms that are necessary to generate additional financial resources, including through public–private partnerships, and land-based revenue and financing tools, maintaining a strong emphasis on transparency and accountability. That includes the quantification, capture and distribution of land value increments, asset management and land taxation mechanisms.

### **Outcome 3: Expanded deployment of frontier technologies and innovations for urban development**

*Contributes to Sustainable Development Goals 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13 and 17, and specifically targets 5.b, 7.1 (7.1.2), 7.a, 7.b (7.b.1), 8.2, 9.5, 9.b, 13.3 (13.3.2), 17.6, 17.8 and 17.16.*

*Contributes to paragraph 66 of the New Urban Agenda.*

*Key United Nations collaborators: International Telecommunication Union and the United Nations Innovation Network.*

81. Frontier technologies are profoundly influencing the emergence of smart cities, the ways in which we build and manage our cities and other human settlements, and how urban managers take more informed decisions. Those currently include, among others, the Internet of things, sensor networks, machine-to-machine communication, robotics, artificial intelligence, virtual and augmented reality, 3D printing, geographic information systems (GIS), remote sensing, autonomous unmanned vehicles, drones, blockchain, cryptographic computing, and big data processing and visualization. The New Urban Agenda calls for technology and communication networks to be strengthened and for smart-city approaches that use digitalization, clean energy and technologies to boost economic growth and improve service delivery, while promoting broad-based inclusion, including of persons with disabilities.

82. Innovation is critical for the realization of various dimensions of development and prosperity, in the process unleashing undeveloped potential and making full use of local resources and assets. Innovative funding opportunities and partnerships need to be explored and the capacity of local governments to effectively procure, test and implement frontier technologies needs to be significantly strengthened.

83. To contribute effectively to urban sustainability, frontier technologies and innovations need to be applied appropriately to ensure that the prosperity they bring is shared among citizens, cities and regions. That work needs to be undertaken by a wide array of actors, and UN-Habitat can play a significant role in the process through the integration of new technologies and innovative practices in both its normative and operational activities. In that regard, its role will embrace anticipating trends and conditions regarding the long-term impact on urbanization; developing innovative ways to collect and use data, including spatial analysis for urban management; and elaborating smart city plans and strategies, including sectoral responses in such strategic areas as urban mobility and environmental sustainability. It would require the creation of open, user-friendly and participatory data platforms to ensure that the benefits of data collection and integration are shared by all, with strong guidance within that context on data protection, data ownership, privacy rights and human rights.

84. In this outcome, an increased emphasis on capacity-building in local government and across the built environment professions is crucial in order to turn smart city plans and the use of frontier technologies in urban planning, design and regeneration into people-centred opportunities, rather than technology-led endeavours. Smart city strategies may benefit from focusing on using technology to harness data for the smart regulation and monitoring of urban land and housing markets.

85. Ultimately, the deployment of frontier technologies and sustainable urban development needs to pay particular attention to underserved populations in order to address inequalities and bridge social and spatial divides.

### Domain of change 3: Strengthened climate action and improved urban environment

86. The New Urban Agenda sets out a shared vision for cities and other human settlements towards strengthened climate action responses and an improved urban environment. Member States recognize the unprecedented threats to cities and human settlements from unsustainable consumption and production patterns, loss of biodiversity, pressure on ecosystems, pollution, natural and human-made disasters, and climate change and its related risks, undermining the efforts to end poverty in all its forms and dimensions and to achieve sustainable development.<sup>15</sup> They commit themselves to facilitating the sustainable management of natural resources in cities and other human settlements in a manner that protects and improves the urban ecosystem and environmental services, reduces greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution, and promotes disaster risk reduction and management.<sup>16</sup>

87. This domain of change focuses on the intersection of cities and other human settlements with climate and the environment. The Paris Agreement defines roles for countries and stakeholders in respect of all elements of climate action. In response to the increasing challenges posed by climate change, Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change have developed nationally determined contributions as a commitment to advance the Paris Agreement. In 2017, a review by UN-Habitat of 164 nationally determined contributions found that 113 had moderate or strong urban content, predominantly focused on adaptation, or a combination of adaptation and mitigation actions, while only a very small number focused exclusively on mitigation.<sup>17</sup>

88. This domain of change addresses the resilience, adaptation and mitigation actions for the development of sustainable cities through curbing the impact of climate change, creating new economic opportunities and improving liveability in cities and other human settlements.

89. This domain of change comprises three outcomes that together aim to strengthen climate action and improve urban environments to create systemic change by designing integrated solutions that balance the patterns of human life and the built and natural environments in cities. Those outcomes are as follows:

- (a) Reduced greenhouse gas emissions and improved air quality;
- (b) Improved resource efficiency and protection of ecological assets;
- (c) Effective adaptation of communities and infrastructure to climate change.

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<sup>15</sup> New Urban Agenda, para. 63.

<sup>16</sup> New Urban Agenda, para. 65.

<sup>17</sup> UN-Habitat (2017), *Sustainable Urbanization in the Paris Agreement: Comparative Review of Nationally Determined Contributions for Urban Content*. Available at <https://unhabitat.org/books/sustainable-urbanization-in-the-paris-agreement/>.

### **UN-Habitat's niche position**

*In this domain of change, UN-Habitat will act as a catalyst for connections and action in the global climate arena, linking global actors and policies to local and national contexts. It will build that linkage through a strategically designed process which combines policy advice, technical support, advocacy, thematic expertise, knowledge production and sharing of international best practice. UN-Habitat climate action programmes will thus create a platform to facilitate bidirectional linkage – from global to local and local to global – as local and regional governments engage in the processes.*

*In order to support Member States in undertaking climate action and improving the urban environment, UN-Habitat will work together with United Nations agencies, such as UNEP, to mainstream environmental considerations into local, national and global urban policymaking and to highlight the local–global element of environmental issues. It will also work with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to enhance awareness of climate change matters and to disseminate knowledge and international best practice to support the implementation of climate change strategies. Furthermore, it will work with the World Health Organization (WHO) to assist Governments in developing and implementing clean air action plans.*

*In the area of adaptation, building climate resilience of the urban poor will be an area of particular attention.*

### **Outcome 1: Reduced greenhouse gas emissions and improved air quality**

*Contributes to Sustainable Development Goals 3, 11 and 13; specifically targets 3.9 (3.9.1), 11.6 and 13.2 (13.2.1).*

*Contributes to paragraphs 67 and 75 of the New Urban Agenda.*

*Key United Nations collaborator: UNEP.*

90. Cities account for between 60 and 80 per cent of energy consumption and generate as much as 70 per cent of human-induced greenhouse gas emissions, primarily through the consumption of fossil fuels for energy supply and transportation. Urban sprawl and segregation of functions greatly increases climate impact, making it vital to ensure that we are able to plan urban growth in a more sustainable and climate-neutral way. The sustainable management of resources includes strengthening the environmentally sound management and minimization of all waste, including air and short-lived climate pollutants, and greenhouse gases in a way that strives to transition to a circular economy.<sup>18</sup>

91. Scientists have concluded that to hold global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, we must reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40 to 50 per cent by 2030 (from 2010 levels). There is consequently an urgent need to accelerate transformative action, particularly in cities.<sup>19</sup> This is thus a priority area for UN-Habitat across all four domains of change during the period covered by the Strategic Plan.

92. To promote mitigation practices, UN-Habitat proposes to use integrated and territorial planning approaches in its normative and operational work to promote compact and transit-oriented development, which will offer benefits in terms of reduced use of private vehicles and, consequently, reduced emissions. UN-Habitat will also continue to advocate for the adoption of renewable energy generation in urban areas, using solar rooftops on public and residential buildings, wind farms whenever and wherever possible, and converting municipal waste into energy sources. That will reduce dependency on fossil fuel for energy generation. Cities are taking ambitious steps, with 73 large cities in the C40 Cities network<sup>20</sup> having committed to becoming net carbon neutral by 2050 or

<sup>18</sup> New Urban Agenda, para. 71.

<sup>19</sup> IPCC (2018). [https://report.ipcc.ch/sr15/pdf/sr15\\_spm\\_final.pdf](https://report.ipcc.ch/sr15/pdf/sr15_spm_final.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> A network of the world's megacities committed to addressing climate change.

earlier. UN-Habitat will continue to mobilize cities to set targets, report data and track progress through the climate action planning framework, and to help to lead the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy,<sup>21</sup> a platform that offers a means for mayors to publicly commit to, systematically plan for and report on climate action.

93. Scientists estimate that in 2016, 91 per cent of the world's population lived in places where air quality exceeded WHO guideline limits of outdoor air pollution, the majority in urban areas with attendant health risks.<sup>22</sup> To help cities to improve air quality, UN-Habitat can assist Governments to develop clean air action plans, recognizing the substantial synergy of such plans with action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and addressing both outdoor and indoor air pollution. Such plans will be evidence-based and designed through meaningful, informed participatory processes and multisectoral approaches. The work will be carried out in collaboration with United Nations agencies, including UNEP and WHO, and other key strategic partners.

### **Outcome 2: Improved resource efficiency and protection of ecological assets**

*Contributes to Sustainable Development Goals 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15; specifically targets 6.3, 6.a, 8.4, 11.6, 11.c (11.c.1), 12.2, 12.3, 12.4 (12.4.1, 12.4.2), 12.5, 12.c, 14.a, 15.1 (15.1.2), 15.4, 15.5, 15.9, 15.a, (15.a.1) and 15.b (15.b.1).*

*Contributes to paragraphs 68, 69, 70, 71, 72 and 73 of the New Urban Agenda.*

*Key United Nations collaborators: UNEP and FAO.*

94. In the New Urban Agenda, Member States note the need to facilitate the sustainable management of natural resources<sup>23</sup> and transition to a circular economy while facilitating ecosystem conservation, regeneration, restoration and resilience.<sup>24</sup> The promotion of resource efficiency measures in the built environment will further contribute to reduced wastage of energy, water, materials and land in the building sector by adopting green building practices, energy performance indicators and rating systems. Member States also envisage cities and other human settlements that protect, conserve, restore and promote their ecosystems, water, natural habitats and biodiversity.<sup>25</sup>

95. To achieve that outcome, UN-Habitat will offer support to countries to develop building codes that are both energy efficient and resource efficient; make appropriate reference to and integrate energy and resource efficiency principles into country-specific codes; develop policy guidelines for mainstreaming energy and resource efficiency in buildings; and facilitate knowledge-sharing. It will further develop and promote knowledge on smart and sustainable urban development, including through training modules, tools and products which are available through the One UN Climate Change Learning Partnership (UN CC: Learn), and will continue to build its work in that area, including supporting Governments with technical expertise in smart city and circular economy approaches.

