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**Twenty-third session**

Nairobi, 11–15 April 2011

Item 5 of the provisional agenda\*

**Activities of the United Nations Human Settlements  
Programme, including coordination matters**

**Activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme**

**Report of the Executive Director**

**Addendum**

**Review of the World Urban Forum: lessons learned**

1. The present report sets out the response by the management of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) to the findings and recommendations of the September 2009 review of the four World Urban Forum sessions that took place between 2002 and 2008. The review focused on identifying lessons learned from the sessions held in Nairobi; Barcelona, Spain; Vancouver, Canada; and Nanjing, China. The review was carried out in response to Governing Council resolution 22/10, on the World Urban Forum, of 3 April 2009. In view of the expanding scale and significance of the Forum and the increasing engagement in it of Habitat Agenda partners, the Governing Council decided that a review of the four sessions of the Forum held since its inception in 2002 should be carried out. The purpose of the review was to provide to UN-Habitat and the Committee of Permanent Representatives forward-looking insights from lessons learned regarding the strengths and weakness of the four sessions with the aim of improving the planning, organization, operational processes and effectiveness of future sessions.

2. The review, which was conducted by an external evaluator, focused on the assessment and identification of lessons learned and provided recommendations related to the following matters, which were specified in paragraph 2 of resolution 22/10:

- (a) Timing of sessions of the Governing Council and of the Forum;
- (b) Mobilization of adequate and predictable resources;
- (c) Consideration of specific provision within the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation budget for activities related to the Forum;
- (d) Scale, inclusiveness and effectiveness of participation;
- (e) Strengthening participant preparations at all levels;

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\* HSP/GC/23/1.

- (f) Results-based-management-compatible evaluation process to ensure that specific objectives of the Forum relate to the UN-Habitat medium-term strategic and institutional plan and the biennial work programme and budget;
- (g) Location assessment, including a cost-benefit analysis;
- (h) Forum budget planning process and financial transparency;
- (i) Timely negotiation of host country agreements;
- (j) Timely submission and distribution of pre-session documents;
- (k) Need to strengthen UN-Habitat internal management processes;
- (l) Cooperation with Habitat Agenda partners.

3. The present report discusses decisions and activities proposed in response to the recommendations of the review. Progress on the implementation of the recommendations is also presented. The recommendations, management response and key activities are reproduced as submitted, without formal editing.

**(a) *Timing of sessions of the Governing Council and of the Forum***

**Recommendation 1:** The ideal period between GC and WUF sessions should be 12 months, allowing a fluctuation by only 2 months. In other words the minimum and maximum period between these sessions should not be less than 10 or more than 14 months. Priorities of the host country should not influence this periodicity.

**Management response: recommendation accepted.** The implementation of the recommendation will allow sufficient preparation for Forum and Council sessions and help to strengthen the linkages and synergies between the two.

**Key activities:** Planning for future Forum sessions will take these timelines into account. UN-Habitat will ensure that the period between sessions of the Council and the Forum will be no less than 10 months and no more than 14 months. A database of potential donors, including the private sector, for specific activities will be developed and requests for sponsorship be coordinated in line with the resource mobilization strategy.

**Status of implementation:** Implementation began with planning for the fifth session of the Forum, held in March 2010. The period between the twenty-second session of the Council, 30 March–3 April 2009, and the fifth session of the Forum, 22–26 March 2010, was about 12 months, allowing adequate time for planning for the fifth session.

**(b) *Mobilization of adequate and predictable resources***

**Recommendation 2:** (i) UN-Habitat should prepare WUF budget plans. The plan should spell out the core activities which are already funded and others which are not. The margin of last minute adjustments within plans should not exceed 20 per cent. Based on this plan, the Secretariat should be more proactive in mobilization of resources through innovative mechanisms of funding, such as sponsorship from the private sector.

**Management response: recommendation accepted.** Experience from the fourth session, for which the host country contribution was far lower than expected, makes this recommendation extremely relevant.

**Key activities:** For future Forum sessions, transparent consolidated budget plans for core activities will be developed from the outset, indicating secured resources and funding gaps. The plans will set out clear objectives and activities in addition to linkages to the medium-term strategic and institutional plan and the UN-Habitat work programme and budget.

