



**Twenty-third session**  
Nairobi, 11–15 April 2011

## **Draft proceedings of the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme at its twenty-third session**

### **I. Organization of the session (agenda items 1–4)**

#### **A. Opening of the session**

1. The twenty-third session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) was opened at 10.30 a.m. on Monday, 11 April 2011, by Mr. Clifford Everald Warmington (Jamaica), President of the Governing Council.
2. The formal opening of the session was preceded by a welcoming musical performance by young people mostly from Nairobi's Korogocho informal settlement.
3. Opening statements were made by Mr. Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi; Ms. Inga Björk-Klevby, Deputy Executive Director of UN-Habitat, on behalf of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon; Mr. Joan Clos, Executive Director of UN-Habitat; and Mr. Mwai Kibaki, President of Kenya. The text of the Secretary-General's message is reproduced in annex [ ] to the present report.
4. In his statement, Mr. Steiner expressed gratitude to the Government of Kenya for its support for the work of UN-Habitat and UNEP and confidence that UN-Habitat would over the coming years play an increasingly important role in sustainable development. UN-Habitat, he recalled, was the only intergovernmental institution concerned primarily with human settlements and, by association, the joined values of the home and the economy. The opportunities to understand better the dynamics of urban areas were manifold, but so were the tragedies in the cities where over half of humanity lived. Serious deficiencies still existed with regard to disaster management, employment, sustainable livelihoods, the green economy and the very right to life as recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
5. UN-Habitat supported, executed and led major programmes in the world's urban settlements, but the United Nations family and the world needed to organize better to support the vision of UN-Habitat and meet the needs of the world's cities. Many projects, such as Nairobi's Ghetto Classics project, and those jointly organized by UN-Habitat and UNEP demonstrated what was possible. The role of the United Nations, he said, was not to dictate, but to show how the international community could align support so that those on the front lines in cities could shape their own futures.
6. As one of its key partners, UN-Habitat worked with UNEP on many issues and at various levels, including the green economy and climate change, where the two programmes strove to mobilize private sector and other support to tackle problems such as urban emissions, infrastructure, energy, transport and human mobility. Continuing to strengthen the partnership with UN-Habitat was a top priority for UNEP, and visible transformative differences over the coming few years would aim at the effective common delivery of results. UN-Habitat and UNEP, he pledged, could deliver as one. UNEP would follow the debate at the current session with keen interest, he said, urging the representatives to view the future of cities through the lens of the human environment and to take very

seriously the transition towards a green economy and sustainable livelihoods. He closed by observing that, while theory kept people busy, it was practice by which people would be measured and judged.

7. Prior to the delivery of the statement by the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, a video was screened on the work of UN-Habitat in Haiti as part of the organization's contribution to the lives of the people of Haiti after the earthquake that had afflicted that country in 2010.

8. In his statement the Executive Director welcomed the representatives to Nairobi. He acknowledged the continuing strong presence and support of UNEP and its Executive Director, observing that the two programmes had strong programmatic and coordination links and common interests in the natural environment, the built environment and indeed most challenges facing humanity. He pointed out that the current session would take place at a time of significant urban challenges that would be perilous to ignore. Those challenges could be grouped in four sets: demographic; environmental; social and economic; and the evolving form of cities.

9. The demographic challenge was one of movement that was increasing the populations of cities in the developing world: both within and between countries rural-urban migration was increasing, particularly by young people seeking jobs. The environmental challenge could be seen in the increasingly urban nature of environmental degradation: the volume of human-induced greenhouse gases attributable to consumption in urban areas, particularly in the developed world, could be up to 70 per cent, using both production-based and consumption-based methods of measurement; further, as at 2010, most victims of natural disasters were urban-dwellers. The social and economic challenges included a lack of decent jobs for a high percentage of growing urban populations, a problem attributable in part to the worrying trend in developing countries of urban migration without industrialization. Only a few emerging economies, such as those of Brazil, China and India had begun to provide jobs for their growing urban populations by increasing industrialization. In many other countries, 60–65 per cent of the populations lived in city slums without decent jobs. Developed countries also had their challenges, with growing income and wealth disparities between societal layers. A major planning challenge was one of urban sprawl and burgeoning congestion. Cities were being allowed to spread uncontrollably outwards and were consequently losing the ability to create wealth through economies of scale and agglomeration: sprawling cities laced with congested roads increased transaction costs and diminished efficiency, choking opportunities for new jobs and prosperity for young people.