96. To support Member States to better protect urban biodiversity and ecological assets, UN-Habitat will provide climate action and urban environment responses within a holistic framework. The allocation of open spaces, protection of fertile agricultural land, urban gardens, botanic gardens and parks becomes a critical action to preserve, regenerate and restore urban biodiversity. Adequate planning and legislation to reduce urban sprawl and its negative effects on the environment is part of UN-Habitat in-depth knowledge and response for this outcome.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/about/>.

<sup>22</sup> World Health Organization (2018), Fact Sheet: Ambient (outdoor) air quality and health. Available at [https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ambient-\(outdoor\)-air-quality-and-health](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ambient-(outdoor)-air-quality-and-health).

<sup>23</sup> New Urban Agenda, para. 65.

<sup>24</sup> New Urban Agenda, para. 71.

<sup>25</sup> New Urban Agenda, paras. 13 (g) and 13 (h).

### **Outcome 3: Effective adaptation of communities and infrastructure to climate change**

*Contributes to Sustainable Development Goals 9, 11 and 13; specifically targets 11.b, 13.2, 13.3 and 13.a.*

*Contributes to paragraphs 77, 78 and 79 of the New Urban Agenda.*

*Key United Nations collaborators: United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.*

97. A special report on global warming published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in October 2018<sup>26</sup> warned that the earth's surface had warmed by 1.0 degree Celsius above pre-industrial levels, sufficient to lift oceans and cause extreme storms, floods and droughts. At current levels of greenhouse gas emissions, the IPCC report projected that temperatures were likely to rise by 1.5 degrees Celsius between 2030 and 2052 if they continued to increase at their current rate, resulting in sea-level rises, threatening coastal urbanization, and posing climate-related risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security and economic growth.

98. Since a large proportion of cities are located on the shoreline of water bodies, urban residents are especially vulnerable to climate change. Approximately 360 million urban residents live in coastal areas that are less than 10 metres above sea level and will be directly affected by the forecast rise in sea levels and natural disasters, such as floods. Fifteen of the world's 20 megacities are at risk from rising sea levels and coastal surges. Cities are also home to concentrations of populations that are highly vulnerable to the impact of climate change and health-associated factors, particularly in informal settlements,<sup>27</sup> in which materials used for housing construction are often not sufficiently robust to withstand the surging seas, wind storms and flooding that may be caused by climate change.

99. To help cities and other human settlements to adapt to climate change, UN-Habitat, working with partners, will build on several areas in which it has a comparative advantage. First, it will continue its efforts to base planning and design on vulnerability analyses to reduce the exposure of populations to climate-related hazards such as flooding and landslides, as well as to address a broader set of natural and human-caused hazards. Second, it will follow pro-poor approaches to building climate resilience in marginalized neighbourhoods, slums and informal settlements, while helping cities to integrate such communities into city-wide urban systems. Third, drawing on its local-national mandate and convening power, UN-Habitat will promote multilevel governance approaches so that national governments empower local governments to take climate action through improved frameworks with strong local-national collaboration.

### **Domain of change 4: Effective urban crisis prevention and response**

100. Global crises are increasingly complex and multi-dimensional; interconnected across geographical and regional boundaries, cyclical, recurrent and increasingly urban and protracted in nature. The United Nations system recognizes that social and spatial inequalities, unplanned growth, unequal access to land, affordable housing and basic services, and pressure on natural resources all contribute to an accumulation of disaster risk, instability and potential conflict. Many of those causes are linked to flawed development and, in most cases, the impact of crisis is particularly severe for the urban poor, the displaced and others who are already chronically vulnerable.

101. Effective urban crisis prevention, urban risk management and preparedness involve approaches to urban development that are sensitive to both risk and conflict. When developing responses and longer-term recovery and reconstruction strategies, the nature and causes of the specific urban crisis are the natural starting point. The United Nations is called upon to recognize the role that sustainable development can play in mitigating drivers of conflict, disaster risks and

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>.

<sup>27</sup> IPCC (2014): one in seven of the world's population lives in slums and informal settlements; citing as a source Mitlin, D. and Satterthwaite, D., *Urban Poverty in the Global South: Scale and Nature* (London, Routledge, 2013).

humanitarian crises, and to engage in the collective responsibility of sustaining peace.<sup>28</sup> Sustainable and equitable urbanization is considered key to addressing some of the underlying risks of natural hazards and the root causes of instability and conflict. If crises do occur, it is vital to base humanitarian responses on a shared understanding of the urban crisis environment; empower local stakeholders, especially local governments; and focus on fast-tracking recovery and a return to more sustainable, inclusive and resilient urban development trajectories.

102. Effective crisis prevention, response and recovery requires a strong focus on social cohesion and inclusive planning. Growing inequalities and increased exposure to natural hazards exacerbate the vulnerabilities of specific groups, fuelling instability and undermining their coping strategies to the point at which humanitarian assistance is needed. During a crisis, both acute and chronic vulnerabilities need to be taken into account. At the same time, migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees seek safety, access to services and livelihoods in urban areas, rather than in camps. Cities are thus faced with both challenges and opportunities. Acute displacement and large population movements can result in acute shocks to city systems and consequent breakdowns, including in social cohesion. In fragile settings with weak planning systems and capacities, that leads all too easily to rapid and unplanned urbanization, further aggravating inequalities and accumulating risks. Taking into account the increased complexity and urban nature of crises, a focus on resilience, of both systems and people, is critical for stability and sustainable development. That is also true for crisis response, which offers unique opportunities to accelerate the resilience of cities and communities. Furthermore, it requires a rights-based approach that gives particular attention to women, children, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities in both host and displaced communities.

103. This domain of change translates into three interrelated outcomes, relevant to both crisis prevention and crisis response:

- (a) Enhanced social integration and inclusive communities;
- (b) Improved living standards and inclusion of migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees through effective crisis response and recovery;
- (c) Enhanced resilience of the built environment and infrastructure.

***UN-Habitat's niche position***

*Based on its decades-long experience in crisis-affected countries and its specific expertise in urban and other human settlements, UN-Habitat is called upon to (a) better support the implementation of the New Urban Agenda in countries affected by conflict and natural and human-caused disasters; (b) ensure that its work contributes, in a coordinated manner, to the United Nations system commitment to sustaining peace and a comprehensive whole-of-system response to complex emergencies; (c) better support Member States in their efforts to implement the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030; and (d) better support Member States facing challenges caused by the mass influx of migrants.<sup>1</sup>*

*UN-Habitat is in a position to offer integrated solutions in support of broader humanitarian, development and political efforts led by other United Nations entities, in particular those led by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The work of UN-Habitat on land, for example, supports the broader conflict prevention work led by UNDP, the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations (DPA) (until 31 December 2018), the Peacebuilding Support Office (until 31 December 2018), the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (from 1 January 2019) and others. It is also important for UN-Habitat to contribute its expertise to United Nations networks such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the United Nations Network on Migration, and to provide urban advisory services to Humanitarian and Resident Coordinators.*

*Strategic partnerships should set out the ways in which UN-Habitat can leverage its expertise (in areas such as planning, land, housing and basic services) towards addressing the root causes of crises in urban areas so that it is optimally positioned to contribute to joint efforts to recover and sustain peace.*

<sup>28</sup> General Assembly resolution 71/243, para. 14.

### **Outcome 1: Enhanced social integration and inclusive communities**

*Contributes to Sustainable Development Goals 9, 10, 11 and 16; specifically targets 10.7, 11.3, 16.1 and 16.a.*

*Contributes to paragraphs 33, 40, 77 and 78 of the New Urban Agenda.*

*Key United Nations collaborators: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, IOM, UNDP, UNICEF, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).*

104. Inclusive engagement of all segments of society, as well as vulnerable groups, including migrants, refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons, in the planning and management of cities and communities, can ensure more equitable access to public space, basic and social services, infrastructure and livelihood opportunities. In turn, that can help to contribute to overall stability and social cohesion, reducing the risk of violence and conflict triggers in urban areas. It also reflects the international agendas on women, peace and security<sup>29</sup> and youth, peace and security.<sup>30</sup>

105. UN-Habitat work to prevent land from being used as a potential root cause for conflict will also contribute to stability and peace, help prevent forced displacement, and facilitate social and economic inclusion.

106. In crisis situations, adapted urban planning and management approaches can help to guide incremental decision-making on appropriate humanitarian and development responses. That allows for more area-based, multi-sectoral and integrated responses, which leverage the social capital of all urban stakeholders, including that of community groups and the private sector. It is critical to empower local governments and communities and strengthen their capacity to promote social cohesion and resilient recovery, and rebuild the social fabric. UN-Habitat will therefore promote consultative mechanisms, that include migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees, and will ensure that such mechanisms include a focus on children, women, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities.

### **Outcome 2: Improved living standards and inclusion of migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees through effective crisis response and recovery**

*Contributes to Sustainable Development Goals 1, 5, 8, 10 and 11, and specifically targets 1.4 (1.4.2), 5.a (5.a.2), 8.8, 10.7 and 11.1.*

*Contributes to paragraphs 29, 30 and 35 of the New Urban Agenda.*

*Key United Nations collaborators: UNHCR, IOM, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNDP and UNICEF.*

107. As forced displacement into urban areas becomes increasingly protracted, integrated urban development strategies should address the needs of both host communities and the displaced, paying particular attention to women, children, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities, seeking to overcome both chronic and acute vulnerabilities. Managing urban displacement therefore needs to be seen as part of sustainably managing urban growth, mitigating the strain on public services and housing supply and avoiding further growth of informal settlements. It calls for appropriate housing and urban development responses that can effectively integrate displaced communities within urban environments, through tailored, area-based, integrated humanitarian and development actions, coordinated by local government.

