



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 (*continued*)**

- I. Organization of the session (agenda items 1–4) (*continued*)**
- D. Credentials**
1. [*To be completed*]
- H. Work of the Committee of the Whole**
2. [*To be completed*]
- I. Work of the drafting committee and adoption of resolutions**
3. [*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)**
4. The Governing Council took up agenda items 5–7 at its 1st plenary meeting, at which time it began the high-level general debate *on* those items. The general debate continued at its 2nd, 3rd and 4th meetings, on Monday and Tuesday, 11 and 12 April. A summary of the general debate by the President of the Governing Council is set forth in annex [] to the present proceedings.
5. [*To be completed*]
- III. Provisional agenda and other arrangements for the twenty-fourth
session of the Governing Council (agenda item 8)**
6. [*To be completed*]
- IV. Other matters (agenda item 9)**
7. [*To be completed*]
- V. Adoption of the report of the session (agenda item 10)**
8. [*To be completed*]
- VI. Closure of the session (agenda item 11)**
9. [*To be completed*]

Annex []**Summaries by the President of the Governing Council of the general debate on agenda items 5–7 and of the dialogue on the special theme of the twenty-third session****I. High-level debate on agenda items 5–7**

1. The Governing Council took up agenda items 5–7 at its 1st plenary meeting, on Monday, 11 April 2011, which took the form of a high-level general debate on those agenda items. The general debate continued at the Council's 2nd, 3rd and 4th plenary meetings, on Monday and Tuesday, 11 and 12 April 2011.

2. Many representatives took as their starting point what they said was the basic theme underlying any debate on human settlement – the fundamental human right to adequate housing and shelter and to dignified living conditions. Several representatives presented their views on the desirable components of the city of the future, including security of tenure, use of renewable energy resources, peaceful coexistence, habitable dwellings and adequate infrastructure, including provision of clean water, sanitation and access to urban services. Several representatives stressed the important positive role that urban centres played in the economic, social and cultural life of countries and regions.

3. The challenges to that vision were recognized by many who spoke. Towns and cities were under relentless pressure from demographic, economic and social changes including rural-urban migration, increases in the proportion of young people (youth bulge), ageing populations in developed countries, increasing strain on services and infrastructure, urban sprawl, expanding slums, rising food prices and growing social unrest and conflict. Processes aimed at developing solutions, including decentralized governance, brought additional challenges.

4. In the light of recent events, several representatives drew attention to the physical threats facing cities and their inhabitants. Examples included the continuing threat of climate change, the devastating floods in Pakistan, and the earthquake and tsunami and subsequent damage to nuclear power facilities in Japan. The representatives of Japan and Pakistan expressed their gratitude for the offers of assistance that had been extended to their countries from around the world, reflecting the importance of international solidarity in dealing with such challenges. A number of representatives spoke of the need to strengthen the resilience of cities and their capacity to respond to the multiple threats associated with extreme weather conditions that they increasingly faced.

5. Many representatives placed those challenges within the broader political context. Several mentioned the continuing relevance of many facets of human settlements to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, especially Goal 7 on ensuring environmental sustainability and its target to achieve significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum-dwellers by 2020. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, praised the notable achievements that had been made in that regard, adding that many municipal and local governments had proven to be important actors in dealing with various development-related targets, although the High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals, which had taken place in New York from 20 to 22 September 2010, had shown that some regions were lagging behind on several of the targets.

6. A number of representatives mentioned the relevance of sustainable urban development to the three pillars of sustainable development – economic development, social development, and environmental protection. One representative said that that linkage should be pursued in an equitable manner, applying the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, with due regard for the economic, social and environmental needs of individual countries. Some representatives said that improved urban planning could contribute to the green economy, for example through promoting resource efficiency; others, however, cautioned that the concept of the green economy still required further clarification and development, particularly with regard to equity and poverty reduction.

