



Human  
Settlements  
in Crisis

# HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS, AND THE ROLE OF UN-HABITAT

Strategic Policy on Human Settlements in Crisis and  
Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction Framework

**UN**  **HABITAT**  
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE



# HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS, AND THE ROLE OF UN-HABITAT

Strategic Policy on Human Settlements in Crisis and  
Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction Framework

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HS/1026/08 E

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### **Acknowledgements**

Produced by: UN-HABITAT's Disaster Management Programme in consultation with partners and representatives of Member Governments of the Governing Council

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Printer: UNON Printshop

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# HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS, AND THE ROLE OF UN-HABITAT

## FOREWORD

I am pleased to forward this publication to all staff working within UN-HABITAT. It contains our “*Strategic Policy on Human Settlements in Crisis*” guiding our engagement in humanitarian operations. Additionally, you will find the “*Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction*” (SRR) framework which is a base document, evolved through several in-depth consultations both within UN-HABITAT, and with our partners for implementing the policy. The Disaster Post-conflict and Safety Section continues to develop guidelines, indicators, and programme methodology. Our objective is to create a normative framework that allows UN-HABITAT to monitor both our own work and that of others in promoting sustainable urban development from the earliest possible opportunity in post crisis situations.


This approach reflects my own position that the victims of crises, whether the crises are human-made or the result of natural hazards or climate change induced vulnerabilities, need not be characterized as human liabilities. Rather, treating victims with dignity and respect, encouraging and supporting their role in their own recovery process, creating opportunities for their emergence from under the humanitarian umbrella into full self-reliance, is the core principle inherent in the SRR framework.

I would draw your attention to the specific roles and responsibilities outlined in the Strategic Policy on Human Settlements in Crisis as we all have obligations and responsibilities. Moreover, as I am now one of the Principals within the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in addition to my responsibilities to the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs, I call upon staff from the entire Agency at all levels, to do your part.

Furthermore, you will note the reference to partners in both the attached documents. In order to succeed and maintain the credibility of this Agency, it is imperative that those UN-HABITAT partners engaged in our work become familiar with our approach and assist in the implementation of our mandate. This requires commitment and diligence in strengthening our partnerships with humanitarian agencies and to ensure we fulfill our role in supporting their mandates as well.

Finally, whilst I recognize that we have extensive experience working in crisis conditions over the years, we have sometimes done so in the absence of appropriate methodologies, approaches or monitoring mechanisms. With the following strategy framework, this gap in our normative system is being addressed. With the tools now

being produced to assist you in its implementation, I will be counting on your input to meet our reporting obligations both internally to our Committee of Permanent Representatives, and Governing Council delegates, as well as externally through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs, to the Secretary General, and the General Assembly. Finally, this approach, in line with our Medium Term Strategic and Institutional Plan, illustrates a key element of our Enhanced Normative and Operational Framework which is to draw in all UN-HABITAT staff to address sustainable development at the most critical moments.



Anna Tibaijuka,  
Executive Director, UN-HABITAT  
Under-Secretary-General, United Nations

## INTRODUCTION

In November 2007, UN-HABITAT's Committee of Permanent Representatives endorsed the *Strategic Policy on Human Settlements in Crisis*, concluding a four year policy development exercise undertaken in consultation with partners and through two successive Governing Councils (20 and 21). The process began with the development of the "Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction Framework" – a conceptual framework articulating two key principles; the first - in times of crisis, the highest possible development gain can be made in the shortest possible timeframe, and the second - a set of strategic interventions in an emergency phase, if integrated in sustainable development goals, can both reduce the period of crisis and build a platform for early recovery and development.

Linked to the Medium Term Strategic and Institutional Plan, the following documents create for the first time in UN-HABITAT a normative framework for measuring the efficacy of its work both on reconstruction of settlements damaged by war or natural disasters; as well as its performance in reducing vulnerability and assisting governments in ensuring more resilient cities. This last point also links to UN-HABITAT's normative agenda embodied in the Medium Term Strategic and Institutional Plan in the forthcoming new Campaign on "Sustainable Urbanisation".

A set of programme development and programme monitoring tools and guidelines have been under development during 2008 that will assist UN-HABITAT in our work on disaster response and risk reduction. These will be published and circulated throughout the organisation and to the network of partners already implementing all or part of the Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction approach.

With the invitation from the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to UN-HABITAT to join as a full member in May 2008, our commitment to the humanitarian community and its commitment to UN-HABITAT are now as formalised as they can be. What remains is the challenge of providing consistent, coherent, and collaborative support in coming years. The Strategic Policy, the Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction Framework, and the forthcoming guidelines are all tools intended to assist UN-HABITAT achieve this, not just as a programme – rather as a reliable partner Agency within the humanitarian community.

Finally, none of these documents defines UN-HABITAT as a post-disaster life-saving, organisation. Those mandates are already well defined and resourced with our partners in the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs, and its operational body - the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. By virtue of our membership in these bodies, it is clear that the humanitarian community see the value added by having expertise on shelter and human settlements within the planning and response system – for the reasons outlined above and in the detail given below.

# STRATEGIC POLICY ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS IN CRISIS

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This policy document articulates UN-HABITAT's role with regard to human settlements in crisis. It responds to Resolution HSP/GC/20/17 and supporting documents produced in response to Resolution HSP/GC/19/9 in relation to "Post-conflict, natural and human-made disaster assessment and reconstruction". Further, this policy has been developed as an integral part of the UN-HABITAT's Medium Term Strategic and Institutional Plan (MTSIP). The new plan articulates a specific provision for urban resiliency and vulnerability reduction in Focus Area 2, whereas post-crisis recovery and reconstruction is addressed under Focus Area 3.

The policy has also been developed as part of the process of UN reform on humanitarian affairs led by the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA) and its coordinating body, the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC). The Humanitarian Review and Reform process resulted in a new cluster-based planning and coordinating system that draws on both humanitarian and development actors in an integrated response and programming system. This system is designed to overcome historical gaps and assist in bridging emergency and recovery processes more effectively. UN-HABITAT has been part of this process and is currently designated as focal point for housing, land and property related issues in the Emergency Shelter, Protection, Early recovery clusters.<sup>1</sup>

The ECHA review process has recognised the unique niche of UN-HABITAT as an important agency in the humanitarian arena. Through its focus on housing, land and settlement planning, UN-HABITAT provides a cross-cutting approach that reduces vulnerabilities and risk both before and after disasters. The cost of sustaining displaced people in conditions of dependency can be enormous if early measures are not taken to plan and provide for sustainable shelter, infrastructure and services, and for restoring livelihoods. UN-HABITAT's unique approach to disaster management, reconstruction and recovery is based on its long-standing experience in working closely with communities and local authorities to meet their needs for shelter and services, while simultaneously addressing the longer-term development needs for land, secure tenure and infrastructure. It is clear from this experience that the potential for development gains is far higher during the early stages of relief and recovery, and that an integrated and strategic approach to relief and recovery to facilitate these gains is a clear niche for the agency.