**Status of implementation:** The planned budget for the fifth session was consolidated with the contribution from the host country and an allocation from the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation. The preparation of the budget plans for the sixth session is taking this recommendation into account.

**Recommendation 3:** Based on the consolidated plan, linking the WUF and the Work Programme and Budgets, the CPR could advocate for special contributions to core WUF activities where there are funding gaps.

**Management response: recommendation accepted.** Forum activities, such as training workshops, seminars and networking events, have proved to be conducive environments for tapping into donor country funding sources through the Committee of Permanent Representatives. Consolidated Forum workplans and budgets will be useful for demonstrating how Forum objectives and activities are connected to the medium-term strategic and institutional plan and the work programme and can be used for resource mobilization.

**Key activities:** The implementation of this recommendation will begin with the preparation of budget plans for the sixth session. The Committee could seek special contributions using the workplans.

***(c) Consideration of specific provision within the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation budget for activities related to the Forum***

**Recommendation 4:** (i) The Secretariat should prepare a consolidated plan and budget for WUF, identifying core activities linked to expected results that could be considered for Foundation funding. Since the Forum has become an important platform for UN-Habitat's work, it is reasonable to fund it from general purpose contributions. Donors could also contribute special funds for WUF. Programme Support Division should devise a simple budgeting and reporting format which details the costs and budget sources of different components of expenditure to the CPR in a transparent manner to facilitate communication on budgetary issues. UN-Habitat should make an estimation of minimum-maximum range of host country contribution from the onset.

(ii) Depending on which recommendations are implemented, the specific amount of the provision could either be USD 1 million, or USD 1.5 million.

**Management response: recommendation partially accepted, but requires further discussion.** The secretariat will prepare a consolidated budget for Forum sessions. Experience from previous sessions, however, demonstrates that host country contributions are variable and unpredictable.

**Key activities:** A consolidated workplan and budget has been prepared for Forum sessions beginning with the sixth session. The workplan and budget includes core activities to be considered for Foundation funding, as set out in Annex V of the 2012-2013 Work Programme and Budget. The Programme Support Division is to facilitate communication on budgetary issues and devise a simple budgeting and reporting format detailing the costs of components.

UN-Habitat will request an estimate of minimum and maximum contributions from the host country at the outset.

**Status of implementation:** Consolidated workplans and a budget for the Forum's sixth session have been prepared.

***(d) Scale, inclusiveness and effectiveness of participation***

**Recommendation 5:** The tradition of using E-Forums prior to WUF sessions should be promoted. The Secretariat or the multi-partner Steering Committee should also consider a smaller scale E-Forum in order to enable access to current human settlements issues on the ground, to be used for the selection of themes and speakers

**Management response: recommendation accepted.** *Forum sessions are becoming key urban development platforms for deliberations and discussions on the most pressing issues related to urbanization. The traditional pre-session e-forum, known as the "Habitat Jam", has broadened and strengthened the scale, inclusiveness and effectiveness of participation in the Forum without necessitating travel to Forum sessions.*

**Key activities:** Implementation began with the fifth session.

**Status of implementation:** Electronic debates on the theme of the Forum were undertaken prior to the fifth session. Dialogue coordinators prepared summary reports that were used at the dialogue sessions and some elements of the e-debates were integrated into the background documents for the session.

**Recommendation 6:** WUF organizers should improve the quality of sessions by: i) maintaining a balance between the new and familiar themes: 50 percent of themes should be new and 50 percent familiar; ii) using substantive considerations as a prime criteria for the selection of key note speakers, allowing for a reasonable margin of political considerations; iii) holding moderators responsible to conduct lively sessions, adhering strictly to time limitations; (The Secretariat should develop terms of reference for moderators); and iv) the increased use of visual and artistic media – exhibitions, films, and drama.

**Management response: recommendation accepted.** The participants' overall impression of dialogues was that they were dominated by politicians and dignitaries, sometimes overshadowing the importance of the themes. In addition, there was some participant fatigue related to repetitiveness in discussions. Such situations do not make for stimulating learning environments. Fresh approaches were introduced at the fifth session in the light of the review's findings.

**Key activities:** (i) The themes for the fifth session were balanced in terms of new and more familiar themes; (ii) Criteria were developed for the selection of speakers and panelists; (iii) Clear terms of reference were developed for the dialogue moderators at the fifth session to ensure that they were accountable for the dialogues that they were moderating; (iv) Quality assurance guidelines were developed for the dialogues.