7. Given that context, many representatives noted the timeliness and aptness of the central theme of the current session of the Governing Council – sustainable urban development through expanding equitable access to land, housing, basic services and infrastructure – and welcomed the opportunity to bring those issues to the fore. One representative said that unpredictable and dynamic realities required an adaptive and flexible approach in pursuing such an ambitious agenda.

8. There was broad-ranging debate on the means by which the aims captured by the theme might be achieved. Many representatives stressed the need for multisectoral, multi-stakeholder cooperation

and action to deal with the complexity of the challenges faced in urban environments. One noted that the international debate had evolved from a desire to contain urbanization to a desire to prepare for it. Representatives mentioned a number of actions that were required in specific areas to improve the liveability of urban areas, including energy-efficient transport systems and buildings, improved solid waste management, adequate sanitation, clean water and infrastructure development.

9. Several representatives underscored the need to ensure inclusiveness in developing solutions to urban problems, giving due regard to the needs of groups that were often marginalized, including women, young people, the elderly, the physically challenged and the poor, and putting in place systems of participation that enabled the voices of all stakeholders to be heard.

10. A constant theme of the debate was the huge challenge of financing sustainable urban development within the overall policy structure of a country. A number of representatives discussed the complementary roles that could be played by the public and private sectors in providing housing, particularly for low-income groups, and the extent to which subsidies or provision of credit facilities could assist in that regard. One representative cautioned that an international policy environment centred on market-based solutions to housing development and loans for urban infrastructure held the danger of undermining the rural economy and endangering provision of affordable housing.

11. Many representatives described the programmes being undertaken in their own countries to improve the urban environment, increase the liveability of towns and cities and provide housing for growing urban populations. There was widespread acknowledgement of the need to adopt an integrated approach, employing the skills and resources of a network of governmental, non-governmental and private-sector actors. Priority activities included slum upgrading, provision of housing for poor populations, construction of public utilities and providing access to basic services. Several noted the importance of developing a supportive policy, legislative and regulatory framework, particularly with regard to land tenure and rights, and outlined actions that had been undertaken in their countries in that regard. Several of those policy structures included provision for decentralization and increased engagement of local authorities. The importance of developing innovative funding mechanisms appropriate to the economic and social needs of each country was also highlighted by several speakers. A number of representatives described financial mechanisms that they had put in place to assist in the provision of affordable housing, including the establishment of national housing funds. In addition, a number of countries were placing increasing emphasis on data gathering, monitoring and analysis as a means of informing housing policy.

12. In addition, several representatives described and welcomed initiatives at the regional level, including 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. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, called upon UN-Habitat to work closely with, and provide necessary support to, relevant regional bodies. Several representatives noted that regions differed considerably in their urban characteristics – in Asia and the Pacific, for example, rapid urbanization had gone hand in hand with high levels of economic growth – and regional approaches were beneficial in devising shared solutions to the problems faced. Reflecting the importance of international cooperation, one representative described the activities of United Cities and Local Governments in promoting improved governance as a means of achieving common goals in sustainable urban development. Some representatives mentioned the need for greater South-South cooperation, including in dissemination of best practices. Several saw promise in extending the relatively new concept of triangular cooperation, with UN-Habitat playing a key role.

13. Considerable attention was paid during the debate to the role of UN-Habitat. Many representatives praised the programme for its efforts to deal with the challenges facing urban settlements and expressed their commitment to continue supporting it in its endeavours. One representative said that studies had shown that much of the work carried out at the programme level by UN-Habitat had been relevant, innovative, cost-efficient and of excellent quality, despite limited resources. Another commended UN-Habitat for building new partnerships with the private sector.

14. Several representatives expressed appreciation for the supportive activities of UN-Habitat in their countries and regions, with some calling upon the programme to strengthen its regional offices and to increase its presence at the country level to bolster the implementation of projects. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, placed particular emphasis on the importance of work undertaken by UN-Habitat in developing countries, stating that the organization had a major role to perform in promoting capacity-building, facilitating the exchange of experiences and encouraging technology transfer. The representative of the Republic of South Korea representative

said that his country would support UN-Habitat by making available its International Urban Training Centre for capacity development in the Asia-Pacific region.