<sup>1</sup> ECHA - the inter-agency forum created within the context of UN reforms, is comprised of 16 UN and non-UN agencies including: OCHA, UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP, OHCHR, DPKO, DPA, UNRWA, WHO, FAO, DPI, UN-HABITAT, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict and the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa.



## **2. MANDATE OF UN-HABITAT**

UN-HABITAT's mandate derived from the Habitat Agenda (paragraphs 40. (l); 43. (z); 170. – 176. ; 208. (d), (e); 228. (c)) to assist member states in disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness, and post-disaster rehabilitation capabilities in human settlements. Other mandatory instruments are contained in Annex I. Based on the above and benefiting from consultations with partners at the second and third sessions of the World Urban Forum, UN-HABITAT has finalised a conceptual framework entitled 'Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction'.

## **3. THE STRATEGIC POLICY**

The policy defines important baselines and priority areas of focus that are considered necessary for the implementation of both preventative pre-crisis intervention, and sustainable recovery from crisis, with a special focus on the role that UN-HABITAT, within its mandated areas, plays in enhancing an effective and sustainable response to identified human settlements needs in post-crisis environs. It addresses the issues of: institutional priorities; inter-agency cooperation; partnerships; and reporting.

### **3.1 Institutional Priorities**

The Strategic policy shall:

- i) Provide an agency-wide platform for supporting national and local institutions responsible for disaster management, promoting implementation of risk and vulnerability reduction plans, and sustainable reconstruction interventions;
- ii) Provide a platform for co-operation and exchange of knowledge and information within UN-HABITAT, and between UN-HABITAT and other United Nations agencies, as well as other relevant parties;
- iii) Support the agency's role in policy development, humanitarian action plans and operational activities as a means of initiating sustainable recovery and reconstruction programming within the overall humanitarian coordination mechanisms, such as the IASC and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and at country level with the Humanitarian Coordinator, UN Country Teams and the new IASC cluster response system.

### **3.2 Interagency cooperation**

UN-HABITAT shall:

- i) Continue to develop its role as focal point for housing, land and property rights within the IASC Cluster system at headquarters, in Geneva and within UN Country Teams where called upon;
- ii) Take up its responsibilities as full member of the IASC, as recommended by the General Assembly in Resolution A/60/203, and approved by the IASC Principals on the 30th of April 2008;

- iii) Continue coordination with Humanitarian Agencies through regular participation in meetings of the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs and the Inter Agency Standing Committee, as well as maintaining relevant linkages with UN initiatives related to linking humanitarian work with recovery and development;
- iv) Continue or initiate, where appropriate, cooperation with global and regional organisations involved in the coordination of peace-building efforts within States in or emerging from conflict.

### **3.3 Partnerships, including cooperation with other UN agencies**

UN-HABITAT, in line with GC Resolution 20/17, shall:

- i) Continue to strengthen existing partnerships, and initiate new partnerships with both normative and operational UN, non-UN agencies, public and private sector and civil society organisations engaged in disaster mitigation, humanitarian and recovery activities globally;
- ii) Continue to strengthen, expand and facilitate partnerships with UN, non-UN agencies, public and private sector and civil society organisations to ensure greater cohesion and more efficient operations addressing human settlements facing or recovering from crisis.

### **3.4 Reporting, Monitoring and Evaluation**

UN-HABITAT will undertake regular and periodic evaluation against the terms of this policy and the indicators set out in the Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction framework. An annual report on the performance of the Agency and its partners who are involved in implementing this policy will be prepared and submitted for review by the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) before release to other interested parties. Data and information drawn from such monitoring will be shared as follows:

- i) To the Governing Council and its members through the CPR, in order to monitor progress and provide substantive proposals for mobilising the necessary resources for the agency to continue "...promoting sustainable human settlements development in emergencies and post-disaster situations.";
- ii) Within the agency, to provide divisions, branches, sections and programmes involved in assisting settlements at risk and settlements in crisis with lessons learned for both normative and capacity building support;
- iii) Through UN Country Teams to Resident and/or Humanitarian Coordinator systems in support of UNCT planning and implementation addressing settlements at risk and settlements in crisis;
- iv) To IASC cluster working groups both at national and global levels on areas for which UN-HABITAT has been given functional responsibility;
- v) Through the Executive Director informing members of ECHA on areas within the mandate of the organisation that address humanitarian issues;
- vi) Through the publication of tools and documentation that provide guidance or support for assistance to settlements at risk and settlements in crises within the Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction framework.

## 4. ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF UN-HABITAT

The overall responsibility for the implementation of the strategic policy rests with the Executive Director, who will ensure that it is mainstreamed throughout the organisation and to:

- i) Facilitate in-house coordination and to generate lessons learned and normative products, such as improved tools for vulnerability reduction, disaster preparedness and mitigation, land and property rights, and mainstreaming disaster management;
- ii) Contribute to inter-agency cooperation, partnerships and networking and promote public-private partnerships, complementing inter-governmental commitments when suitable, in implementing sustainable interventions in human settlements at risk and settlements in crisis;
- iii) Identify key partners, priorities and opportunities for immediate measures linked to longer-term technical and capacity building support to ensure a seamless transition from early crisis response to longer-term recovery and development;
- iv) Establish an in-house Secretariat for Agency-wide engagement and regular reporting to ECHA, the IASC, and other humanitarian coordination mechanisms, as necessary;
- v) Provide agency liaison for engagement with the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF);
- vi) Backstop substantive inputs through UN-HABITAT's Geneva sub-office, to the IASC Humanitarian Reform cluster working groups;
- vii) Ensure, where UN-HABITAT programmes are present, collaboration with UN Country Teams on Common Humanitarian Action Plans; Consolidated Appeals, and Flash Appeals; and endeavour to link these to UN Development Assistance Frameworks; Poverty Reduction Strategies, and other development planning processes at local and national levels;
- viii) Ensure in countries requesting assistance where no UN-HABITAT programme is operating, that a response team is deployed at the earliest possible opportunity;
- ix) Continue building and maintaining strategic partnerships in particular with local government and local government networks and civil society, addressing the design and implementation of sustainable disaster risk reduction programmes in support of the Hyogo Framework for Action as endorsed by Member States during the World Conference for Disaster Reduction in Kobe, Japan in January 2005.

## 5. SUBSTANTIVE FOCUS AND IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

Within the framework of the Medium Term Strategic and Institutional Plan, and the Enhanced Normative and Operating Framework (and the Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction framework, UN-HABITAT will focus on:

- Reducing the vulnerabilities of human settlements and strengthen their capacities for managing human made and natural disasters at all levels (MTSIP Focus Area 2);
- Responding to immediate needs in the aftermath of crises that are linked to Agency mandated interventions supporting sustainable human settlements (MTSIP Focus Area 3).