**Status of implementation:** The implementation of this recommendation began with the fifth session and is continuing with the sixth.

**Recommendation 7:** The Governments of Spanish and Arabic speaking countries as well as the Francophone countries could consider following the example of Russia and China by sponsoring the interpretation

**Management response: recommendation accepted.** It is acknowledged that the lack of interpretation at Forum sessions poses a major constraint to effective participation and causes exclusion. This is a common problem at international meetings. A pragmatic solution would be the sponsorship of interpretation costs by member States.

**Key activities:** Contact has been made with member States and groupings of countries, especially those that are French-speaking or Spanish-speaking, to solicit support for interpretation at the sixth session.

**Status of implementation:** The Secretariat is awaiting responses from member States.

***(e) Strengthening participant preparations at all levels***

**Recommendation 8:** National Urban Forums should be promoted by the UN-Habitat. The establishment of the Regional Urban Forums should be facilitated and supported by the Regional and Technical Cooperation Division in order to support the national initiatives to set up and operate the Forums.

**Management response: recommendation accepted.** At least 14 national urban forums were reported to be active at the end of 2009. This number had reached 20 by the end of 2010 in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia as a result of previous Forum sessions. As part of the normative work of UN-Habitat, national urban forums are considered to be important platforms for promoting sustainable urbanization and the World Urban Campaign.

**Key activities:** Through the regional offices, UN-Habitat and Habitat programme managers will commit themselves to supporting and encouraging the establishment of national urban forums, especially in developing countries where none have yet been established.

**Status of implementation:** Funding of \$500,000 was allocated for this matter during the biennium 2010–2011 and is being used to support some 15 countries in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia. Ministerial organs, such as the African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development, the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development and the Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-level Authorities of Housing and Urbanization in Latin America and the Caribbean, continue to serve as regional forums.

***(f) Results-based-management-compatible evaluation process to ensure that specific objectives of the Forum relate to the UN-Habitat medium-term strategic and institutional plan and to the biennial work programme and budget***

**Recommendation 9:** Plan future WUF sessions using an RBM model: (a) The role of the Secretariat in WUF should be defined and its borders of influence clearly drawn. (b) The expected results and success criteria should be clearly articulated using a RBM evaluation model, taking into account the MTSIP results-framework and the work programme and budget. (c) Evaluability assessments of WUF plans should be carried out to ensure that WUF sessions can be monitored and evaluated effectively. The existing set of monitoring instruments need to be coupled with additional tools as necessary in order to evaluate the results over which UN-Habitat has influence

(d) The concept of “results-based-management” should be put into practice, by developing an integrated monitoring and evaluation plan for the Secretariat’s programmes, ensuring that 3 percent of the WUF budget is allocated for monitoring and evaluation

(e) As the subsidiary body of the Governing Council the CPR should ensure that; Linkages between the WUF and MTSIP are well articulated in plans and that the results of WUF interventions are evaluated.

**Management response: recommendation accepted.** Future Forum sessions will be planned, monitored and evaluated using the results-based management model. The secretariat’s role in terms of expected accomplishments, indicators of achievement and areas of accountability will be clearly defined. The evaluation possibilities for Forum plans will be considered to ensure that monitoring and evaluation of sessions are possible.

**Key activities:** The implementation of this recommendation began at the fifth session using the results-based management model. The participants’ satisfaction survey tool will be revised to include information on selected performance indicators on the role of UN-Habitat. Tools will be developed for assessing the quality and impact of the organization’s contribution to Forum sessions. Monitoring and evaluation will be a core activity in the session plans. For the sixth session estimates should be included in the consolidated budget for core activities, including monitoring and evaluation.

**Status of implementation:** An evaluation of the fifth session was carried out using the results-based-management model and the evaluation recommendations are being implemented and lessons learned integrated into planning for the sixth session. Evaluation of sessions has been incorporated into the biennial workplans.