15. Many representatives welcomed the arrival of Mr. Joan Clos as the new Executive Director of UN-Habitat, and there was broad support for the direction in which he was guiding the organization. Many spoke of the process of change and adaptation taking place within UN-Habitat, particularly with regard to the examination of the governance of UN-Habitat with a view to improving its transparency, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness, as called for by the Governing Council in its resolution 22/5. There was overall recognition of the need for internal reform and support for the governance review process as it reached the conclusion of its third phase, and appreciation for the efforts undertaken by the governance review implementation team. Several representatives called on the Executive Director to increase the current momentum to implement the medium-term strategic and institutional plan and related work programme. Some representatives further referred to the fresh opportunities emerging for UN-Habitat as the medium-term strategic and institutional plan for the period 2008–2013 drew to its close. One representative said that the results-based framework was an important tool for guiding the direction of UN-Habitat.

16. The continuing challenge of funding for UN-Habitat and its activities was highlighted during the debate. Several representatives called for development partner countries to ensure adequate financing for UN-Habitat through their voluntary contributions. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed all efforts to increase the predictability of funding and non-earmarked contributions to support the medium-term strategic and institutional plan. The representative of Kenya encouraged the Executive Director and the Committee of Permanent Representatives to continue exploring ways of addressing the perennial challenge of imbalance between the earmarked and non-earmarked contributions to the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation; to assist in that regard, the Government of Kenya would increase its annual contribution to the Foundation from \$60,000 to \$70,000, as from 2012. The representative of Zimbabwe said that the Government of Zimbabwe pledged, in 2011, \$10,000 to the Foundation in appreciation of the mutual cooperation enjoyed with UN-Habitat.

17. One representative said that, in the face of its financial challenges, UN-Habitat should refocus its attention on its unique mandate by setting clear priorities and concentrating on its normative work, where it had a comparative advantage and could demonstrate leadership. To achieve that, the organization needed to become more nimble, transparent and accountable, and to lay greater emphasis on demonstrating effectiveness to present and prospective donors. Another representative called upon UN-Habitat to maintain a harmonious balance between its normative work at headquarters and the implementation of projects in the field. Another representative said that the reform process should continue apace, financial constraints notwithstanding, highlighting the development of strategic guidelines as a priority activity within the medium-term strategic and institutional plan. He drew attention to the guidelines on decentralization and the strengthening of local authorities (2007) and on access to basic services for all (2009). UN-Habitat and member States should intensify their efforts to integrate the guidelines as two cross-cutting strategies in their programmes to support access to basic services for all.

18. There was some discussion on the outcomes of recent meetings of relevance to UN-Habitat and its agenda. Several representatives expressed satisfaction at the outcomes of the fifth session of the World Urban Forum, which had taken place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 22 to 26 March 2010. One representative said that the Forum was essential to pursuit of the Habitat Agenda and urged UN-Habitat to strengthen coordination of the Forum. Another said that deliberations at the fifth session had shown that equitable access to shelter required new approaches to urban planning. In that regard, the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000, adopted by the General Assembly in 1988, urgently required review and reformulation to align it with current priorities and realities.

19. Upcoming events, and the role that UN-Habitat might play in contributing to the agenda of those events, were also discussed. Among the most significant was the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development to take place in Rio de Janeiro from 4 to 6 June 2012. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, urged UN-Habitat and its partners to participate actively in the conference, given that sustainable development could not be accomplished without sustainable urban development. Another representative said that debate at the conference on the institutional framework for sustainable development could, in turn, inform the governance review process of UN-Habitat. One representative expressed hope that there would be a strong UN-Habitat presence at the upcoming fourth session of the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, to be held in Istanbul, Turkey, from 9 to 13 May 2011.

20. Several representatives welcomed plans to convene a third United Nations conference on housing and sustainable urban development, scheduled for 2016, and called for a constructive debate to inform the agenda for that conference.

II. Dialogue on the special theme

21. [To be completed]