108. UN-Habitat, contributing to broader United Nations efforts, is well placed to support those efforts by providing disaggregated, multisectoral, spatial analysis that considers the absorption

<sup>29</sup> United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security.

<sup>30</sup> United Nations Security Council resolution 2250 (2015) on youth and peace and security.

capacity of cities and the “push” and “pull” factors of displacement to support rapid decision-making that connects to long-term impact, and by deploying technical support in the areas of urban planning, land, housing and basic services. UN-Habitat has a key role to play in supporting local governments and building their capacity to manage urban displacement, drawing on its strong experience and expertise in the humanitarian, development and peace nexus.

109. In cases in which camp-like environments are inevitable, UN-Habitat, working with agencies such as UNHCR and UNDP, contributes its expertise in planning camps as future urban extensions with adequate urban planning standards and tenure arrangements which are suitable for eventual transformation into neighbourhoods.

110. Lack of security of tenure complicates humanitarian responses and exposes vulnerable populations, such as female-headed households, to a wide range of protection issues, including further displacement. Addressing housing, land and property rights early on in a crisis situation is often critical to allow for early voluntary return or local integration. Housing, land and property rights are a critical component of durable solutions for forced displacement, enabling affected populations to return home, remain where they are and access basic rights, or move to a location of their choice.<sup>31</sup> A key role for UN-Habitat is to continue to catalyse a United Nations system-wide approach towards a more coherent and sustained engagement at scale on land and across the conflict cycle, applying the land tenure continuum<sup>32</sup> and fit-for-purpose land administration.

### ***Outcome 3: Enhanced resilience of the built environment and infrastructure***

*Contributes to Sustainable Development Goals 9, 11, 13 and 16; specifically targets 9.1, 9.4, 9.a, 11.5, 13.2, 13.b and 16.6.*

*Contributes to paragraphs 77 and 78 of the New Urban Agenda.*

*Key United Nations collaborators: UNDP, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and World Bank.*

111. Well-planned and well-managed urbanization has the potential to create built environments that are more resilient and socially stable. The reduction of multidimensional risks needs to be hardwired into the development process itself. Urban resilience refers to the ability of cities and other human settlements to resist and recover from shocks and stresses, while undergoing a transformation into more sustainable urban systems. A resilient city assesses, plans and acts to prepare for and respond to all hazards, whether sudden or slow-onset, expected or unexpected.

112. As part of the United Nations reform, there is also a better understanding of how crisis response, particularly in urban areas, increasingly requires an early application of developmental approaches to fast track recovery, which reduces the need for humanitarian assistance, while laying the ground for a more resilient urban development trajectory through sustainable reconstruction approaches. Crisis response provides important opportunities to remedy underlying risks and vulnerabilities. UN-Habitat also aims to achieve that by developing and improving urban-specific recovery frameworks, tools and approaches, supporting local implementation and mobilizing networks of urban stakeholders, complementing work led by the World Bank, European Union and UNDP at the national level.

113. Resilience assessments and profiling by UN-Habitat are key to help identify the strengths and weaknesses of systems, as a basis to design proactive measures to make cities, neighbourhoods and communities more resilient to future shocks, and to support the principle of “building back better” in post-crisis reconstruction situations. Such measures include, for example, reviewing building norms

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<sup>31</sup> <http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/themes/housing-land-and-property/>.

<sup>32</sup> “The [land tenure] continuum offers an alternative approach to the dominant focus on titling of individually held private property as the ultimate form of tenure security, or the end goal of land tenure reforms. It promotes recognition and increase of security across the continuum, with opportunity for movement or transformation between different tenure forms.” (UN-Habitat 2016, Framework for Evaluating Continuum of Land Rights Scenarios).

and their enforcement, introducing or reinforcing planning restrictions in locations of risk, upgrading basic infrastructure, reviving increasingly targeted cultural heritage and re-planning destroyed areas. UN-Habitat expertise in urban resilience and reconstruction efforts can also help to align humanitarian and development responses, working closely with agencies such as the World Bank, UNDP and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. UN-Habitat will also ensure that the resilience of marginalized groups and communities, who often suffer the most in crises that affect the built environment and services, are prioritized and fully included in recovery and reconstruction strategies and plans.

#### **D. The social inclusion dimension and cross-cutting thematic areas**

114. The Strategic Plan approaches the organizational priorities that must underpin all the areas of work that UN-Habitat carries out on two tracks: the social inclusion dimension, which encompasses human rights; gender; children, youth and older persons; and disability; and two cross-cutting thematic areas: resilience and safety. These tracks provide a transversal connection across all the domains of change and their respective outcomes, as well as the drivers of change.

##### **(a) The social inclusion dimension: human rights; gender; children, youth and older persons; and persons with disabilities**

###### **Human rights**

115. This dimension is critical for the fulfilment of the commitment under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that no one should be left behind, working towards a world in which everyone can benefit from the advantages of sustainable urbanization. The Strategic Plan offers the opportunity to make the social inclusion dimension the filter through which the work of UN-Habitat passes to ensure that the most vulnerable groups are not engaged incidentally, but are specifically targeted, including through active compliance with the United-Nations-wide human-rights-based approach.

116. Human rights are universal, inalienable, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, and are thus inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, gender, nationality or migration status, ethnicity, language, religion or any other status.

117. Urbanization can only be sustainable if it is human rights based, and living conditions can only be improved for all if everyone's human rights are comprehensively protected and promoted. As evidence indicates, narrow, discretionary measures, addressing the symptoms of poverty rather than its systemic economic, social and spatial causes, will not produce the ambitious results called for by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

118. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development confirms the commitment to a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity,<sup>33</sup> the New Urban Agenda is grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights treaties,<sup>34</sup> and a number of UN-Habitat Governing Council resolutions have affirmed the need to base the work of the programme within the international human rights system.<sup>35</sup>

119. Human rights inform and interconnect all the outcomes of the Strategic Plan. UN-Habitat applies the human-rights-based approach to address inequalities and discrimination, reaching those who are furthest behind first by placing power relationships in human settlements at the heart of its analysis and action. In particular, the Strategic Plan contributes to the realization of the right to an adequate standard of living, including the right to adequate housing<sup>36</sup> and the right to water and

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<sup>33</sup> Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, para. 8.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, New Urban Agenda, paras. 12 and 126.

<sup>35</sup> In 2013, for example, human rights mainstreaming was approved as a priority issue through its inclusion in the Strategic Plan for 2014–2019.

<sup>36</sup> Part of the right to an adequate standard of living contained in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

sanitation;<sup>37</sup> and by doing so it facilitates the achievement of interrelated rights, such as the right to health care and education. Related principles, such as non-discrimination and equality, access to information, participation, accountability and the right to a remedy<sup>38</sup> are also of key importance.<sup>39</sup>

120. The prioritization of human rights addresses the structural causes of inequality and discrimination in an integrated manner. For example, reduced poverty and spatial inequality includes outcomes related to equal access to basic and social services, and access to land and public space.

121. UN-Habitat will build partnerships with other entities which play an active role in the United Nations human rights system, including the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, and other actors responsible for upholding human rights principles. When engaging with the private sector, UN-Habitat will be led by the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework and the United Nations Global Compact.

### **Gender**

122. Gender-based discrimination, which refers to discrimination against individuals because of their gender, gender identity or sexual orientation, can further intersect with, and compound, discrimination on other grounds, such as ethnicity, migration status and age, among others, thus exacerbating marginalization and curtailing their ability to fully participate in and benefit from sustainable urban development.

123. The United Nations Human Rights Council has repeatedly acknowledged the need to prevent and address discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation.<sup>40</sup> The New Urban Agenda envisages gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls<sup>41</sup> and emphasizes the need for gender-responsiveness in all aspects of sustainable urban development. UN-Habitat has a long track record of promoting the mainstreaming and programmatic prioritization of gender in all its work.<sup>42</sup>

124. The Strategic Plan of UN-Habitat for 2020–2023 builds on those rights commitments in the four domains of change in line with United Nations standards.<sup>43</sup> For example, effective participation is key to addressing different forms of gender discrimination, both in decision-making and in programme implementation. UN-Habitat will therefore continue to strengthen its strong partnerships in this area with Governments at all levels; within the United Nations system, in particular with UN-Women and OHCHR; with non-governmental partners and civil society; and with the Advisory Group on Gender Issues, an independent advisory body to the Executive Director of UN-Habitat.

### **Children, youth and older persons**

125. Young women and men have been a key focus of the work of UN-Habitat. It has successfully advocated for the role of youth as leaders in sustainable urban development, recognizing the Sustainable Development Goals’ guiding principle of leaving no one behind, and the New Urban Agenda vision of cities for all. A successful methodology for achieving urban equity for youth is that of “youth-led development,” codified in the 2008 Kampala Principles. Its youth programmes have

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<sup>37</sup> As recognized by the General Assembly in 2010 by its adoption of resolution 64/292 on the human right to water and sanitation.

<sup>38</sup> The right to a remedy is enshrined in article 2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

<sup>39</sup> All the principles listed are enshrined in international human rights instruments. See also [www.unhabitat.org/books/the-human-rights-in-cities-handbook-series-volume-i-the-human-rights-based-approach-to-housing-and-slum-upgrading/](http://www.unhabitat.org/books/the-human-rights-in-cities-handbook-series-volume-i-the-human-rights-based-approach-to-housing-and-slum-upgrading/).

<sup>40</sup> A/HRC/RES/32/2.

<sup>41</sup> New Urban Agenda, para. 13 (c).

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, Governing Council resolutions 16/6, 20/7 and 24/4.

<sup>43</sup> For example, enhanced shared prosperity in cities and regions can only be achieved if women and girls have equal access to decent jobs and livelihoods. Likewise, improved living standards and the inclusion of migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons would be impossible to realize unless viewed through a gendered lens.

allowed UN-Habitat to play a leadership role with regard to youth issues within the United Nations system.