### 5.1 Risk and vulnerability reduction

UN-HABITAT activities related to risk and vulnerability reduction are based on the Hyogo Declaration and its Framework for Action. This framework of action identified gaps and challenges in several areas. Those that correspond to the Focus Areas of the Medium Term Strategic and Institutional Plan are:

Hyogo Framework of Action	MTSIP
Governance: organizational, legal and policy frameworks	Focus area 2: participatory planning, management and governance
Risk identification, assessment, monitoring and early warning	Focus area 2: participatory planning, management and governance
Knowledge management and education	Focus Area 1: Advocacy, monitoring and partnerships
Reducing underlying risk factors	Focus Area 3: Land and Housing Focus Area 4: Environmentally-sound and affordable basic infrastructure and services
Preparedness for effective response and recovery	Focus Area 1: Advocacy, monitoring and partnerships

UN-HABITAT, in collaboration with international, national and local partners will work on the above through the production and application of normative tools and products aimed at risk and vulnerability reduction and sustainable reconstruction in human settlements.

### 5.2 Post-crisis recovery and reconstruction

The five key priority areas of UN-HABITAT's post-crisis reconstruction programming involve advisory and technical support to requesting member States, and with partners and counterparts, on settlement upgrading by addressing:

- i) Land and Tenure: ie. Land and property rights (Focus Area 3: Pro-poor land and housing); Land use and urban planning and governance (Focus Area 2: Participatory urban planning, management and governance);
- ii) Transitional and permanent shelter (Focus Area 3);

- iii) Environmental remediation: solid and liquid waste management, rubble recycling, etc. (Focus Area 4: Environmentally-sound and affordable infrastructure and services);
- iv) Rehabilitation of basic infrastructure and services: transport, water, school and health facilities, etc. (Focus Area 4);
- v) Immediate economic recovery and restoration of livelihoods: markets and income generating facilities designed to restore local government revenue systems (Focus Area 5: Strengthening human settlements finance systems).

In addition, UN-HABITAT will combine experiences of its global and technical cooperation programmes to offer support to member States in post-crisis situations on:

- Damage and needs assessments for housing, basic infrastructure and services;
- Immediate technical assistance to affected communities, local authorities and support agencies in the areas of site preparation, and property management, housing reconstruction, infrastructure rehabilitation, water and sanitation, and livelihoods;
- Field level coordination and information management in the human settlements sector (with reference to inter-agency standing committee clusters Protection, Emergency Shelter, Camp Management and Early Recovery);
- Development and implementation of integrated shelter recovery programmes and strategies promoting the principles of sustainable recovery, and addressing the most vulnerable segments of the population;
- Selected implementation and visible delivery of priority projects/pilot activities to demonstrate the feasibility of new and improved norms, standards, laws and planning practices that assist member States achieve resilient and sustainable urban development.

### **5.3 Implementation approach**

Positive links between disaster risk reduction, reconstruction, recovery and sustainable urban development need to be established through:

- i) Supporting local initiatives:
  - Utilisation of participatory planning and inclusive decision-making methods, ensuring involvement of all actors and in particular women, youth and vulnerable groups, in all planning and implementation stages;
  - Creation of strategic partnerships and alliances at all levels within the continuum from relief and reconstruction to recovery and development.
- ii) Building local capacities:
  - Building and engaging capacities at all levels and of all actors and specifically of local authorities to operate as active partners in the process from relief and reconstruction to recovery and development.

iii) Focusing on shelter and livelihoods:

- Development of broad-based and long-term reconstruction and shelter strategies from the earliest stages to ensure effective use of emergency resources;
- Development of longer-term solutions for land management to reduce the potential for conflict and increase the potential for investments;
- Development of productive economic activities such as markets and income generating facilities to assist the consolidation of peace and security and promote the recovery of livelihoods and local government revenue systems.

iv) Promoting appropriate legal frameworks:

- Operating within human rights framework particularly in terms of land rights, security of tenure, and equal rights of women, and establishing clear and understandable legal and regulatory frameworks related to human settlements.

## 6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

UN-HABITAT's ability to respond to natural and complex emergencies depends on the availability of predictable financial resources for pre- and post-emergency interventions, scrutiny and evaluation of current and past international emergency aid practice, development of new approaches to relief activities, public information programming, and disaster vulnerability reduction. Apart from funds required for supporting national and local activities, budgetary allocations are also required for the development of normative tools and products, the dissemination of good practices and the mainstreaming of lessons learned through participation in international humanitarian fora.

Resolution HSP/GC/20/17 calls for mobilisation of necessary financial resources to implement the strategic policy and invites Governments in a position to do so to contribute generously to support activities in emergencies and post-disaster situations. To guarantee timely and credible responses to humanitarian and transition needs, a strategic and dedicated outreach and fund-raising programme is developed and implemented in line with the resource mobilisation strategy of UN-HABITAT's medium term plan for 2008-13.

The resource mobilisation strategy shall address member States in a position to do so, to provide non-earmarked, soft-earmarked and/or ear-marked funding for the agency's risk reduction and post-crisis recovery initiatives.

# SUSTAINABLE RELIEF AND RECONSTRUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

1. For more than 10 years, UN-HABITAT has been operating in humanitarian and crisis situations, supporting national governments, local authorities and civil society in strengthening their capacity to manage and recover from human-made and natural disasters and mitigate future disasters. Understanding the discontinuity within the international aid community between the short term humanitarian imperative, and longer term reconstruction and development priorities, UN-HABITAT has engaged and offered its perspectives on bridging this divide.
2. Conceptually, disaster management and reconstruction encompass many dimensions; exploring the roles of various institutions at civic, municipal, national and international levels, addressing the impacts of natural and human caused disasters from the perspective of reducing their impacts, and assisting in the sustainable reconstruction of settlements following disaster. The Disaster Management Programme of UN-HABITAT has focused on its normative responsibilities, using the Agency's experiences in the field, forging alliances with key partners, and engaging in dialogue as a means of refining and defining the role of the agency in the arena of humanitarian response and vulnerability reduction.
3. When hazards turn into disasters or a struggle for political and economic control turns into an armed conflict, it is always human settlements, people and property that are worst hit. The cornerstone of UN-HABITAT's strategy is to leverage investment in the emergency and recovery phases into the longer term development of human settlements. Through UN-HABITAT participation at the earliest stages, we ensure that human settlements interventions, either immediate emergency or transition recovery, are linked to longer-term development strategies in disaster hit countries.
4. Paradoxically, disaster can also be an opportunity. Recovery phases offer a unique chance to revisit past practices and rewrite policies affecting future development in disaster-prone areas. A range of mitigation measures can be incorporated during recovery to promote vulnerability reduction. Beyond the physical aspects of rehabilitation, the recovery period also offers an opportunity for the society at large to strengthen local organizational capacities, and to promote networks, awareness and political mechanisms facilitating economic, social and physical