***(g) Location assessment, including a cost-benefit analysis***

**Recommendation 10:** The host country selection criteria should include the cost-effectiveness of location with regard to accommodation, daily subsistence allowance and travel and flexibility of conference facilities. Cost benefit analysis should also take into account the share of staff travel costs. The number of staff traveling for sessions should be directly linked to their accountability to specific WUF results. The political criteria also need to be considered in the selection of location. The governance mode of the host country/city should allow for the participation of all types of Habitat Agenda partners. The administrative mode of the host country should be conducive to fast decision making both during the negotiation process and during the sessions

**Management response: recommendation partially accepted.** The proposed approach and criteria will be used to guide the selection of host countries, beginning with the sixth session It should be recognized, however, that this is a delicate political process.

**Key activities:** Location affects the overall costs of WUF due to varying airline fares, daily subsistence allowance etc. A location assessment will be undertaken, including a cost-benefit analysis, for the sixth session.

**Status of implementation:** The criteria will be fully applicable only when several countries offer to host a Forum session.

**(h) *Timely negotiation of host country agreements***

**Recommendation 11:** The WUFs should be subjected to a hybrid form of an open-bidding-system, where the criteria of applying, and the conditions expected of the country/city are well articulated; the bidding is called “hybrid”, because being a UN conference, there will always be a need to consider the geographical and political dimensions, such as regional rotation. In order to synthesize geographical and functional considerations, the bidding for a certain WUF could be confined to a certain continent, rather than be open to all countries.

**Management response: recommendation accepted.** Forum sessions have evolved into large events that are complicated and costly to organize. Capitalizing on demand for sessions, UN-Habitat will modify its approach to the selection of the host country and the necessary host country agreement negotiation processes.

**Key activities:** The implementation of this recommendation will be incremental in line with the evolution of the Forum as a complex global event.

**Status of implementation:** Negotiations with Brazil, as the host country for the fifth session, were timely and contributed to the session’s success.

Communication in the lead-up to the fifth session was smooth in comparison to preparations for the fourth session, which required multiple layers of consultations for decision-making. Lessons learned from previous sessions are being taken into consideration in preparations for the sixth session.

**Recommendation 12:** The host-country negotiations should follow an institutional blue print with set criteria and the mapping of roles and responsibilities.

**Management response: recommendation accepted.** Negotiating parties should use the guidelines to be developed.

**Key activities:** The implementation of the recommendation began with the fifth session.

**Status of implementation:** The recommendation has been partially implemented. Detailed guidelines for negotiations will be developed for and applied to the sixth session. The preparation of a Forum manual is in progress.

**(i) *Timely submission and distribution of pre-session documents***

**Recommendation 13:** The evaluation suggests that in accordance with the practices of the UN Conferences, the pre-session documents should be submitted 6 weeks before the event.

**Management response: recommendation accepted.** This recommendation is in line with the continuing initiatives related to excellence in management and organizational effectiveness. There is room for improvement in the timely submission of pre-session documents.

**Key activities:** Pre-session documents are aimed at two target audiences: the Committee of Permanent Representatives and the general public. Efforts will be made to ensure that documents are submitted within the agreed time frame in accordance with the related indicator of achievement and performance measures.

**(j) *Need to strengthen UN-Habitat internal management process***

**Recommendation 14:** The WUF team within the Secretariat needs to be strengthened. The GC and the WUF could be managed by different leaders, under the same Branch. An additional full time professional staff needs to be deployed, preferably proficient in both handling complex operations, as well as, authoritative in the field of human settlements programme. Through such a team, the missing link between the operational and substantive sections preparing for the WUF, and perceptions of exclusion could be overcome.

**Management response: recommendation partially accepted.** A WUF coordination unit was established to strengthen the Governing Council secretariat. There is no need to create two reporting lines. The WUF team needs to be strengthened. The level of professional staff will be established taking into account Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation funding resources. With WUF 5, coordination between the operational and substantive divisions improved.

**Key activities:** Executive Director to define clear roles and responsibilities and reporting lines. The roles should be clear on who takes responsibility for planning, coordination, negotiations, protocol matters and event management. The relative priority of the additional staff recommended for the WUF team will be reviewed and decided as part of the preparation of the 2012-2013 Work Programme and Budget.

**Status of implementation:** Implementation was delayed as a result of a change in the leadership of UN-Habitat. This recommendation will be reconsidered as part of the institutional assessment and restructuring of UN-Habitat recently initiated by the new Executive Director. An executive decision on the strengthening of Forum coordination mechanisms will be made as part of the continuing organizational restructuring.

