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Chair: Mr. Dhanapala (Vice-Chair) (Sri Lanka)

Contents

Agenda item 20: Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

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In the absence of Mr. Diallo (Senegal), Mr. Dhanapala (Sri Lanka), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 20: Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)
(A/68/8, A/68/328 and A/68/332; E/2013/68)

1. **Mr. Clos** (Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)), speaking via video link from Nairobi, introduced the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the outcome of the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of UN-Habitat (A/68/332) and the report on coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda (E/2013/68). He also drew attention to the report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (A/68/8).

2. One of two key resolutions the Governing Council had adopted was resolution 24/15, whereby it had approved the new strategic plan for the period 2014-2019. The plan was, for the first time, fully aligned with the programme budget and organizational structure of UN-Habitat and contained seven focus areas, inter alia urban planning and design, urban basic services and housing and slum upgrading. The other was resolution 24/1, whereby the Governing Council had decided to recommend that, beginning in 2014, 31 October of every year should be designated as World Cities Day.

3. Turning to preparations for Habitat III, he said that he had submitted to the Governing Council a proposal on how best to provide inputs for and support to the preparatory process of the conference together with a draft budget, the outlines of which were contained in paragraphs 24, 25 and 26 of the report (A/68/332).

4. Resolution 24/14 of the Governing Council had requested him to prepare a number of additional documents, including guidelines for the national reports, and to prepare the regional and global reports with the support of the United Nations system as a whole. Accordingly, UN-Habitat had prepared guidelines for the national reports and had established an inter-agency coordinating committee to operationalize the trust fund.

5. Regarding the governance review process, he recalled that an open-ended consultative group on governance review had been established; it had prepared a report setting out four options to reform the governance of UN-Habitat. However, the Governing Council had been unable to reach an agreement.

6. Income projections for the biennium 2012-2013 had remained at \$60.4 million and \$283 million for non-earmarked and earmarked income respectively. As at 30 September, 90 per cent of non-earmarked income and 102 per cent of earmarked income had been received. However, although overhead income had increased in recent years, non-earmarked contributions had decreased.

7. Finally, he urged Member States to make a decision on the recommendation of the Governing Council to designate 31 October of every year as World Cities Day, to give strong support to the Habitat III preparatory process and to step up non-earmarked contributions to UN-Habitat in support of the strategic plan for the period 2014-2019.

8. **Mr. Thomson** (Fiji), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that, given that some 50 per cent of the world's population currently lived in cities, sustainable urban development was one of the most pressing global challenges. Due consideration should therefore be given to sustainable cities in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda.

9. The Group of 77 and China was of the view that a holistic approach to urban development and human settlements was required, providing for affordable housing, social services and infrastructure. Slum upgrading should be prioritized under that approach.

10. The Group was greatly concerned by the increasing number of urban slum dwellers, the negative impact of environmental degradation on human settlements and the increasing vulnerability of urban settlers to natural and man-made disasters. It believed that UN-Habitat should continue to receive support through the regular budget of the United Nations and increased voluntary contributions and it called on international and bilateral donors, including the private sector, to support preparations for the Habitat III conference through generous contributions to the Habitat III trust fund.

11. **Mr. Liverpool** (Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM),

said that small island developing States faced overwhelming challenges related to population growth, the growth of slums, poverty, and lack of access to water and sanitation. In the post-2015 context, environmental responsibilities, social awareness and economic vitality were important to sustainable urbanization. Efforts by UN-Habitat to raise international awareness of the impact of rapid urbanization, including megacities and urban sprawl, were laudable. There should be more emphasis on educating the international community on changes that were needed in consumption patterns and lifestyles, particularly with regard to land use. The promotion of sustainable patterns of consumption and production according to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities was significant to implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

12. Fulfilment of the internationally agreed goals regarding, inter alia, provision of adequate shelter for all and development of sustainable human settlements, required an all-inclusive and integrated approach, supported by policies that were nationally owned and led. Building adequate capacity at the regional level should also be a priority. Development partners were therefore urged to provide UN-Habitat with the financial and technical support it needed in order to carry out its wide-ranging responsibilities. The imbalance in the levels of core and non-core funding was grounds for concern. Moreover, the continued unpredictability of funding created an imbalance between earmarked and non-earmarked contributions, as well as dependence on a small number of donors, which hampered implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

13. **Mr. Tin** (Myanmar), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that, given the rapid pace of urbanization in developing countries it was crucial that the post-2015 development agenda recognize the need to promote cities that were environmentally sustainable, socially inclusive and economically productive. Accordingly, there should be a strong focus on improved access to adequate housing, water, sanitation, domestic energy and public transport. Broader processes, such as enhancing inclusive national urban policies and reducing the increased rate of urban sprawl, must be emphasized.