- development long after a disaster – that is, to build its own sustainability.
5. UN-HABITAT is indeed in a strong position to act in a technical advisory function in two key areas: the development of local capacity for managing and mitigating disasters and supporting capacities of outside actors to provide operational response within a sustainable development context. In recognition of this contribution, in April 2004 UN-HABITAT was invited to bring to the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA) its perspectives and support to international interventions within the context of shelter and human settlements. The Agency was also invited to join as a full member of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in May 2008.
  6. UN-HABITAT is using this operational experience to generate normative products to be applied in future disaster response, including vulnerability reduction, preparedness and mitigation in general. UN-HABITAT will continue drawing on practical experiences and extracting lessons with a view to continuous learning both internally as well as in support of sister agencies and humanitarian actors. These normative products will be integrated in future response strategies for human settlements in crisis.
  7. Through its involvement from the outset of the crisis as a supporting partner in reconstruction, shelter, infrastructure and governance, UN-HABITAT is in a crucial position as an institutional partner to help humanitarian agencies, local and national governments – and most importantly the affected and most vulnerable communities. Through this approach the recent emergency response activities have made a mark throughout the affected countries, and UN-HABITAT has managed to introduce the perspective that short term humanitarian support to human settlements in crisis can and should be used in a manner that promotes and facilitates longer term gain and reduces future risks.

### **The process**

8. In response to the deliberations of the 19th session of the Governing Council of 2003, and its recommendation for a report on the theme 'Post conflict, natural and human-made disasters assessment and reconstruction' UN-HABITAT's conceptual framework entitled 'Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction' has been formulated. This concept, as introduced in the pre-session document HSP/GC/20/5, is derived from key elements of the Habitat Agenda, and the Agency's experience, methodologies and principles of involvement in support of human settlements in crisis.
9. The development of the concept has been a consultative process, through which the primary elements have been critically reviewed and debated with UN-HABITAT's partners and colleagues both during the second session of the World Urban Forum in 2004 as well as during the third session in 2006.
10. The Networking Event entitled 'Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction – turning discussions into operational reality' during the World Urban Forum III explored a range of issues pertaining to the concept of 'Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction' ranging from land administration in post conflict environs, through the importance of integrating community and in particular women, as well as global issues pertaining to risk and vulnerability reduction. The networking event continued the momentum built up in WUF II in 2004 and during the Governing



Council in April 2005, concentrating on operationalising the conceptual framework and the guiding principle of Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction. The event introduced good practices and lessons learnt from the field, all within the context of reflecting and reviewing the precision of the conceptual Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction framework, and further elaborating it. This process also supported the formal commitment of development of a strategic UN-HABITAT Policy on human settlements in crisis as requested by the 20th session of the GC in Res. HSP/GC/20/17.

11. For the way forward, our hope is to obtain a commitment from the partners and colleagues to work collectively with UN-HABITAT to ensure the implementation of sustainable recovery both in prevention and in response to human settlements in crisis.

### **The approach**

12. The changing nature of conflict and natural disasters is leading to re-visioning of traditional approaches to recovery assistance. Natural and human-caused emergencies are increasing in regularity, and perhaps more importantly, their impacts on populations and human settlements are rising alarmingly. This, coupled with cycles of dependency and shortage of resources, all point to the need to develop innovative approaches and re-examine traditional policies on relief, recovery and mitigation assistance.
13. The international community is performing an ever-widening range of recovery and rehabilitation activities. This exacerbates the fundamental challenges of the crisis management and recovery processes; how to bridge the gaps that have repeatedly emerged between emergency, recovery and sustainable development efforts, and how to provide national and local government, civil society and business organizations with practical strategies to mitigate and recover from crises, and also to prevent lapsing back into crisis. It is equally critical to build the capacity of national and international aid agencies to deliver rapid response services that integrate a longer term developmental strategy. Based on these changing dynamics in international assistance, it is clear that a new approach is required. Through analysis of these needs, the concept of sustainable relief and reconstruction has emerged.

### **Disaster mitigation - building a culture of prevention**

14. Mitigation is the first step towards a comprehensive approach to managing disasters. Communities are often unaware of the hazards they face, do not put much trust in mitigation strategies, and rely heavily upon emergency responses from others when the need arises. Sustainable relief and reconstruction encompasses all phases of disaster management, from mitigation to response; with a view to improving communities' and governments' capacities to prevent and mitigate disaster events so that needs during response are reduced. Concepts of sustainability and sustainable development offer a crucial framework for integrating vulnerability reduction plans in the context of disaster recovery. Sustainable human settlements development does not necessarily prevent disasters, but it should mitigate their impact. Disaster mitigation and management needs to look beyond the hazards alone to consider prevailing conditions of

- vulnerability. It is the social, cultural, economic, and political setting in a country that defines the level of vulnerability or resilience, of its people and communities.
15. A better understanding and emphasis on capacity development during mitigation will increase the ability of local actors – civil society, local and national government – to respond effectively to disasters. The cornerstone of the implementation strategy is to build a “culture of prevention” among society at large. Such a culture will not only save lives but will enhance the economic and social fabric, through working with cities and civil societies to reduce their vulnerability to natural and human-caused disasters, as well as providing sustainable solutions for the re-construction of war-torn and post-crisis societies. Disaster management and mitigation therefore needs to be introduced as an integral part of any on-going development and poverty reduction plans.
  16. It is essential that the community as a whole be involved in developing and implementing mitigation and sustainable development programmes. Civil empowerment is a fundamental complement to any mitigation exercise undertaken within cities or by civil society. Without a common understanding of the necessity for mitigation measures, without the active participation of civil society in execution, and without community’s sense of ownership, such measures stand a slim chance of reducing disasters or resolving conflicts.

**Crisis response - meeting the long term needs of many, while supporting the emergency needs of few**

17. When conflicts occur or hazards turn into disasters, human settlements - people and property - are the most affected. Therefore, any recovery process irrespective of its short- or long-term planning horizon has to consider, in addition to meeting urgent human needs, the physical infrastructure and human settlements problems that arise, including adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development. In many post-crisis scenarios, experience has shown that interventions are most effective when they are designed to begin simultaneously; consideration of long term impacts of short term interventions can add value to the latter, and depth to the former. A process of long-term reconstruction and economic recovery should therefore begin while post-emergency actions aimed at restoring normality for the affected populations returning home or settling in new places are being undertaken. In this manner, strategic investment during emergency and relief stages can contribute significantly to building foundations for development.
18. Post-crisis responses by national governments, bilaterals, NGOs and UN agencies have been characterized by rapid rehabilitation projects including water and sanitation, housing, irrigation, food-security measures and health. These tend to be ad-hoc, palliative and not linked to overall development objectives of disaster-hit countries. Piecemeal efforts, that are not connected with the long-term development strategy, can not only aggravate precarious social conditions creating dependency on aid, but are a critical waste of financial and human resources invested in short-sighted emergency relief plans. Humanitarian agencies can no longer operate in isolation; instead they require active participation from development-oriented agencies. The real challenge lies in broadening the portfolios of humanitarian and developmental actors and in bringing them

together in shared realization of recovery processes for sustainable development.