126. The Strategic Plan expands the scope of work to consider the entire age spectrum, fully integrating children and older persons, who can be vulnerable to discrimination in the urban setting. Children, especially girls, older persons and people in situations of particular risk of marginalization, such as female-headed households, are often excluded from access to housing, urban basic services, public spaces and infrastructure, and the overall benefits of urbanization.

127. The particular needs and vulnerabilities of older persons, children and youth, have been highlighted in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.<sup>44</sup> Likewise, the New Urban Agenda calls for “age- and gender-responsive housing policies and approaches”.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, the Sustainable Development Goals include two specific targets that highlight the needs of children and older people in the transport and public space domains.<sup>46</sup>

128. UN-Habitat will work with and further expand partnerships with representatives of these age-specific groups; local and national governments; other key partners, including civil society and the private sector; and with relevant United Nations system bodies, such as UNICEF and the UN-Habitat Youth Advisory Board, in line with the Secretary-General’s “Youth2030: The United Nations Strategy on Youth”.<sup>47</sup>

### **Disability**

129. “Disability is an evolving concept [...] that [...] results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”<sup>48</sup> Research indicates that persons with disabilities account for approximately 15 per cent of the world’s population.<sup>49</sup> Disability, as is the case with gender and age, may be a compounding factor in the context of intersectional discrimination and exclusion, rendering a person who is already vulnerable to exclusion even more so. That exclusion can be seen in the fact that more than 80 per cent of persons with disabilities live in poverty.<sup>50</sup> As such, sustainable urban development, including in the context of poverty reduction, can only be achieved if persons with disabilities are included meaningfully in decision-making and are able to access their rights.

130. The New Urban Agenda recognizes the multiple forms of discrimination faced by persons with disabilities<sup>51</sup> and emphasizes their rights, including to accessibility and universal design, as an essential precondition for their inclusion in society. It also recognizes the need for their effective inclusion in society and respects their right to an adequate standard of living.<sup>52</sup> The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities also stresses the importance of their rights, yet persons with disabilities continue to face many barriers related to, for example, access to housing, transport, technology and employment, in both urban and rural settings, often exacerbated by ineffective urban planning and design.<sup>53</sup>

131. Sustainable Development Goal 11 emphasizes the importance of disabled persons in two specific targets: transport and access to public space. In the Strategic Plan, the social inclusion

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<sup>44</sup> See, for example, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, paras. 23 and 25.

<sup>45</sup> See New Urban Agenda, paras. 20, 32, 113 and 134.

<sup>46</sup> See Sustainable Development Goal 11, targets 11.2 and 11.7.

<sup>47</sup> See <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/youth-un/>.

<sup>48</sup> Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, preamble.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, Handicap International, “Disability and Development”, [http://www.hiproweb.org/fileadmin/cdroms/Handicap\\_Developpement/www/en\\_page21.html](http://www.hiproweb.org/fileadmin/cdroms/Handicap_Developpement/www/en_page21.html).

<sup>50</sup> Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, para. 23.

<sup>51</sup> New Urban Agenda, para. 20.

<sup>52</sup> New Urban Agenda, para. 36.

<sup>53</sup> Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Training Guide*. Available at [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/CRPD\\_TrainingGuide\\_PTS19\\_EN%20Accessible.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/CRPD_TrainingGuide_PTS19_EN%20Accessible.pdf).

dimension places great importance on persons with disabilities. To that end, UN-Habitat will partner with representative groups and individual rights holders, local and national government, relevant United Nations bodies and civil society to maximize impact and ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities, including accessibility and universal design, are promoted, respected and protected.

**(b) Cross-cutting thematic areas: resilience and safety**

**Resilience**

132. UN-Habitat understands urban resilience as the measurable ability of any urban system, with its inhabitants, to maintain continuity through shocks and stresses, whether natural, such as earthquakes, or human-made, such as rapid population flows as a result of armed conflict, while adapting positively and transforming towards sustainability. Vulnerable groups and the poor are disproportionately affected by shocks and stresses, as they often live in precarious locations and situations, and do not have the resources or capacity to recover from them.

133. As such, building the resilience of cities and other human settlements and of their people, communities, institutions, environments and infrastructure systems is one of the key goals of the Strategic Plan, as informed by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>54</sup> The link between resilience and development is also illustrated in the New Urban Agenda in areas such as urban basic services, housing and infrastructure.

134. UN-Habitat has a wealth of experience in urban resilience and has been supporting cities to integrate thinking and action on resilience into plans, processes and projects and, where necessary, identifying additional action that cities can undertake to prepare for, react to and recover from hazards.

135. In the Strategic Plan, resilience is considered an important transversal issue that connects the work of UN-Habitat with that of its partners. That is the case, for example, with the efforts that are being made towards assisting communities and infrastructure to adapt to climate change, with a particular focus on ensuring the inclusion of marginalized and informal communities in adaptation to climate-related shocks, building on their organizational capacity and support mechanisms.

136. UN-Habitat has several key partnerships working on resilience, which it aims to strengthen and expand during the period covered by this Strategic Plan. Those include local and national government; United Nations system partners, such as the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and IOM; the private sector; research institutions; and civil society. UN-Habitat recognizes in particular the critical role of women and grassroots groups in ensuring resilient communities.

**Safety**

137. Safety is of key relevance in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which aims for “a world free of fear and violence [...] where human habitats are safe”,<sup>55</sup> with a number of targets under Sustainable Development Goal 11 making specific references to safety.<sup>56</sup> The New Urban Agenda calls for a safe and secure environment in cities and human settlements, enabling all to live, work and participate in urban life without fear of violence and intimidation, taking into consideration that women and girls, children and youth, and persons in vulnerable situations are often particularly affected.<sup>57</sup>

138. The Strategic Plan recognizes the relevance of safety in ensuring overall improved urban living conditions, social inclusion, reduction of inequality, and eliminating social and territorial exclusion patterns. UN-Habitat elevates safety as a transversal issue to be considered as a marker across all the domains of change and their respective outcomes, with particular regard to improving standards of

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<sup>54</sup> See, for example, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, para. 7.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Sustainable Development Goal 11, targets 11.2 and 11.7.

<sup>57</sup> New Urban Agenda, para. 39.

living and the inclusion of migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons, as only if such groups are safe can they meaningfully participate in decision-making.

139. The New Urban Agenda calls for crime prevention policies to be integrated into urban strategies and initiatives.<sup>58</sup> In that integrated perspective, safety intersects with aspects of social inclusion that are related to sustainable mobility, effective access to and use of public space and basic services, and the fostering of social cohesion and integration. It is also important for the promotion and preservation of productive and competitive cities, decent jobs and livelihoods. Studies have shown a strong statistical relationship between crime, violence, increased inequality and the role that the concentration of disadvantage in specific parts of a city – an expression of spatial inequality – plays in exacerbating different forms of criminality. Safety also has a disproportionate effect on women, gender minorities, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities, leading to diminished outcomes in terms of development and prosperity.

140. Based on its experience in promoting urban safety and its leadership position on the matter within the United Nations system, UN-Habitat is in a strong position to mainstream safety issues throughout its work, partnering with local and national government; United Nations system partners, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UNICEF and UN-Women; the private sector; and civil society and stakeholders, including rights-holding groups, organized community groups and research institutions.

### **(c) Internal modalities of implementing, monitoring and evaluating social inclusion issues and cross-cutting thematic areas**

141. Through its Strategic Plan for 2014–2019, UN-Habitat approached cross-cutting issues through the two-track approach of mainstreaming and issue-specific projects. As a result, significant progress has been made towards setting up programmes and systems to ensure effective rights- and issue-based mainstreaming and prioritization, and a more cohesive and integrated approach. Targeted programmes have led to effective field operations with gender- and youth-specific projects.

142. The creation of a cross-cutting marker system that assesses cross-cutting activities in all UN-Habitat projects and programmes and provides recommendations has proven effective in mainstreaming key areas, as have project support, capacity-building and advocacy efforts. Project support and issue-specific projects will therefore continue to play an important role in the new Strategic Plan. In addition, the social inclusion dimension and cross-cutting thematic areas will be further reinforced through the support of the organizational enablers.

143. Lessons learned from previous cross-cutting issues point towards challenges in measurability, monitoring, evaluation, funding and buy-in. UN-Habitat capacity to meaningfully address the social inclusion dimensions must therefore be radically strengthened to fulfil its ambitious objectives, including in the context of its organizational structure, staffing and related performance management indicators and targets.

144. Furthermore, specific indicators for the proposed outcomes in the Strategic Plan under each domain of change will take into account social inclusion parameters. Clear and explicit outputs for each social inclusion dimension or thematic area will be developed and integrated into the domains of change for improved monitoring, evaluation and evidence-gathering so that their impact can be measured to inform knowledge-based advocacy for best practice.

## **E. Drivers of change**

145. The Strategic Plan presents a method and a framework that describes why and how a desired change is expected to happen, with the understanding that the transformation is a multi-year journey. Drivers of change are specific elements that work together and are required to deliver services and

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<sup>58</sup> New Urban Agenda, para. 103.

products that will lead to change or drive results and will ultimately result in the achievement of the objectives of the Strategic Plan. They also represent the main functional competencies of UN-Habitat.

146. The New Urban Agenda identifies the following four fundamental drivers of change:

- (a) Policy and legislation;
- (b) Urban planning and design;
- (c) Governance;
- (d) Financing mechanisms.

147. These drivers are context specific, and UN-Habitat will support cities and countries to develop their own successful means for deploying them and overcoming any barriers that might prevent their full implementation. Drivers will be informed by the human-rights-based approach and, as such, will be gender responsive.

**(a) Policy and legislation**

148. Within the context of urbanization, national governments in all countries must place urban policy at the very core of the highest levels of policy analysis and policymaking, whether macroeconomic, social or spatial. National urban policies, in particular, bring together the otherwise disjointed energies and potential of urban centres within national systems of cities and as part of urban and territorial planning. They are outstanding instruments, not just for resource allocation across cities, but also to redress social inequalities and discrimination, both within and between urban areas, and to establish synergetic connections between the dynamics of urbanization and the overall process of national development, recognizing the importance of fostering mutually reinforcing rural–urban linkage and leveraging that linkage for sustainable development.