10. Such challenges notwithstanding, there were messages of hope. Evidence could be seen in many cities where issues were being confronted with best practices that could be adapted to other cities. Perennial pessimism about cities had inspired inaction and a positive approach was needed, emphasizing what cities had always been: places of prosperity, culture, intellectual pursuit, freedom and individual development. He therefore called for a back-to-basics approach grounded on fundamental urban planning principles. The approach did not have to be complex: basic urban planning began with streets and everything else followed. The current urban sprawl could be reversed through increasing density, with dignity, to regain an efficient ebb and flow of city life. Prosperity and quality of life would follow.

11. The city did have a future, he said. While it once had been thought that investing in the countryside could keep people there it was eventually recognized that it was not cost-effective to bring basic services to all rural areas. By the time of the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, in 1996, there was no alternative to cities. In the twenty-first century, however, the cities were full of slums and there was a need to think again. He therefore requested the representatives to consider a third United Nations conference on housing and sustainable development that would change the mood from pessimism to optimism, and to imagine prosperity, freedom and equality, and cities that could be the source of all three.

12. In his statement Mr. Kibaki observed that when rapid urbanization was a major challenge in most of the world, it was fitting that the Council's deliberations would be guided by the theme of sustainable urban development through equitable access to land, services and infrastructure. Currently, more than half of the world's population lived in urban areas and by 2050 the figure would increase to 70 per cent, increasing each year by 70 million people, the equivalent of seven mega-cities. One third of the current urban population – more than 1 billion people – lived in informal settlements, where they suffered from a lack of access to land, services and infrastructure. Rapid urbanization was causing the growth of informal settlements and therefore constituted a monumental problem and challenge.

13. He challenged the representatives to use the current session to share country-specific experiences and to draw up creative programmes to tackle the problems. Looking at the experience of Kenya, he drew attention to the problems of transportation, pollution, employment and informal settlements, while suggesting that the implementation of the new Constitution would deal with such

issues. It provided for fundamental rights to housing, water, sanitation and a clean environment; and a national land commission had been established to uphold such principles. The Government, in collaboration with UN-Habitat, would continue to implement the Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme to improve the conditions of the people living and working in informal settlements. The Government had also initiated a number of housing incentives to encourage private-sector investment and improvements for low-income groups and was creating enabling legal frameworks. Noting that urbanization could not be dealt with by any one actor alone and that partnerships were therefore essential, he concluded by declaring the twenty-third session of the Governing Council officially open.

## **B. Attendance**

14. The following States members of the Governing Council were represented: *[to be completed]*.
15. The following States not members of the Governing Council participated as observers: *[to be completed]*.
16. The following United Nations bodies were represented: *[to be completed]*.
17. The following United Nations specialized agencies were represented: *[to be completed]*
18. Representatives of national and regional assemblies and parliaments, local authorities and national, regional and international associations of local authorities attended the meeting, as did representatives of non-governmental and private sector organizations.
19. A full list of those attending the session may be found in the final list of participants, which is available under the symbol [ ].