19. The recovery phase can also offer a unique opportunity to revisit past practices and rewrite policies affecting future development in disaster-prone areas. A range of mitigation measures, for example, can be incorporated during recovery to promote vulnerability reduction, such as land-use, environmental and community planning, improving building codes and construction regulations. Beyond the physical aspects of rehabilitation, the recovery period also offers an opportunity for the society at large to strengthen local organizational capacities, and to promote networks, awareness and political mechanisms facilitating economic, social and physical development long after a disaster – that is, to build its own sustainability.

### **The aim**

*'Ensuring the development, in line with the principles of sustainable human settlements, of a disaster-resistant environment for residents of cities, towns and villages to live, work and invest'.*

20. UN-HABITAT's conceptual framework entitled Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction together with the guiding principles, developed as part of the broader framework, aim to provide a robust framework for action. The concept and principles represent a substantive and achievable set of objectives, culminating in its twin goals of ensuring that investments in the emergency and recovery phases are leveraged for longer term impacts, and integrating the essential elements of disaster risk reduction in the process. The development of guiding principles serves to articulate the basic practice philosophy that actors must adopt to ensure that relief and reconstruction assistance is having a positive effect on the sustainable and equal development of human settlements in post conflict and disaster environments. The principles establish important baselines and priority areas of focus considered necessary for the implementation of truly sustainable relief and reconstruction activities.
21. For sustainable recovery to be achieved, it will require a shift in thinking about relief, reconstruction and development at all levels. These guiding principles offer a realistic, forward thinking approach to recovering from crisis. Developing these guidelines on sustainable relief and reconstruction is the first step in turning these discussions and debates into operational realities. However, for this to be truly effective, commitment must be sought from international agencies, governments (local and national) and civil society on these guidelines and the direction of change that they represent.
22. It has been our objective to establish a set of principles for approaching humanitarianism in a human settlements context. The next vital step is that these guidelines are translated into action at all levels.
23. Guiding Principles for Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction are the following:
  - a. *Permanent links between emergency relief and reconstruction and the transitional phase of development are established.*
  - b. *The capacities of local governments to be developed as necessary, to operate as active partners in the process.*
  - c. *Building and engaging capacities at all levels and of all actors to be a priority from the*

*earliest stages and throughout the process from relief and reconstruction to recovery and development.*

- d. Utilisation of participatory planning and inclusive decision-making models, ensuring involvement of all actors, women in particular, in all planning and implementation activities.*
- e. Developing productive economic activities at the earliest stages of recovery to assist consolidation of peace and security.*
- f. Facilitation of safety and security of affected populations as a critical pre-condition for any humanitarian or development activities.*
- g. Developing broad-based and long-term reconstruction and shelter strategies from the earliest stages ensuring more effective use of emergency resources.*
- h. Ensuring the protection of land and property rights of affected populations, and developing longer-term solutions for land and property dispute resolution to reduce potential for (further) conflict.*
- i. Incorporating vulnerability reduction and disaster management into on-going national and local development and poverty reduction plans.*
- j. Redirecting the focus on disaster risk reduction and mitigation rather than preparedness and response related strategies in the human settlements context.*
- k. Operating within a human rights framework, particularly in terms of land rights and security of tenure, and the equal rights of women.*
- l. The creation of strategic partnerships and alliances at all levels within the relief and reconstruction to development continuum.*
- m. Decentralisation of responsibility for prevention of, and recovery from, crises in human settlements is essential to ensure appropriate, balanced and sustainable vulnerability and risk reduction.*
- n. Building a culture of prevention entails a cross sectoral, multi-dimensional approach integrating participatory analysis of risk, implementation of programmes, and development of policy and legal frameworks with all stakeholders including civil society, private sector, local, national and international government, in a gendered and comprehensive process.*
- o. Effective peace-building requires due attention to clear and understandable legal and regulatory frameworks, effective and impartial land and property administration, a functional interface between local government and its citizens in a dialogue that builds trust and commitment (with capacity building where essential), a common vision, and coordination of international actors.*
- p. Understanding that crises, and in particular conflicts, virtually always creates displacement, sustainable strategies integrating rights based approaches to shelter, tenure, and protection of the most vulnerable, need implementation at the earliest stages.*

## **The action**

*"Preventing man-made disasters... and reducing the impacts of natural disasters and other emergencies on human settlements, inter alia, through appropriate planning mechanisms and resources for rapid, people-centred responses that promote a smooth transition from relief, through rehabilitation, to reconstruction to development..."*

24. Further discussion and debate is necessary to review the proposed concept, principles and means for their implementation. How can the implementation of the guiding principles become an operational reality? Is this the right starting place? Who becomes the custodian of the principles and how does one apply them? Do we sufficiently integrate the issues of vulnerability reduction and sustainable disaster management in human settlements development, incorporating them into the national and local policies and actions?
25. The purpose of these principles is to articulate the basic practice philosophy that actors must adopt to ensure that assistance and interventions are having a positive effect on the sustainable and equal development of human settlements in post conflict and disaster environments. Giving serious consideration to these aspects during planning and decision-making can assist communities, authorities and support agencies to realize that decisions made during the earliest stages of recovery will have long-term impacts on the success and sustainability of the joint efforts in recovery.
26. This conceptual change needs to be backed up with new operational approaches from international agencies, governments, and in communities. Sustainable recovery in human settlements is a process, combining the following key elements:
  - a. *Bridging the gap between emergency relief and sustainable development.*
  - b. *Integration of mitigation and vulnerability reduction into sustainable development and recovery.*
  - c. *Creating appropriate human settlement conditions for facilitating the transition from emergency to sustainable development.*
  - d. *Building and engaging capacities at all levels, in all sectors and of all actors to be a priority from the earliest stages and throughout the process.*

## **Partner consultations**

27. The concept and principles have been the subject of scrutiny, assessment, and subsequent shaping with our partners; and capitalizing on their advice, the following sections introduce some elaborated elements and practical recommendations to guide us in formulating our future programming and implementation.
28. The objective of the consultative Networking Events in both sessions of the World Urban Forum has been to draw together partners of UN-HABITAT for informal, provocative sessions concentrating on both reviewing the conceptual framework and the guiding principles and exploring new operational approaches for implementation of sustainable support. The partner consultations have introduced good practices and lessons learnt from the field, all within the context

of reflecting and reviewing the precision of the conceptual Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction framework, and further elaborating it towards sustainable realization.