14. Although significant improvements had already been made in the lives of at least 200 million slum dwellers, more than 860 million people in developing countries remained in slums. Governments and the international community must step up their efforts to

upgrade slums and prevent new ones from coming into existence.

15. Given the importance of participation by all stakeholders in preparations for Habitat III, the ASEAN members welcomed Governing Council resolution 24/14. They also welcomed the choice of “Urban equity in development — cities for life” as the theme for the seventh session of the World Urban Forum.

16. At their recent summit in Brunei Darussalam, ASEAN leaders had called for effective implementation of ASEAN action plans on water resource management and on climate change and had stressed that particular attention should be given to the needs of vulnerable groups.

17. **Mr. Loh Seck Tiong** (Malaysia) welcomed the offer of Ecuador to host Habitat III, noting that the latter should be based on the Habitat Agenda, the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium and the internationally agreed development goals, balancing the three mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development.

18. The Ministry of Housing and Local Government was cooperating with the private sector and non-governmental organizations to implement the Habitat Agenda. Housing programmes were prepared every five years on the basis of needs and relevant data. The aim was to provide 78,000 affordable housing units for the urban and semi-urban low-income groups and 50,000 new or restored homes for the rural poor. In view of the rapid industrialization, the Government had established a corporation in order to construct and maintain affordable housing for middle-income households in key urban centres.

19. Malaysia would continue to cooperate with the various international organizations to achieve the aims of the Habitat Agenda. It had established its own programme, based on Agenda 21, that was designed to build partnerships with the community and private sector in order to promote sustainable development.

20. **Mr. Momen** (Bangladesh) said that, in line with the conclusions reached at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), his Government was working to promote environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive cities. Particular attention would have to be paid to improving access to adequate housing, water, sanitation, energy and public

transport and creating economic opportunities for all, especially youth and women.

21. The fight against poverty must be holistic. Comprehensive urban and rural development could facilitate a sustainable solution to the problems of poverty and exclusion.

22. In developing countries, 33 per cent of the total urban population continued to live in slums. Accordingly, those countries would require both technical and financial assistance in order to deal with that problem.

23. The recent Global Leadership Meeting on Population Dynamics had led to the Dhaka Declaration which contained the following recommendations on urbanization: (i) urban growth should be planned to ensure that urban residents had access to such things as housing, water and essential services; (ii) sustainable and integrated rural and urban development should be promoted and the spread of urban slums contained; and (iii) urban sprawl should be slowed in order to minimize the environmental impact of cities. Moreover, the opportunities provided by higher population density (such as higher energy efficiency in transport and housing) should be seized.

24. **Ms. Amarasinghe** (Sri Lanka) said that her Government was developing a policy framework for moving certain industries into rural areas, thus enabling rural youth to find employment in their own neighbourhoods. In addition, industrial parks had been set up away from the main cities.

25. Her Government had supported the General Assembly's decision to convene a third conference on housing and sustainable urban development and it was in favour of having 31 October designated as World Cities Day.

26. Almost all of the 100,000 houses damaged or destroyed in the tsunami of 2004 had been renovated. In some cases, new houses had been provided to those who had lost their houses in the disaster. In 2013, public discussions had led to the drafting of a new national housing policy. The Government aimed to provide an adequate dwelling with basic amenities for every family in the country.

27. The country depended on its villages, 16,000 of which were being made into self-sufficient settlements with facilities enabling villagers to lead comfortable lives. Sustainable consumption and production were an

integral part of that effort. In that context, the active engagement of women and young people was particularly important. Small-scale agricultural industries, sustainable energy and waste management practices, rural road and irrigation networks and credit facilities through State and private banks for housing and self-employment were among the initiatives being developed in close collaboration with municipalities, the private sector and civil society organizations.

28. By 2015, every family of plantation workers would own a new house with basic amenities. Housing loan programmes had been introduced for low- and middle-income families. Environmentally friendly energy technologies were being encouraged. Work was under way to make cities greener and more attractive.

29. In South Asia, about 30 per cent of the population lived in cities, and over the next 20 years, that figure would double.

30. **Ms. Onishi** (Japan) said that her country had accumulated a wealth of experience on the challenges of urbanization and it hoped to share that experience with others. The city of Kitakyushu, which had once been affected by serious pollution but was now renowned as an environmentally friendly city, had recently hosted an international conference on the future of cities.