149. UN-Habitat will work with countries to develop and implement urban policies at the appropriate level, including in local–national and multi-stakeholder partnerships, build integrated systems of cities and other human settlements, and promote cooperation at all levels of government to enable the achievement of sustainable integrated urban development.

150. A clear and transparent legal framework for urban development further establishes appropriate rules and regulation systems that respond to real needs, actual capacity and available resources. It can provide a solid, forward-looking framework to guide urban development, based on accountability, the rule of law and clear implementation mechanisms, and which can be continuously enforced as part of efforts to harness the transformative force of urbanization. UN-Habitat will promote relevant legislation, including that based on equity considerations that leave no one and no area behind and foster gender equality, which in turn reduces poverty and enhances shared prosperity; and appropriate building and urban regulations, designed to strengthen climate action and improved urban environment, and to address effective urban crisis prevention and response.

**(b) Urban planning and design**

151. Urban and territorial planning and design is more than a technical tool; it is an integrative and political participatory process that addresses and helps to reconcile competing interests regarding city form and functionality within an appropriate urbanization perspective. The proportion of land occupied globally by planned urban areas and densities is decreasing, with land consumption exceeding population growth, moving away from the key Sustainable Development Goals and the targets thereof. The fastest urbanizing areas often have the weakest planning systems and capacities. All too often, planning and design concepts still promote segregation of functions and car-oriented developments, with a focus on buildings rather than on the streets, parks and squares that constitute public space.

152. As a driver of change, urban planning and design needs to work for the public good, representing collective values and agreements, and adopting a human-rights-based approach, with development plans and solutions that address the pressing needs of cities, while at the same time

maximizing their comparative advantage. Urban planning and design must be a central component of the renewed urban governance paradigm, which promotes local democracy, participation, inclusion and transparency, with a view to ensuring sustainable urbanization and spatial quality.

153. Well-planned and designed cities and other human settlements can optimize economies of agglomeration and increase density. UN-Habitat will promote well-planned cities and other human settlements to optimize economies of agglomeration and infrastructure investment, increase density when necessary, generate mixed land use, protect the natural and built environment, promote public spaces with vibrant streets, and encourage social diversity, integration, cohesion and gender equality. UN-Habitat will also reinvigorate long-term and integrated urban and territorial planning and design in order to optimize the spatial dimension of the urban form and deliver the positive outcomes of urbanization. That will require a renewed engagement with the private sector, in particular the real estate sector.

#### **(c) Governance**

154. Weak institutions and poor governance mechanisms increase the risk of low performance, wasted resources, inefficient sectoral interventions, human rights violations and an overall lack of progress. Effective institutions and governance mechanisms, both formal (constitution, legislation and regulations) and informal (social norms, customs and traditions), together determine how people, and public and private sector organizations, make decisions of an economic, social or political nature, maximizing potential and optimizing resources. Urban governance encompasses the different ways in which public and private institutions and individuals participate in the planning, design and management of the common affairs of a city, and the processes used for effectively realizing the short- and long-term agenda of a city's development. Urban governance can deliver sustainable development when it is environmentally friendly, participatory, accountable, transparent, effective, equitable and inclusive, both in law and in practice.

155. UN-Habitat recognizes the multiplicity of local, regional and national governmental agencies and organizations, many of which have competing interests and influence. Improving urban governance requires that the institutional framework be coordinated and transparent. UN-Habitat will work to help strengthen urban governance, with sound institutions and mechanisms that empower and include representatives of urban stakeholders and constituencies, in addition to appropriate checks and balances, providing predictability and coherence in urban development plans to enable social inclusion; sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth; and environmental protection.

#### **(d) Financing mechanisms**

156. Financing mechanisms are a powerful driver of change in the Strategic Plan. The ability of local and national government to mobilize, sequence and make effective use of a wide variety of financial sources and instruments is central to the achievement of the sustainable development agenda. An increasing number of cities and countries are aiming to use an increasingly diverse set of financing frameworks and instruments, including blended finance, impact investment, public-private partnerships, property taxation, land value capture and bond issuances. New schemes such as city-focused finance facilities and international funds, such as the Green Climate Fund, the Adaptation Fund and the Global Environment Facility, are opening up novel opportunities for funding. Country/city ownership, multi-stakeholder partnership and higher accountability are critical in the use of such funds. Development finance through bilateral and multilateral funds should support innovative projects, pilot interventions and critical capital investment. The funds should be climate-sensitive, connected to environmentally sound activities and founded on human rights principles, giving particular consideration to gender and age dimensions.

157. UN-Habitat will work, through its United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation, with countries to support effective, innovative and sustainable financing frameworks and instruments, and enable strengthened municipal finance and local fiscal systems in order to create, sustain and share the value generated by sustainable urban development in an inclusive manner.

## **F. Organizational performance enablers**

158. Organizational performance enablers will allow the organization to operate efficiently, achieve the expected results and make progress towards the goals of the Strategic Plan. While developing its internal efforts and expertise in these areas, UN-Habitat will also support local and subnational governments, Member States and other partners to develop their organizational enablers, thus driving sustainable urban development. Enablers allow for greater efficiency, effectiveness and impact, to influence and leverage the actions of other stakeholders, and initiate and sustain transformative action.

159. The following six organizational performance enablers will create the conditions necessary for UN-Habitat to support the desired change set out in the Strategic Plan:

- (a) Monitoring and knowledge
- (b) Innovation
- (c) Advocacy, communication and outreach
- (d) Partnerships
- (e) Capacity-building
- (f) Systems and processes.

### **(a) Monitoring and knowledge**

160. The monitoring of urban conditions and trends at the country, regional and global level is essential for the reporting of progress on Sustainable Development Goal 11 and providing evidence-based information to build sustainable urban policies at every level of urban governance. All types of data – small, big, spatial, local and national, disaggregated (by gender, age and location), quantitative and qualitative – are important. Shared ownership of data, including by the most vulnerable, analytical capacities and leadership to build a shared understanding are critical for data and knowledge to work as an enabler that supports change. By adopting an incremental and inclusive approach to the creation of adapted indicators, and user-friendly and participatory data platforms and databases, as proposed by the United Nations Secretary-General in the Quadrennial Report: UN-Habitat Strategy to Report on the Progress of the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda (2018), data and the production of related knowledge can be perceived as a critical resource for change.

161. To become a centre of excellence and innovation, UN-Habitat needs to produce cutting-edge knowledge; facilitate knowledge sharing, particularly between cities; enhance knowledge management; systematize and use best practice; develop institutional incentives for learning; and further develop knowledge-supporting systems, drawing on the work of key partners.

162. The UN-Habitat Knowledge Management Strategy; its long-standing research and normative work; the production of flagship publications, including country, regional and global reports; the work of the Global Urban Observatory, tracking and reporting on urban trends and conditions; and the best practice database, are all supporting structures that need to be significantly expanded and consolidated so that knowledge can play an appropriately important role as an organizational enabler. As part of its focal point role, UN-Habitat has a key role to play in generating knowledge based on the operational work and good practice within the United Nations system and its network of partners. There is a need for a stronger focus on emerging and frontier issues, such as migration, climate change, the future of work and food, insecurity and conflict, and the use of new technologies and their impact on the future of urbanization. Similarly, more research needs to be undertaken into the most appropriate urbanization models and their impact on the domains of change and consequently on the interrelations between the urban dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals.

## **(b) Innovation**

163. Innovation, at the frontier of new knowledge, is key to developing solutions that have the ability to accelerate progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, while taking into account the scale and speed of urbanization, and the impact of climate change and new technology. For innovation to flourish and become a key enabler in designing and deploying the drivers of change, UN-Habitat needs to put in place adequate institutional, managerial and financial conditions. It is only when innovation is part of every job across the organization, and when innovative solutions are used by everyone, that innovation becomes a key enabler for development.

164. Innovation is critical for the realization of various dimensions of development and prosperity, and in the process releases undeveloped potential and makes the fullest use of local resources and assets. Innovative funding opportunities, partnerships and methodologies, such as open and challenge-driven innovation, need to be explored and the capacity of local government to effectively procure, test and implement frontier technologies needs to be significantly strengthened.

165. As part of the implementation scheme of the Strategic Plan for 2020–2023, UN-Habitat will work with “innovation teams”. Drawing on the experience of the Urban Planning and Design Lab, those teams will deploy specific tools and methods, evaluate new and innovative ideas and the prospect of implementing them, assess specific strengths of people and analyse the potential of existing processes to be improved and transformed into innovative solutions.

## **(c) Advocacy, communication and outreach**

166. UN-Habitat recognizes that a key role is influencing broader action at all levels and by all types of stakeholders, including Governments, communities and the private sector. It is a key element of UN-Habitat’s role as a focal point for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and in accelerating progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and goes beyond the partnerships that the Programme can establish. It is fundamental that it should draw on the data, knowledge and innovation generated by UN-Habitat and the wider group of urban stakeholders. That requires strong narratives that are tailored to different audiences and take into account regional diversity. The transformative nature of the Strategic Plan and the fact that its realization necessitates a collective effort requires UN-Habitat and other United Nations agencies to speak with one coherent voice. Advocacy, in that sense, can strengthen credibility and reinforce coordination between partners, ultimately influencing actions, thoughts and beliefs, and bringing together different actors and segments of society.

167. Effective communication will be vital for the success of the Strategic Plan, to enable the results of the normative and operational work of UN-Habitat to be shared effectively. Such communication, beyond providing simple data and information, should articulate more detailed messages and narratives, based on a deep understanding of people and partners, their demands and motivations. UN-Habitat has significant experience in creating communication tools and packages that give voice to what it is doing and achieving in cities and countries around the world, although reporting on transformative change and impact is an area in which it needs to improve. It has a long track record of amplifying the voices of decision-makers, citizens, slum-dwellers, grassroots women’s organizations, community groups and other partners working in urban development, as has been evident at major conferences, such as the World Urban Forum.