29. As identified, the key thematic areas of Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction are:
  - a. *Disaster mitigation and vulnerability reduction*
  - b. *Land and property administration*
  - c. *Longer-term shelter strategies*
  - d. *Economic recovery*
  - e. *Participation and good governance*
  - f. *Partnerships*
  - g. *Capacity building*

### **Disaster mitigation and vulnerability reduction**

30. Deficient urban management practices, inadequate planning and construction, unregulated population density, exploitation of the environment, dependency on inadequate infrastructure and services, 'absent' or incompetent local governments and institutions all contribute to increasing vulnerability. Disaster is a result of the combination of natural hazards and an accumulation of the above factors. Sadly, it is only after the occurrence of disaster that awareness is raised on the importance of reducing vulnerabilities.
31. When disaster strikes, it ironically provides an opportunity to dimension vulnerabilities, and rethink how to address these during the recovery and reconstruction stages, avoiding past weaknesses within and around human settlements. Recovery efforts supported by the international community, must in any case integrate risk reduction to ensure that reconstruction takes place wherever possible in safer locations and according to robust building codes and safety standards. Particular attention needs to be paid to schools, hospitals, and other critical infrastructure needs, as well as environmental vulnerabilities. Agencies, companies and professionals who work in reconstruction, need to be trained/advised to understand how recovery efforts can help reduce vulnerabilities and make communities more resilient to disasters.
32. Building a 'culture of prevention' at all levels in society is a challenge often not met until after the devastation wrought by disaster. However, the international aid community, governments, the media, and communities, together in partnership can and should use every opportunity including post disaster recovery programmes for awareness campaigns to create a culture of prevention, and ensure those most vulnerable need not remain that way indefinitely.

### 33. Challenges

- a. *Increasing investment in disaster risk reduction - redirecting priorities from visible and short-term development projects to abstract long term potential threats and risks. Finance and planning authorities need also to be sensitized to the importance of investing in disaster resilient interventions as more cost-effective than post-crisis reconstruction.*
- b. *Addressing the root causes of disasters - inadequate development practices increase the vulnerability of communities, and more focus on pre-disaster risk reduction needs to be integrated in all development planning.*
- c. *Translating technical knowledge into action - despite extensive knowledge on hazards and risks, not enough efforts are made to prepare cities and people for their worst impacts.*
- d. *Coordination - professionals are often fragmented, working inside institutional boundaries. Risk reduction and mitigation are a cross cutting issue, requiring coordination mechanisms that bring a sufficiently wide group of stakeholders together.*

### 34. Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction Guiding Principles

- a. *Incorporating vulnerability reduction and disaster management into on-going national and local development and poverty reduction plans.*
- b. *Redirecting the focus on disaster risk reduction and mitigation rather than preparedness and response related strategies in the human settlements context.*
- c. *Building a culture of prevention entails a cross sectoral, multi-dimensional approach integrating participatory analysis of risk, implementation of programmes, and development of policy and legal frameworks with all stakeholders including civil society, private sector, local, national and international government, in a gendered and comprehensive process.*

### 35. Additional recommendations for the Guiding Principles

- a. *Disaster risk reduction is everybody's business, being an integral part of everyday life. Mitigation is not only a responsibility of experts and disaster managers, and all sectors of the society needs to be involved. Emphasize public awareness as the key to create proper behaviour with long term goals in mind, applicable specifically to children as future decision-makers.*
- b. *The Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction Guiding Principles should give more emphasis to the pre-disaster phase and support the incorporation of risk reduction consideration into development planning.*
- c. *Recommendations of the Hyogo Framework for Action are acknowledged as part the Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction Framework.*

## Land and property administration

36. One of the major threats to stability in the post-disaster context is the question of housing, land and property rights within the reconciliation and reconstruction process. Access to land and water resources can be a new cause of conflict following disaster or war displacement. With high potential for destruction and looting of property, secondary occupation of both residential and agricultural land and housing, and the disintegration of the institutions governing and protecting land and property rights, the potential for further conflict, or the undermining of peace processes, are likely as displaced populations return to re-occupy their homes, farms, and properties.
37. Of the numerous housing, land and property (HLP) challenges arising in the aftermath of disaster and conflict, the demand for restitution and compensation are increasingly sought. Restitution mechanisms addressing the rights of displaced persons to return to their original homes and lands have increased considerably in recent years, and these developments have slowly been matched by concrete actions in the field.
38. Protecting housing, land and property rights is always a challenging enterprise as recent attempts have clearly shown. In the past two years alone, structural restitution problems requiring resolution arose following the 2004 Asian tsunami in several countries (most notably Sri Lanka and Indonesia), the 2005 floods in New Orleans (US), the 2005 SE Asian Earthquake (Pakistan) and in a range of other disasters. In terms of conflict, the attempted resolution of housing land and property issues arose during the same period in; Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda, while contingency planning work continues on a range of other countries where conflict has yet to come to an end, but where restitution themes loom large over any eventual peace arrangements.
39. Whilst UN-HABITAT through its Global Campaign for Secure Tenure, has considerable expertise; globally the capacity of deployable experts is alarmingly low and there is much scope for building and coordinating this. Furthermore, in spite of repeated threats to sustainable peace, indeterminate displacement from disasters, looming conflicts over land and property rights, the issue remains relatively low on the humanitarian and donor agendas.
40. Challenges
  - a. *Inadequate financial and human resources in the field operations to match the necessary capacity for operational credibility and delivery.*
  - b. *Lack of political and commitment at both local and international levels remains a fundamental challenge in attempting to secure housing, land and property rights.*
  - c. *The scale and scope of housing, land and property issues may dampen the enthusiasm for devoting resources together with the sometimes long periods of time required to adequately address lost rights.*
41. Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction guiding principles
  - a. *Ensuring the protection of land and property rights of affected populations, and developing longer-term solutions for land and property dispute resolution to reduce potential for (further) conflict.*



- b. *Operating within a human rights framework, particularly in terms of land rights and security of tenure, and the equal rights of women.*
  - c. *Understanding that crises, and in particular conflicts, virtually always creates displacement, sustainable strategies integrating rights based approaches to shelter, tenure, and protection of the most vulnerable, need implementation at the earliest stages.*
42. **Additional recommendations for the Guiding Principles**
- a. *The adoption of a comprehensive global Housing, Land and Property Rights Policy for application in post-conflict and post-disaster settings. Such a policy – which would cover all housing, land and property (HLP) issues, and not only restitution – would help prevent the largely ad hoc responses of the international community in both post-disaster and post-conflict field operations in addressing the wide range of HLP crises that invariably come about in all such circumstances.*
  - b. *Policy-makers need to be given access to information on successful examples of past restitution programmes and how these worked in practice, as a means of removing apprehensions concerning restitution.*

### **Longer-term shelter strategies**

43. Shelter is one of the most visible and immediate needs in post-crisis settings. Providing shelter and infrastructure after a disaster or post-conflict situation, however, is not as simple as counting the houses lost and building replacements. There are many other issues to consider in the reconstruction of shelter. Relief efforts are often focused on providing shelter quickly, without taking into account the impact of short-term shelter strategies. The format of rebuilding houses has often been to develop cheap, easily transportable prefabricated housing, which can be quickly erected, yet has no bearing on traditional styles of housing of the region. In the planning of projects dealing with providing shelter and infrastructure, it is vital to consider the long-term effects of the programmes.
44. Long-term shelter strategies not only focus on development and implementation of realistic and permanent reconstruction for affected communities, but also assist rebuilding community confidence, and support structure for civic responsibility and urban governance, through participatory planning and delivery of reconstruction processes.
45. Shelter issues are closely bound to mitigation aspects as well, particularly in disaster-prone areas. The development of disaster-resistant housing is a major factor in reducing vulnerability to natural catastrophes. But shelter issues in mitigation go beyond the structural aspect. Rights to ownership and security of tenure make an enormous difference to the development, management and maintenance of shelter, particularly in urban areas. When people have security where they live, they are better able to manage space and invest in safety, and engage in activities that will reduce rather than increase their vulnerability.