31. There were two elements to be taken into account when discussing the topic of urbanization, namely, the importance of empowering women and the importance of disaster risk reduction. The latter would be addressed at a conference on the subject to be held in Japan in 2015.

32. Finally, noting that the preparatory process for Habitat III was under way, she said that her delegation looked forward to contributing to the discussions on the subject of sustainable cities

33. **Mr. Ke Yousheng** (China) said that the urban development challenges around the world called for strong international cooperation. The international community should remain committed to economic development, poverty reduction and bridging the poverty gap with a view to delivering sustainable human settlements for low-income groups. It should respect the sovereignty and laws of Member States and their ability to develop strategies on the basis of their own capabilities and conditions. It should ensure that the development of human settlements was balanced

with environmental protection and it should make specific commitments in respect of capital, technology, human resources and debt reduction in order to support developing countries.

34. His delegation supported the decision to convene Habitat III and it supported the strengthening of UN-Habitat, the strategic plan for the period 2014-2019 and the recommendation that 31 October of every year be designated as World Cities Day.

35. **Mr. Mbodj** (Senegal) said that rapid demographic growth in Africa had led to the development of overcrowded slums, which had brought significant difficulties in access to health, transport and education. Eradicating poverty would require judicious and ecologically friendly urban policies ensuring that public infrastructure and facilities were consistent with the needs of the population. His Government had embarked on a new urban regeneration programme designed to restructure urban centres, modernize rural settlements and improve access to viable land for construction projects. The programme drew on existing institutions and was consistent with the country's strategic framework on housing for the decade 2011-2021.

36. **Ms. Chui** (Singapore) said that while efficiency was important, improving quality of life was essential. Her Government had always focused on the need to ensure liveability in a high-density urban setting, for Singapore was a small city-State of 700 square kilometres, with no rural areas and a population of more than 5 million. Appropriately planned compact cities could constitute one of the most liveable settlement patterns.

37. Singapore's approach to liveability was based on three objectives — a competitive economy, environmental sustainability and high quality of life. They could be achieved through integrated planning and development, on the one hand, and dynamic urban governance on the other. Planning and development was guided by such things as long-term thinking, operational flexibility and systematic innovation.

38. As a strong supporter of sustainable cities and sustainable urbanization her Government called on Member States to focus their efforts on how best to support the preparatory process for Habitat III at all levels.

39. **Mr. Salvador** (Ecuador) reiterated his country's offer to host Habitat III. A holistic focus on sustainable cities would necessarily lead to more thoroughgoing discussion of such topics as poverty, urban exclusion, transport issues and human settlements. The conference would advance a global urban development agenda that stressed the role that cities could play in regulating growth.

40. The urban agenda for the twenty-first century must be updated based on the changes that had occurred over the past 20 years. Urban growth had continued so aspects of the Rio+20 outcome — such as protection or re-establishment of safe, green urban spaces — must be promoted. At the same time, issues of climate change, urban unemployment, disaster risk reduction and the need for decent jobs, potable water and sanitation must all be taken into account.

41. Strengthened regional and national coordination was a clear indication of the increased focus on sustainable development. In Ecuador, a national committee had been working on preparations for Habitat III; recently it had hosted a national urban forum to discuss guidelines for making cities more prosperous, just and sustainable and to share relevant lessons learned.

42. Ecuador paid particular attention to issues of affordable housing, improvement of marginal neighbourhoods, urban farming, access to basic services, mobility and coexistence with nature. It was important to address urban development challenges in ways that achieved results.

43. **Mr. Bezerra** (Brazil) said that, given that some 60 per cent of the world population would be living in cities by 2050, the focus of Habitat III on reinvigorating the global commitment to sustainable cities was welcome. The preparatory process should build on regional experiences, taking special account of the needs of developing countries. It should take full advantage of forthcoming meetings such as the twenty-fifth session of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat and the seventh and eighth sessions of the World Urban Forum.

44. With respect to the UN-Habitat biennial strategic framework for the period 2014-2015 and the strategic plan for 2014-2019, Brazil commended the initiative taken by the Executive Director to reaffirm the importance of urban planning. Governance changes should focus exclusively on actions that would

improve the ability of UN-Habitat to implement its mandate. Slum upgrading and sustainable urbanization should be development priorities.

45. Brazil's urban policies had long been guided by the principles of the social role of property and participatory planning. Thanks to funding from a government programme, more than 1.3 million affordable housing units had been built since 2008. Basic sanitation and slum urbanization initiatives were in place. Enhanced participation of urban residents, including the poor, in decision-making, was crucial to the work of making cities sustainable.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.