168. Advocacy and communication must go hand in hand to maximize outreach and broaden the number of stakeholders working towards the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the achievement of the urban-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

## **(d) Partnerships**

169. Strategic partnerships are an essential vehicle for mobilizing and sharing knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources. That is clearly reflected in Sustainable Development Goal 17, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda. The Strategic Plan aims to strengthen partnerships as essential vehicles for advocacy and resource mobilization, scaling up and

deepening the impact of UN-Habitat programmes at all levels; enhancing national ownership, transparency and accountability; giving voice to communities, women, youth, persons with disability, older persons and vulnerable groups; and implementing, monitoring and reporting on the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals in line with its role as a focal point.<sup>59</sup> Partnerships are needed, both to complement UN-Habitat expertise in its leading role in a wide range of outcomes and for the Programme to add its expertise and value to efforts led by others.

170. UN-Habitat will build on its Stakeholder Engagement Policy and Stakeholder Collaborative Framework to enhance the engagement of its partners in policy, advocacy and decision-making, and the coherent participation of local, regional and national governments, the United Nations system, civil society, academia, the private sector, financial institutions and other stakeholders in programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

171. The reform of the United Nations development system also calls for a much more coherent engagement of the United Nations system as a whole at the country, regional and global level, and for the United Nations to focus on its comparative advantage in its partnerships beyond the United Nations system. That includes the organization's multifaceted role as thought leader, catalyst, convener and capacity-builder. The collaborative implementation framework proposed by UN-Habitat is a basis on which to further develop its focal point role, organized around the following four key objectives:

- (a) Improve knowledge production, monitoring, reporting and advocacy;
- (b) Provide coherent, integrated policy and technical support to Member States across the three United Nations pillars (human rights, peace and security, and development);
- (c) Increase joint catalytic action to drive transformative change;
- (d) Scale up the role of the UN-Habitat as a convener and catalyst for all urban stakeholders, including deepening collaboration with local government.

172. UN-Habitat will strengthen United Nations system collaboration to bring greater synergy and coherence in the implementation of the four domains of change. As mandated by the General Assembly, it will coordinate the development and implementation of a United Nations system-wide strategy on sustainable urban development and human settlements. Working to significantly improve engagement in United Nations country teams, regional coordination mechanisms and United Nations Development Group processes,<sup>60</sup> the Strategic Plan aims to optimize the contributions made by the various parts of the United Nations system.

**(e) Capacity-building**

173. Capacity-building, defined as the transfer and multiplication of knowledge, competencies, methods and skills to a maximum number of individuals and institutions worldwide, is an important means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and a transformative engine for creating and maintaining development change. It creates and strengthens the ability of UN-Habitat; Governments, particularly local and regional governments; and partner organizations to plan, manage, execute and monitor policies, programmes and projects at all levels. Capacity-building (including training) is the means to ground UN-Habitat's normative work, assess and respond to the needs of Governments and partners, trigger innovations and support long-term institutional transformation at the country level. It comprises a set of activities and innovative approaches that empower and enable individuals and organizations to understand, analyse and implement solutions to the daunting urban challenges facing cities and urbanization. It is therefore not only an enabler of

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<sup>59</sup> New Urban Agenda, para. 171.

<sup>60</sup> The Inter-Agency Coordination Framework, a UN-Habitat document yet to be adopted, proposes incorporating sustainable urban development into the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and thence mainstreaming it into regional and subregional policies and strategic plans or frameworks, such as the Agenda 2063 strategic framework of the African Union, regional economic communities, the Association of South-East Asian Nations and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

organizations and individuals alike, but also an enabler of policy implementation, organizational and institutional change, and transformative action on the ground.

#### **(f) Systems and processes**

174. The Strategic Plan embraces systems and process management as a fundamental enabler. Any change in institutions is confronted by resistance and inertia in their internal processes and systems. The design and adaptation of UN-Habitat systems and processes to the Strategic Plan will involve more than rearranging workflows and general conditions. It requires the development of an experienced and capable team that responds to the requirements and conditions of the plan; well-planned, robust, flexible and adaptable processes that render more effective administration and decision-making; realignment of information systems so that they help cross-functional processes to work smoothly, rather than simply supporting projects or units; a results-based management that guides programme planning, monitoring and reporting, and evaluation; innovative, adapted and highly secure technology that supports the operation of the day-to-day work of organizational units; and knowledge management to address barriers in systems and processes that have provided limited support to increase performance and deliver better results. In supporting the development of information and knowledge platforms (including the Project Accrual and Accountability System, the database of best practice, the information portal and social media), this enabler will support an integrated knowledge process to better achieve the desired transformations, connecting knowledge to attitude, behaviour change and policy decisions.

175. Furthermore, UN-Habitat, in line with system-wide United Nations policy, is targeting improved gender parity, particularly at higher levels, with an aim of achieving 50/50 parity in employment in the organization by 2024.

### **III. New ways of working**

176. The achievement of the new Strategic Plan will require breaking down silos at multiple levels. It warrants greater coherence in the ways in which UN-Habitat intervenes in various situations; how it engages at the city, regional and country level in line with the reform of the United Nations development system; and how integrated programming is promoted and ensured across the organization. The following sections summarize those issues with a particular focus on innovation and a strong interplay between the domains of change, the drivers and the organizational performance enablers.

#### **A. Typology of human settlements**

177. The achievement of the new Strategic Plan will require tailored and focused efforts at the country level, while bearing in mind paragraph 19 of the New Urban Agenda, which recognizes the “unique and emerging urban development challenges facing all countries, in particular developing countries, including African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, as well as the specific challenges facing middle-income countries [and that] special attention should also be given to countries in situations of conflict, as well as countries and territories under foreign occupation, post-conflict countries and countries affected by natural and human-made disasters”.

178. Each country and its cities and other human settlements are unique and subjected to specific sets of conditions and dynamics. A simple typology comprising six groups is proposed. It can be translated into a differentiated approach for UN-Habitat, working with its partners, to best support countries and cities in implementing the New Urban Agenda and achieving the urban dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals. The typology developed in the context of this new Strategic Plan will be adjusted during the plan’s implementation.

179. The six groups are as follows:

- (a) Where there is demand to develop drivers of change for sustainable urbanization;

- (b) Where there is demand for drivers of change to be realigned to ensure development outcomes in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- (c) Where drivers of sustainable urbanization are broadly aligned to development agendas, but there is demand for increased impact;
- (d) Where there are already drivers of sustainable urbanization, but support is needed in urban regeneration and in achieving more balanced territorial development;
- (e) Where drivers of sustainable urbanization appear to be effective in achieving sustainable development outcomes, but there is a demand for systems to evaluate and measure progress;
- (f) Where shocks, including conflict, natural events and complex emergencies, are disrupting progress towards the achievement of sustainable urban development.

## **B. UN-Habitat presence at the city, country and regional levels**

180. The implementation of the new Strategic Plan will require a catalytic approach, in which UN-Habitat leverages its knowledge, technical cooperation, convening capacity, partnerships and advocacy (“Think, do, partner, share”, a process illustrated in figures 2–4 below) for scaled-up impact to achieve sustainable urban development. Cities, countries and regions will be mapped in relation to the domains of change and the Typology of Human Settlements, drawing on voluntary national reviews of progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Quadrennial Report: UN-Habitat Strategy to Report on the Progress of the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

181. The new Strategic Plan will be tailored to regional specificities and regional development frameworks. UN-Habitat capacity and footprint at the regional level will be reviewed to improve their effectiveness. Knowledge generated locally will be synthesized regionally and will contribute to regional policy frameworks and knowledge repositories through partnership with the United Nations regional commissions and regional United Nations Sustainable Development Groups. It will also contribute at the global level to the normative development and best practices of UN-Habitat, including flagship reports and international norms and guidelines. The international norms and guidelines will be promoted through advocacy platforms and channels at the country and regional level, for use by various levels of government and other stakeholders.

182. The World Urban Forum, which takes place every two years, and regional forums, which take place between the World Urban Forums, will each enable groups of cities and groups of countries with similar change trajectories to meet regularly and share experiences. These forums will engage United Nations Resident Coordinators and a broad range of United Nations agencies, so that the organization is better placed to support change trajectories towards the achievement of the urban Sustainable Development Goals, including in countries where UN-Habitat is not present. Regional forums will also be better linked to United Nations regional commissions for strengthened contributions to regional policy dialogue and knowledge exchange.

183. Other than in crisis-affected countries, entry point of UN-Habitat at the country level is the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, which allows the discourse on urbanization to be integrated within the broader national development agenda and the opportunity to link the achievement of urban targets with the broader Sustainable Development Goals.

184. UN-Habitat will aim to ensure country presence in a critical mass of countries across the typology and across regions. That will involve strengthening country teams where they are effective, introducing new country programmes where needed and developing flexible ways to make expertise available for short- or longer-term periods, such as seconding senior urban advisors to Resident Coordinator’s offices or seconding specific urban expertise to other key United Nations entities, such as UNDP. Wherever possible, technical cooperation in establishing drivers of change will be integrated

within broader collaborative efforts of the United Nations and other stakeholders, such as the World Bank and local government networks.

185. Where UN-Habitat is not present at the country level, it will utilize its knowledge and experience in similar contexts to support partners and stakeholders, and provide on-demand support as needed. The Typology of Human Settlements will help to group cities and countries in such a way as to optimize knowledge exchange. Through partnership with city networks and local government associations, UN-Habitat will ensure that optimal local practice and experience are shared effectively.

186. Catalytic local action that addresses acute challenges and accelerates the achievement of the urban Sustainable Development Goals will be equally important. It will initially be implemented through pilot projects and scaled up through various forms of investment, including social impact investors, cooperatives, community-based initiatives, public–private partnerships and partnerships with development banks. Drivers of change, as described above and tailored to the four domains of change, will be supported by norms and tools that can be adapted to local contexts, drawing on methodologies already developed by UN-Habitat.

187. Achieving sustainable urban development is seen as a continuum that involves generating knowledge and supporting local implementation, monitoring results and then advancing to the next stage. It will be of key importance that the development of drivers of change and catalytic local actions are both effectively monitored, communicated and disseminated as best practice. That will enable stakeholders to continue to be engaged in the process and ensure that outcomes are on course with common objectives, while enabling lessons learned to be transferred to contexts in which they can be replicated and scaled up. UN-Habitat, present on the ground and with strategic partnerships, is uniquely placed to effectively utilize its niche knowledge position and convening capacity to leverage the efforts of others to accelerate the achievement of urban goals.