## **C. Election of officers**

20. At the 1st plenary meeting, on Monday, 11 April 2011, Mr. Vincent Karega (Rwanda) was elected President of the Governing Council at its twenty-third session.
21. The following other officers were also elected for the session:
 

Vice-Presidents:	Mr. Konrad Paulsen (Chile)
	Mr. Liu Guangyuan (China)
	Mr. Sergey Trepelkov (Russian Federation)
Rapporteur:	Ms. Heli Serve (Finland)

## **D. Credentials**

22. *[To be completed]*

## **E. Adoption of the agenda**

23. At its 1st plenary meeting, the Governing Council had before it documents HSP/GC/23/1 and Add.1. The Governing Council adopted the provisional agenda for the twenty-third session as contained in document HSP/GC/23/1, as follows:

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Election of officers.
3. Credentials.
4. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
5. Activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, including coordination matters.
6. Dialogue on the special theme for the twenty-third session of the Governing Council.
7. Work programme of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and budget of the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation for the biennium 2012–2013.
8. Provisional agenda and other arrangements for the twenty-fourth session of the Governing Council.
9. Other matters.
10. Adoption of the report of the session.
11. Closure of the session.

## **F. Organization of work**

24. At its 1st plenary meeting, the Governing Council established a sessional committee of the whole, to which it allocated agenda items 5, 7 and 8, with issues arising from those and other items to be given preliminary consideration in general debate at the plenary meetings of the Council.

25. The preliminary work of the plenary meetings was divided into two segments; first, a high-level segment, with interventions primarily by ministers and other heads of delegations, which would be held on the first and second days; and, second, a dialogue of Governments with local authorities and other Habitat Agenda partners on the special theme of the meeting, to be held on the third day.

26. The Governing Council also established a drafting committee to consider the draft resolutions submitted to the Governing Council.

27. In considering the agenda items, representatives had before them the documents listed for each item in the annotations to the agenda for the session (HSP/GC/23/1/Add.1). A list of those documents arranged by document symbol was issued in document HSP/GC/23/INF/1.

## **G. Policy statement by the Executive Director**

28. Welcoming the representatives, the Executive Director provided an overview of current urban and human settlements challenges. He stressed the importance of changing the approach to those challenges by turning from the current path and deliberately choosing a new one rather than allowing a spontaneous reaction to evolve. Simple and workable approaches to urbanization existed, including a multitude of good examples and best practices that responded to demographic challenges and social and economic inequities and could be replicated around the world. Cities, he said, should be seen as assets rather than liabilities, providing opportunities for growth and increased national wealth. To solve current urban problems, a paradigm shift was required, accompanied by a change in attitude to one of optimism and positive daring.

29. The international community, he said, could not accept the current high proportion of urban-dwellers living in slums in developing countries nor the very high unemployment rates among them. Urban areas in developed countries were also beset by problems, as they were responsible for most greenhouse-gas emissions globally and were places of increasing inequality, low-salaried employment and conflict. It was important for developed countries to recognize that the Earth could not sustain humankind's current energy consumption rates, especially with regard to energy derived from fossil fuels. A new global consensus on the urban future was required, and developed and developing countries had to join together to rethink the future of cities.

30. He called for a return to basics, revisiting the principles of urbanization and learning from the past. A return to basics represented a sound methodology and a good technical choice, and provided a convenient political path to ensure the evolution of more democratic and participatory cities that were able to embrace development and produce economic, social and political results. The transformation of cities would be complex, however, and was likely to distance people from their leaders. It was therefore crucial for the public to understand the work of politicians in relation to urban development.

31. His vision for a new approach to urbanization comprised three basic strategies. The first required the revival of urban planning, which had been out of fashion for several decades, having been rejected as complex, expensive and extremely difficult to accomplish. The starting point for urban planning should be the simplest step, namely, the planning of streets. Streets represented a common space that involved the community in the management of a common good. They immediately increased the value of land and the ensuing infrastructure development increased land values further in a revolving process of value generation that provided the resources to finance the extension of urban areas. The second strategy was to create urban institutions underpinned by legislation on critical urban issues. Cities could not evolve into prosperity-generating urban spaces without a minimum set of basic institutions that people could understand and to whose regulations they could adhere. The third strategy was to prioritize job creation by urban stakeholders, including mayors, governors and other decision makers. Current unemployment levels were symptomatic of the failure of urban development and management.