#### 46. Challenges

- a. *The demand for speedy response is still dominating over proper planning, detailed consultations, reviews of safety and environmental requirements, quality controls and opportunities for participatory work, i.e. sustainable reconstruction.*
- b. *Permanent reconstruction often remains uncoordinated, inefficiently managed and slow to get off the ground, particularly as local government capacity to plan and participate in recovery strategies is usually limited as a result of a disaster.*
- c. *Unmet demands for professional and impartial support for establishing and restoring property rights.*
- d. *To use the opportunity of disaster recovery to make things better than before - Build Back Better, incorporating risk reduction elements in the process.*
- e. *Inflexible and short-term focused funding resources hinder a smooth and rapid transition to longer-term reconstruction and recovery.*
- f. *Regarding disaster survivors as passive victims awaiting the arrival of assistance can yield a long-term legacy of dependency.*

#### 47. Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction guiding principles

- a. *Permanent links between emergency relief and reconstruction and the transitional phase of development are established.*
- b. *Developing broad-based and long-term reconstruction and shelter strategies from the earliest stages ensuring more effective use of emergency resources.*
- c. *Understanding that crises, and in particular conflicts, virtually always creates displacement, sustainable strategies integrating rights based approaches to shelter, tenure, and protection of the most vulnerable, need implementation at the earliest stages.*

#### 48. Additional recommendations for the Guiding Principles

- a. *Raise awareness among all players of their roles, inter-dependence within the overall recovery system, and long-term consequences of their actions.*
- b. *Facilitate double accountability, upwards to international financial institutions, donors and the government and downwards to the beneficiaries of assistance.*
- c. *Adopt a demand-driven approach with continual assessment and monitoring of changing needs and capacities, rather than supply-driven, donor-oriented approach.*
- d. *Adopt a development approach while supporting capacity development in all sectors and at all levels.*
- e. *Create a single point of overall responsibility in government, assigning a dedicated organisation at the apex of political power and decision making, with a clear mandate supported by appropriate legislation, adequate resources, direct links to all line ministries and knowledge of the dynamics of the disaster recovery process.*

## Economic recovery

49. Natural and human-caused disasters destroy investments, infrastructure and livelihoods. Poverty and lack of resources increase vulnerability, weaken coping strategies and delay the recovery process. A vibrant local economy is one of the key elements in sustainable recovery and development, yet economic recovery is also recognized as one of the most difficult aspects of the process. Despite disasters, many communities have resources that can be tapped such as the availability of local building materials, the existence of a labour force, and most importantly the eagerness of local communities and the private sector to participate in the recovery process.
50. It is necessary to identify and exploit the potential within the community to use skills or resources that are at hand. This not only makes the best use of limited external assistance, but also reduces the risk of external dependency.
51. This is also an important consideration for local organisations and governments, as the redevelopment of their economic potential must be a key priority. Re-establishing small scale production in the affected areas, creating employment opportunities for local entrepreneurs and the community it self—both affected and host communities—and reinforcing the local building sector can have a huge impact on the rebuilding of the economy from a very early stage in the programming. The encouragement of economic activities in a post-crisis situation is a crucial objective in the long-term context of development and rehabilitation.
52. Challenges
  - a. *Destruction of infrastructure, facilities and services hampers revitalization of economic activities.*
  - b. *Decreased production and buying capacities, weakened institutional frameworks (legal and regulatory) for local economic development, such as judicial systems, business licensing, land allocations, etc.*
  - c. *Lack of organizations and institutions specialized in local economy and labour skills development, i.e. microfinance, vocational training and public employment programmes, etc.*
  - d. *Lack of social capital and stable social structures and dynamics in post-crisis environment, i.e. mistrust, lack of confidence and resources.*
53. Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction guiding principles
  - a. *Developing productive economic activities at the earliest stages of recovery to assist consolidation of peace and security.*

54. Additional recommendations for the Guiding Principles
- a. *Utilize local resources for recovery and reconstruction interventions, both material and human resources.*
  - b. *Strengthen local capacities to deliver responsive business and technical services to actors in production sectors and enterprise activities with growth potential (technical and business skills training and upgrading, institution/association capacity strengthening, transfer of appropriate technology, etc) and support creative interim delivery of credit to actors in production sector, pending the arrival of microfinance services.*
  - c. *Strengthen the capacity of local institutions and a broad-based representation of economic actors to establish, manage and develop a local economic development process.*
  - d. *Assist local economic stakeholders to identify new and improved market opportunities.*
  - e. *Rehabilitate basic services and infrastructure, which is essential for revitalization of economic activities at any level.*

#### **Public participation and good governance**

55. Cities are managed and communities interact at the local level. At no time is the opportunity for public involvement in planning and decision-making greater than when a community is faced with post-crisis recovery process. Civil society plays a major role in disaster management, conflict prevention, reconciliation and post-conflict reconstruction. They are much more than recipients of relief assistance, and must be viewed as such for developmentally focused relief and recovery programmes to be successful. Civil society acts as an important channel for awareness raising and education, for promoting a climate of peace and reconciliation, and for preventing and mitigating conflicts and crises.
56. Empowerment of essential governance actors such as community based organisations, volunteer groups and NGOs is important – empowered civil society can play an active role not only in planning and forming policies for risk reduction and sustainable recovery strategies but particularly during their implementation at the local level. It is crucial to address the issues at their root causes. In order to do so, an assessment of vulnerability of communities to hazards and disasters is crucial. An effective disaster risk assessment will identify activities to reduce the likelihood of a threat event as well as activities to reduce the impact of a threat event.
57. Inclusive decision-making, including women in particular, is a key element of a strategy in building consensus among different participants in the emergency phase, ensuring an active participation of affected populations, community groups, and local authorities also in the subsequent recovery phases. Ownership at the local level in response and recovery is important if these activities are to contribute to the longer term development and reduction of vulnerability of the population. However, truly participatory involvement of all segments of people is not simple. It is a process that requires substantive support to local governments in strengthening their technical and institutional capacities and in understanding the main principles of people's participation and good governance.