Figure 2  
Think and partner

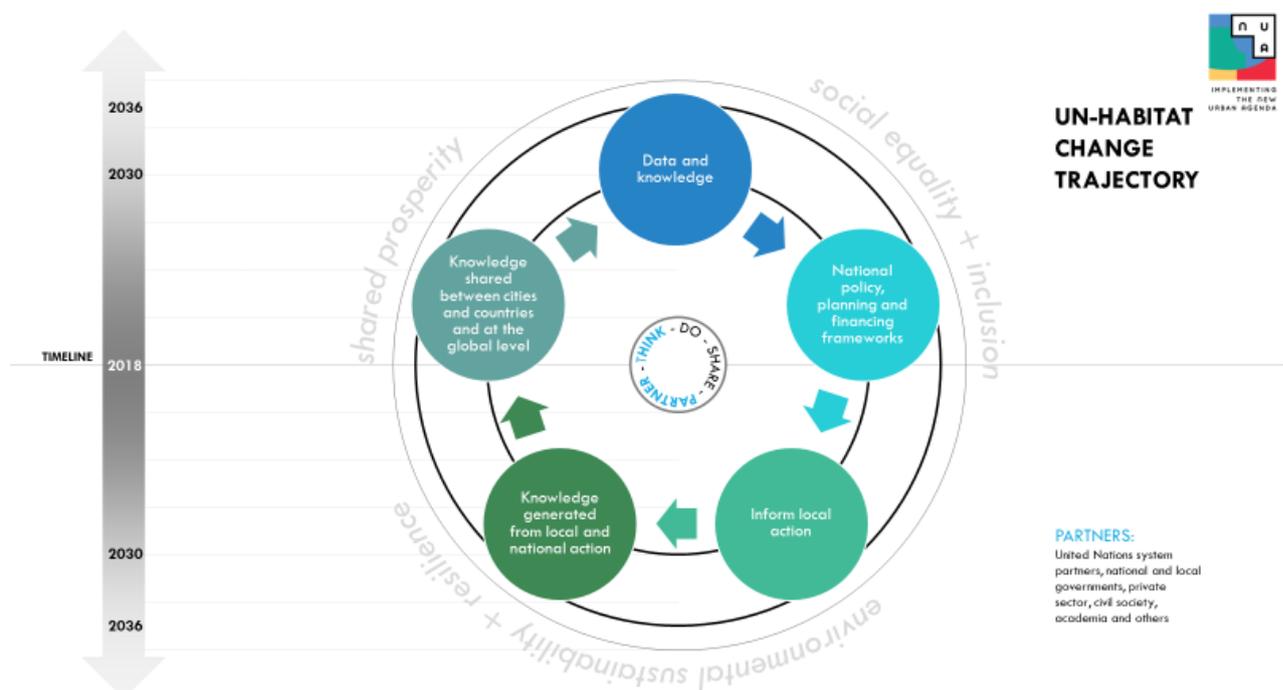


Figure 3  
Do and partner

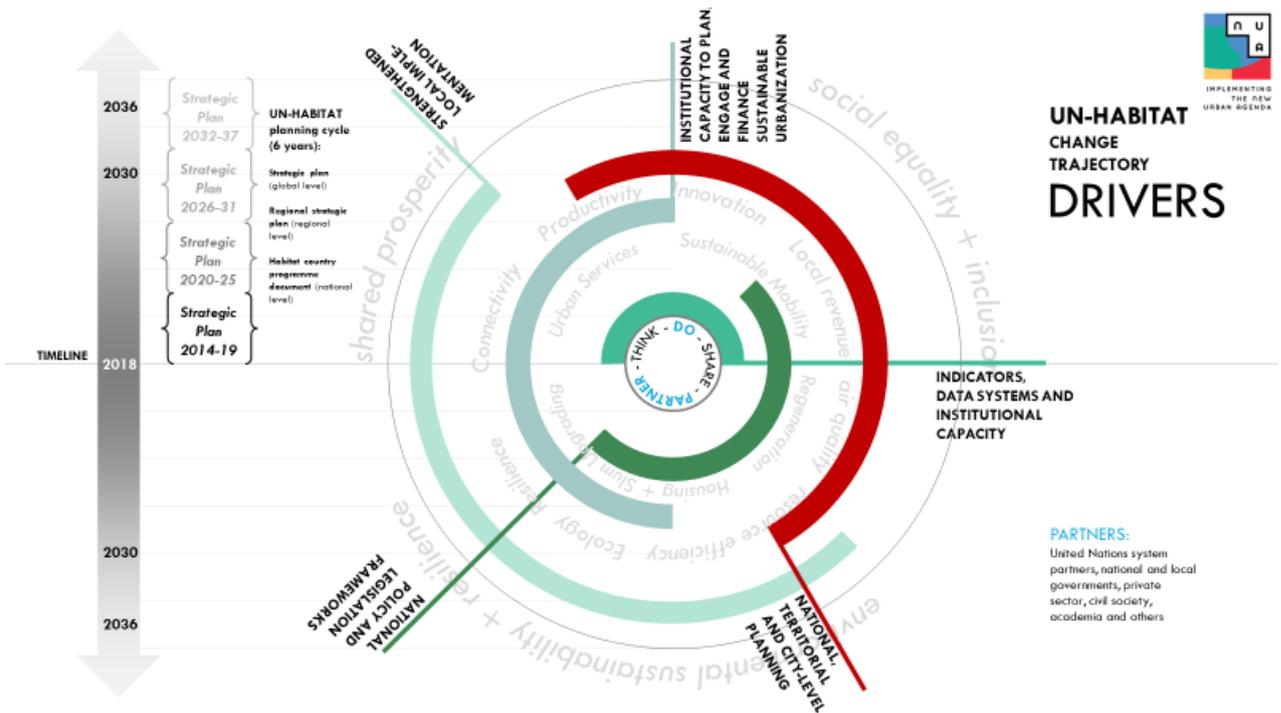
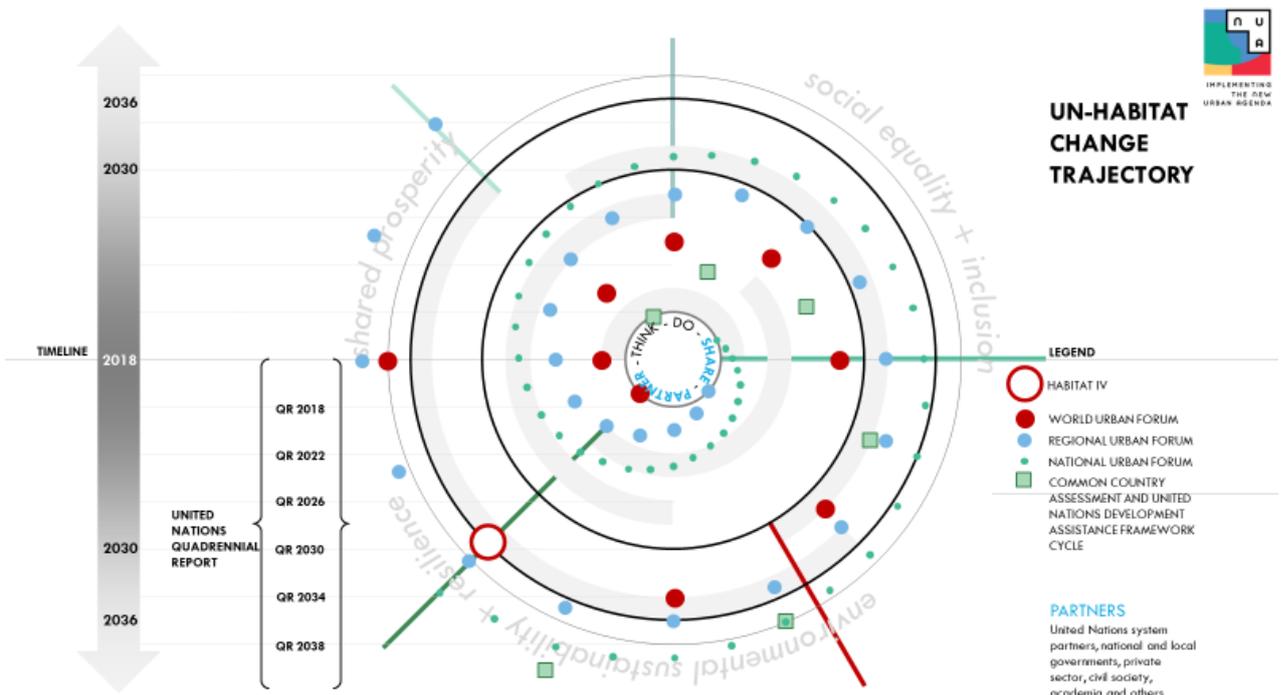


Figure 4  
Share and partner



### C. Integrated programming, programme planning and budgeting

188. The outcomes of the new Strategic Plan will only be achieved through integrated programming that cuts across the four domains of change and focuses on niche position, value proposition and strengths of UN-Habitat. That entails developing an integrated results measurement system, including a set of results-oriented indicators to track transformational work. Developing more systematic approaches to knowledge management, collation, publication and meta-evaluation of projects and programmes will be central to this new approach.

189. The United Nations reform agenda includes a reform of the peace and security architecture, development system reform and management reform, aimed at simplifying procedures and decentralizing decisions, providing greater transparency, efficiency, agility and accountability. The management reform includes a transformation of the programme planning and budgeting process to better respond to changes in the breadth and depth of the organization's mandates. In response to the challenges posed by the programme planning and budgeting processes, the Secretary-General has proposed the streamlining and improvement of the planning and budgetary processes to better support decision-making and increase the transparency of information. Those proposals include the following:

- (a) Moving from a biennial to an annual process;
- (b) Shortening the planning and budgetary cycle from five years to three years;
- (c) Presenting programme planning and performance information in the annual regular budget, rather than in separate reports;
- (d) Refining elements of the results-based budgeting framework;
- (e) Strengthening performance reporting by reflecting information on lessons learned, including from evaluation and self-evaluation, in the annual budget;
- (f) Seeking greater authority for the redeployment of resources during budget implementation;
- (g) Increasing the level of the Working Capital Fund.