32. Turning to the work of UN-Habitat, he said that the organization would focus on basic urban planning and legislation, municipal finance, economic development and job creation. Its mandate was to focus its work through the results-based medium-term strategic and institutional plan. Its management structure and governance were being reviewed against the backdrop of the resource limitations that were affecting its work. Some 65 per cent of its budget was currently devoted to field projects at the national level, and budgetary allocations for such projects were increasing, allowing

more to be undertaken. The remaining portion of the budget was devoted to policy and normative work, for which resources were lacking. On the normative side, steps were being taken to increase flexibility and adaptability to the new requirements of the world's urban process; the challenge was to bring about change in the context of decreasing resources. In the light of the diminishing funding within the United Nations system it was important to be pragmatic and efficient, ensuring the optimal use of available resources in the delivery of goods and services. To that end, rules and norms were being reviewed to decrease bureaucracy and delays. He expressed his utmost trust in UN-Habitat staff, noting that a 10 per cent decrease in posts over the previous five months had made a significant contribution to rebalancing the budget. It was, however, crucial to generate new thinking and innovative approaches to challenges. To that end, three working groups had been established, on new urban planning, on urban legislation and on economic development and job creation.

33. He drew attention to a number of issues and decisions to be considered by the Governing Council, including on the third United Nations conference on housing and sustainable urban development, review of the governance of UN-Habitat, the special theme for the twenty-third session of the Governing Council, the work programme and budget for 2012–2013 and experimental reimbursable seeding operations, before turning to global and national strategies and frameworks for future work on slum upgrading. He said that the lessons of the past 20 years had made clear that the participatory involvement of affected populations was key, as were the introduction of basic water and sanitation services and the provision of streets. Proven ways to improve slums did exist, but they required the cooperative participation of the affected populations and the development in phases of urban infrastructure. It was important to identify the needs of slum-dwellers by listening to them and then to elaborate policies to support them. In closing, he underscored the need to plan the future of cities to ensure wealth, equality and freedom for all.

#### **H. Work of the Committee of the Whole**

34. *[To be completed]*

#### **I. Work of the drafting committee and adoption of resolutions**

35. *[To be completed]*

#### **II. High-level segment and dialogue on the special theme for the twenty-third session of the Governing Council (agenda items 5–7)**

36. *[To be completed]*

#### **III. Provisional agenda and other arrangements for the twenty-fourth session of the Governing Council (agenda item 8)**

37. *[To be completed]*

#### **IV. Other matters (agenda item 9)**

38. *[To be completed]*

#### **V. Adoption of the report of the session (agenda item 10)**

39. *[To be completed]*

#### **VI. Closure of the session (agenda item 11)**

40. *[To be completed]*

## Annex [ ]

### Message by the Secretary-General

It is a pleasure to send greetings to UN-Habitat's Governing Council. Thank you for your commitment to our shared pursuit of cities that are beautiful, green, sustainable and humane places to live and work. As our world becomes more and more urbanized, imagining the cities of the future is imagining the very future of humanity.

The urban era we are entering has many unknowns, chief among them the growing dangers associated with climate change. Moreover, what we know already is just as daunting. Since the articulation of the Millennium Development Goals more than a decade ago, 55 million new slum dwellers have been added to the global population. Most global population growth is expected to take place in the urban areas of the developing world. And everywhere, we can expect a huge demand for more land, housing, basic services and infrastructure.

We have the science and technology to build smarter cities and cope with the challenges of urban expansion. We know what policies would strengthen urban good governance and improve the way cities handle such key issues as housing, land use, equitable access to land, inheritance and shelter rights, sanitation and energy efficiency.

Our collective challenge is to stimulate sustainable urban development and the transition towards a green economy. Your deliberations are also an important opportunity to ensure that the urban development agenda is fully reflected at next year's United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development – Rio+20.

Cities, as they have for centuries, play a central role in the advancement of human progress. Let us ensure that all their citizens enjoy the well-being they need to continue making those unique and invaluable contributions. Please accept my best wishes for a successful session.

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