**Recommendation 15:** Consider establishing a multi-partner Steering Committee, representing the host country/city (four representatives), the Secretariat (one representative), NGO (one representative), professional/academic, (one representative), and UCLG (one representative). Roles and responsibilities of each party would need to be defined. The role of this committee would need to go beyond the organization of the event to raise the performance bar, from the substance point of view.

**Management response: recommendation accepted.** In principle, it was decided that a steering committee representing various stakeholders would be established, beginning with the sixth session. The committee's role should go beyond the planning and organization of sessions to improving the Forum.

**Key activities:** The Secretariat to transform the existing Advisory Board into a multi-partner steering committee in which all Habitat Agenda partner groups will be represented, as recommended by the review. It is suggested that the steering committee also include representatives of the CPR.

**Status of implementation:** Representatives in the multi-partner steering committee for the seventh session will be selected at the sixth session through the partners' platform in which all Habitat Agenda partner groups are represented.

**Recommendation 16:** In view of the growing complexity of the Sessions and increasing number of staff engaged in preparations, a virtual follow up system should be developed. The main components of this system should include a *WUF Newsletter* that highlights major decisions taken during missions, and meetings, as well as the substantive arguments regarding the themes, and speakers. Division directors need to be more visible in the preparatory process and the MTSIP Steering Committee should also ensure that the WUF plans are linked to the MTSIP and the work programme.

**Management response: recommendation accepted.** Implementation began with the fifth session.

**Key activities:** Division directors to be more involved in the preparation processes. The Programme Review Committee will approve the Forum session plans as aligned with the medium-term strategic and institutional plan and work programme. The medium-term strategic and institutional plan steering committee, as the overall entity responsible for ensuring programme alignment, will review the Forum session plans. WUF Newsletter to be established to communicate major decisions taken during missions and planning meetings. Staff specific roles to be defined in early stages of planning for WUF6.

**Status of implementation:** A Forum newsletter was first published before the fifth session. It keeps staff informed of the plans and preparations for sessions. UN-Habitat web pages ensure regular communication and progress updates on preparations for sessions. Division directors are increasingly involved in preparations for the sessions.



**(k) Cooperation with Habitat Agenda partners**

**Recommendation 17:** More energy should be devoted to engage the UN in the WUF. This could be possible through special efforts geared towards involving them more in the organization of events. As part of its routine programme, the Secretariat should have a close look in the UN's programmes that cater to the urban poor, and build long-term partnerships. As a platform for advocating urban development-related issues, the UN's effective participation in WUF sessions could be used for enhancing UN-Habitat's long-term partnership with the rest of the UN.

**Management response: recommendation accepted.** WUF is a UN event. Initiatives that aim to strengthen the engagement and participation of other United Nations agencies will be planned for all future Forum sessions.

**Key activities:** Beginning with the fifth session, divisions are responsible for identifying and implementing relevant Forum activities and events in collaboration with other United Nations agencies. A special event on South-South cooperation will be organized at WUF 6, in collaboration with the UNDP Bureau of South-South Cooperation. Other partners, such as the ILO and WB, who have participated in previous sessions will be engaged. A side event on Delivering as One UN will take place at WUF 6. These activities and events will be incorporated into the plans for Forum sessions.

**Status of implementation:** UN-Habitat focal points for other United Nations agencies have made considerable efforts to engage United Nations entities, especially whose activities cater for the urban poor. Nevertheless, the engagement of United Nations agencies at Forum sessions could be improved.

**(l) Preliminary outcomes from the World Urban Forum**

**Recommendation 18:** The Secretariat should build a system of WUF-To WUF follow-up on policy debate. It should summarize and track key arguments, actions and recommendations, documenting what accomplishments were achieved and identify gaps.

**Management response: recommendation accepted.** UN-Habitat will take steps to improve its results-based evaluation and follow-up process. Substantive aspects as well as results achieved will be documented

**Key activities:** Evaluating and planning outcomes, both during and after sessions, began at the fifth session. Results-based planning, monitoring and evaluation will be incorporated into the sixth session, both in terms of preparations for and during the session. Tracking of policy debates also began at the fifth session.

**Status of implementation:** Implementation is in progress, with the evaluation of the fifth session the starting point. Some outcomes of the fifth session were documented and a framework for assessing key policy debate issues was tested.