190. UN-Habitat annual work programmes and budgets will be aligned with the above process and informed by the four-year Strategic Plan.

#### **D. Organizational architecture**

191. UN-Habitat is undergoing a bold and ambitious internal reform process aimed at turning the organization into a modern, exemplary United Nations programme:

- (a) That is trusted, transparent and accountable;
- (b) That operates effectively, efficiently and collaboratively;
- (c) Whose expertise is relevant, valued and in demand.

192. The change process, which further aligns UN-Habitat with the broader reform agenda of the United Nations, is being undertaken on the following seven priority areas:

- (a) **Vision** – Fosters a values-driven way of working to achieve our shared vision and purpose;
- (b) **Impact** – Delivers impact in all that we do to change lives for the better;
- (c) **Funding** – Maintains the trust and confidence of our funders and partners to deliver our mandate;
- (d) **Collaboration** – Collaborates effectively within the United Nations system and externally to achieve more together;
- (e) **Team** – Creates a safe and productive workplace where talent thrives;
- (f) **Processes** – Gets systems and processes right for maximum efficiency;
- (g) **Leadership** – Engages and empowers staff to collectively drive change.

193. The reform of UN-Habitat will not be complete, however, without transforming the way in which the organizational structure is set up at the country, regional and headquarters levels, with a view to implementing the new Strategic Plan, once it has been finalized, in a more coherent, inclusive, agile, efficient and effective manner. UN-Habitat is therefore undertaking an organizational

restructuring exercise which will enable it to respond optimally to its strategic and programmatic imperatives.

### **E. Risk management**

194. The top critical risks identified at the corporate level are the following:
- (a) Realization and demonstration of results or impact in line with the new UN-Habitat Strategic Plan and mandate;
  - (b) Human resource strategy, operational tools and business processes that are fit for purpose;
  - (c) Financing the core budget.
  - (d) Realization and demonstration of results or impact in line with the new UN-Habitat Strategic Plan and mandate
195. To mitigate this risk, a number of strategies will be pursued, including the following:
- (a) Focusing on the niche position, value proposition and strengths of UN-Habitat;
  - (b) Developing an integrated programme planning and results measurement system;
  - (c) Developing a set of transformational indicators to track transformational work;
  - (d) Strengthening engagement of the regional offices in the processes of the United Nations Development Group;
  - (e) Developing more systematic approaches to knowledge management;
  - (f) Leveraging strategic partnerships to scale up the work of UN-Habitat and acting as a catalyst;
  - (g) Developing a systematic approach to collation, publication and meta-evaluation of project and programme evaluation;
  - (h) Centralizing reporting information and data to ensure ease of reporting as requests arise.

#### **Human resource strategy, operational tools and business processes that are fit for purpose**

196. To address this risk, the internal reforms being undertaken by UN-Habitat will address matters related to the following:
- (a) Creating a safe and productive workplace in which talent thrives;
  - (b) Managing talent and recruiting as resources permit; this point includes the development of a Human Resources strategy;
  - (c) Getting systems and processes right for maximum efficiency.

#### **Financing the core budget**

197. To mitigate the funding risk, a number of strategies will be pursued, including the following:
- (a) Expanding resource mobilization to unconventional and non-traditional donors, such as foundations, the private sector and emerging donor countries, including carrying out situation analyses of the non-traditional resource environment;
  - (b) Developing a strategy for building long-term strategic relationships with key donors from relevant sectors, based on common priorities;
  - (c) Reviewing the UN-Habitat funding model to align it with donor policies and trends, including mapping outcomes and their value to different types of donors;

- (d) Developing policy, procedures and systems to support a coordinated approach to donors and providing a holistic picture of UN-Habitat engagement with donors;
- (e) Making a compelling case for support by using the outcome of previous achievements and impact to broaden knowledge and appreciation of the work of UN-Habitat to change lives and transform societies;
- (f) Deploying a robust communication strategy that uses messaging and branding to raise awareness of sustainable urbanization challenges and opportunities, and the unique contribution that UN-Habitat makes as a thought leader and as a centre of excellence and innovation;
- (g) Making a commitment at the highest level of UN-Habitat to engage fully in resource mobilization;
- (h) Investing in a results-based management framework to strengthen quality reporting and ensure consistent quality, timeliness and transparency in the use of funds and a consistent reflection of outputs and results.

198. A more comprehensive and detailed risk analysis will be carried out during the preparation of each of the six annual work programmes and budgets through which the new Strategic Plan will be implemented.

#### **F. Performance measurement**

199. Planning, monitoring, reporting and evaluation are critical elements of results-based management and together constitute the basis of UN-Habitat transparency and accountability with regard to partners and donors. Performance information from monitoring and evaluation will be used more systematically so as to take corrective action, enhance programmatic and organizational decision-making and accountability, and ensure that results are achieved, and outputs delivered effectively and efficiently.

200. In addition, information on monitoring and evaluation will be used for organizational learning, by sharing findings and lessons learned both internally and with Member States and partners. Through regular briefings and quarterly and annual progress reports, information on monitoring and evaluation will be used to hold UN-Habitat accountable to Member States by communicating the extent to which resources are efficiently and effectively being used to achieve results.

#### **G. Monitoring and reporting**

201. The implementation of the new Strategic Plan will be systematically monitored in order to optimally manage the achievement of results. In more specific terms, that means ensuring that the various levels of indicators in the results framework are reported upon. Objective level indicators will be measured every two years, while outcome level indicators will be measured annually or biannually, depending on the type and methodology.

202. Monitoring delivery of the programme of work in terms of implementation of deliverables at the project level will be undertaken continuously and reported upon on a quarterly basis through both the Umoja 2 module and the UN-Habitat internal performance measurement system.

203. Monitoring of the implementation of the new Strategic Plan will be based on the results framework. It is envisaged that the same set of indicators will be used throughout the life of the plan, with minor adjustments being made as necessary. Reporting will focus on the four domains of change: social inclusion issues, cross-cutting dimensions, drivers and enablers.

204. A performance measurement plan will be developed to facilitate systematic tracking of the implementation and performance of the Strategic Plan. It will include development of performance indicator data sheets for strategic results and outcome level results. For each indicator, the following information will be provided: (i) description of what is being measured, (ii) sources of data, (iii) data

collection methodology, (iv) frequency of data collection, (v) baselines, and (vi) targets over the duration of the Strategic Plan. Milestones will be set for each indicator.

205. The main reporting mechanisms will be a quarterly progress report or dashboard on the implementation of the annual work programme and budget, and an annual report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan. UN-Habitat will enhance its efforts to secure increased funding for monitoring, reporting and evaluation. Monitoring and reporting will be strongly motivated by the need to identify lessons learned and generate new knowledge and evidence to inform the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

## **H. Evaluation**

206. A mid-term evaluation of the new Strategic Plan will be carried out to assess performance in terms of achievement of expected accomplishments, and relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. That will provide evidence of what is working well and what is not working, which will allow corrective action to be taken during the second half of the period covered by the plan. Similarly, an end-of-plan evaluation will be carried out, focusing on outcomes achieved, to draw lessons from the implementation and generate evidence to inform the next planning cycle.

207. In addition to those two evaluations, evaluations of particular subprogrammes, country programmes or thematic areas of the Strategic Plan, requested by the Executive Director, Member States or donors will be carried out, depending on availability of resources. Such evaluations will be included in the relevant annual evaluation plans. Other evaluations conducted by UN-Habitat will include end-of-project evaluation of all projects with a value of US\$1 million and above, as required under the UN-Habitat Evaluation Policy, and self-evaluation of projects with a value of more than US\$300,000 but less than US\$1 million.

208. In line with United Nations system evaluation norms and standards, UN-Habitat develops a management response to each evaluation and recommendations from evaluations are tracked regularly to ensure that proposed actions are implemented by the responsible entities in UN-Habitat.

## **I. Financing the Strategic Plan**

209. The primary vehicle for financing the new Strategic Plan will be the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation, including the Urban Basic Services Trust Fund and other technical cooperation trust funds. UN-Habitat will put in place a strategy for strengthening the Foundation to allow it to fulfil its core functions.

210. The core function of the Foundation and its primary operative objective is to serve as an international facility to assist in strengthening national sustainable urbanization development programmes through the provision of seed capital and the extension of the technical and financial assistance necessary to permit the effective mobilization of international and domestic resources in support of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and other relevant mandates. That entails the following actions:

- (a) Stimulating innovative approaches to pre-investment, pre-project and financing strategies for urban development activities, related urban poverty reduction strategies and integrated city development strategies, while drawing on the accumulated experience of both the public and private sectors for the mobilization of financial resources for sustainable urbanization projects through strategic partnerships;
- (b) Promoting and facilitating the mobilization of extrabudgetary financial resources for urban development from domestic and international sources, including United Nations agencies, the World Bank, regional development banks, bilateral donors and the private sector;
- (c) Providing technical assistance services through projects related to sustainable urbanization and financed from extrabudgetary resources;

- (d) Promoting the adaptation and transfer of appropriate scientific and technical knowledge on sustainable urbanization projects, with particular attention to poor and low-income populations.

211. UN-Habitat will use its knowledge and convening capacity to attract financing for the achievement of the Strategic Plan. Urbanization is known to be an engine of economic growth and, as such, is capable of attracting investment. It will be the role of UN-Habitat to work with partners to ensure that investment in urban development means investment in sustainable urban development.

212. At the global level, traditional, non-earmarked donor support will be needed to maintain the basic agency structure, including liaison and regional offices, and to ensure the effectiveness of the knowledge, communication and partnership functions of UN-Habitat in line with its focal point role. Earmarked funding will continue to be sought for global advocacy work, primarily through Member States bidding to host the World Urban Forum and World Cities Day. At the country level, additional donor funding will be sought for senior advisors, who will convene the United Nations system organizations and stakeholders with a view to the joint achievement of the urban dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals. Speed, scale and cost efficiency will be achieved by leveraging the roles, capacities and resources of United Nations agencies and partners, and of other actors, including development banks, the private sector, cooperatives and communities, towards achieving scalable urban interventions that catalyse positive change.

# Annex: The UN-Habitat Theory of Change