58. Challenges

- a. *Most of the capacities created and resources invested in disaster management are lodged with professionals, who leave once their project is completed. Sustainable relief and reconstruction requires substantial investments in capacity building of local communities and processes that look beyond the project framework.*
- b. *Women's participation does not necessarily follow when there is a mandate for community participation. Women's contribution to disaster management is usually informal and invisible, thus unrecognized and un-resourced in policies and programmes.*
- c. *Insufficient capacities of authorities in facilitating the consultative dialogue between private and public interests.*

59. Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction guiding principles

- a. *The capacities of local governments to be developed as necessary, to operate as active partners in the process of recovery and reconstruction following crisis.*
- b. *Utilization of participatory planning and inclusive decision-making models, ensuring involvement of all actors, women in particular, in all planning and implementation activities.*

60. Additional recommendations for the Guiding Principles

- a. *Mobilize a critical mass of affected people to take on multiple roles and active leadership in rebuilding their communities and play active roles at all stages of disaster management.*
- b. *Gain greater understanding of communities as the key drivers, playing multiple roles: as planners, problem solvers, information providers and in implementing and overseeing risk reduction and recovery initiatives.*
- c. *Strengthen the mandate for women's participation in disaster recovery and reconstruction, by making women's contributions visible, allocating clear roles and responsibilities to women, and strengthening grassroots women's capacities to advance their priorities in risk reduction and recovery.*
- d. *Building mechanisms for dialogue with government, local authorities and civil society, strengthen accountability and build partnerships.*

## **Partnerships**

61. The human settlements component is integral to post-crisis solutions, from refugee settlements planning to development of strengthened municipal and national institutional capacities, good governance and reviving local economy.
62. However, in order to develop an integrated approach to sustainable rehabilitation of human settlements, limited resources must be better coordinated to achieve the maximum possible effect. The multi-sectoral and interdisciplinary nature of disaster reduction and response requires continuous interaction, co-operation and partnerships among related institutions and stakeholders to achieve global objectives of disaster mitigation and sustainable post-crisis recovery. Solutions to insure sustainable recovery are interwoven in such a manner that activities cannot be implemented in isolation.
63. Building strategic partnerships among all stakeholders; civil society, national/ local governments, private sector, media and national/international support agencies, is therefore a shared challenge and responsibility. In combination, this contributes to the development of a coherent framework for sustainable recovery of human settlements in post-crisis situations.

## **Capacity building**

64. Post-crisis activities provide unique opportunities for increasing capacities among all national and local actors involved in the recovery process.
65. At the national level this may require strengthening policy making capacities and formulating legal instruments for implementation of national vulnerability reduction plans that promote sustainable development. Municipality authorities can be introduced to the sustainable rehabilitation and recovery process, re-directing the focus from technical and conventional response actions towards incorporation of mitigation measures in disaster management plans, introducing proper land use planning and building regulations, protection of land and property rights, effective project management and improved governance, among others, all within the framework of longer-term reconstruction strategy. Along the process, national professionals at different levels improve their technical and managerial skills and know-how; civil society and communities are empowered through their active participation in recovery efforts and development of a self-sustaining process; local small business, building contractors and organizations have the opportunity to grow and gain experience; and individuals, women in particular, can be trained in income generating activities in the housing and infrastructure sector.

## Conclusion

66. UN-HABITAT Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction principles, the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative, the Hyogo Framework for Action as well as International Recovery Platform all confirm the importance that governments join forces with both humanitarian and development actors to achieve sound and sustainable recovery. These good practices are unfortunately too often overlooked when the support actors are faced with pressure to deliver short-term, visible quick fix recovery solutions, at the same time when it is widely known that sustainable recovery is a process of several months at its minimum.
67. The partner consultations, during the two sessions of the World Urban Forum, among others, are a cause for optimism. A clear shift in thinking is starting to take shape among some of the key players of the international community. The Pakistan and Yogyakarta earthquakes, for example, are affirmative cases that serious effort has been put into trying to improve our collective track record.
68. Further, the recent Humanitarian Reform and its new cluster approach framework are a strong effort to make the post-crisis response more predictable, effective and accountable through establishment of nine clusters where significant gaps in the humanitarian response had been identified, including early recovery and improved disaster preparedness. In the new humanitarian cluster system, UN-HABITAT will add value through its comprehensive and specialized knowledge, expertise and experience in shelter, land and property. UN-HABITAT is in a principal position to propose coherent response frameworks, which can help close the continued gap between emergency shelter and shelter in recovery and longer-term development, combining the unique capacities of the agency as both humanitarian and development actor.
69. Resilient communities may bend but don't break when crisis strikes – by adopting policies which make livelihoods more secure, vulnerability reduction part of everyday life, institutions more responsive, public-private partnerships more effective, communities more sustainable and poverty less prevalent, resiliency of our settlements are dramatically enhanced. Beyond the physical aspects of rehabilitation, the recovery period also offers an opportunity for the society at large to strengthen local organizational capacities, and to promote networks, awareness and political mechanisms facilitating economic, social and physical development long after a disaster – that is, to build its own sustainability.

## ANNEX I

### MANDATORY DOCUMENTS

- i) Resolution HSP/GC/19/9 of 9 May 2003: declares that one of the special themes of the twentieth session of the Governing Council shall be “Post-conflict, natural and human-made disasters assessment and reconstruction”. (A/58/8 Report of the Governing Council of the UNHSP, p. 44)
- ii) Resolution HSP/GC/19/7 of the same date recommending UN-HABITAT to devote specific attention to human settlements needs in the reconstruction of countries and territories affected by armed conflicts or by other human-made or natural disasters. (A/58/8 Report of the Governing Council of the UNHSP, p. 42, paragraph 6)
- iii) GA Resolution 59/239 of 22 December 2004 on the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and the strengthening of UN-HABITAT further requested that UN-HABITAT continue to support the efforts of countries affected by natural disasters and complex emergencies, to develop prevention, rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes, and to ensure a more effective transition from relief to development. (A/59/239, paragraph. 18)
- iv) GA Resolution 60/203 of 22 December 2005 urging the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to include UN-HABITAT in its membership. (A/60/203, paragraphs 15, 16)
- v) Resolution HSP/GC/20/17 on ‘Post-conflict, natural and human-made disaster assessment and reconstruction’ taking note of the UN-HABITAT’s guiding principles for sustainable relief and reconstruction, and requesting that the Executive Director mainstream prospects for risk and vulnerability reduction and limiting the after-effects of disasters, elaborate on the guiding principles, and develop a strategic policy for the role of UN-HABITAT. (A/60/8 Report of the Governing Council of the UNHSP, p. 43)



"In late 2007, UN-HABITAT's Committee of Permanent Representatives endorsed the Agency's *Strategic Policy on Human Settlements in Crisis* providing for the first time, a normative basis for implementing and monitoring the work of the Agency in both pre- and post-crisis environs. This document, "*Humanitarian Affairs, and the role of UN-HABITAT*" contains both the policy, and the *Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction Framework* from which the policy was derived, and against which the policy will be measured.

While this publication is written for an internal UN-HABITAT audience, it may be of interest to readers outside of the organisation, in particular as a reference for Representatives of UN-HABITAT's Governing Council and successive Committees of Permanent Representatives."

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