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**Dialogue on the special theme for the twenty-fifth
session of the Governing Council**

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Report of the Executive Director

Summary

In its final report, the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals recommended that sustainable cities and human settlements be addressed as a standalone goal, and the General Assembly decided that the proposal of the Open Working Group contained in the report would serve as the main basis for integrating sustainable development goals into the post-2015 development agenda. Goal 11, the proposed standalone goal, is to “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.” In its resolution 24/10, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director, in consultation with the Committee of Permanent Representatives, to ensure that UN-Habitat contributed to the development and implementation of the post-2015 development agenda in order to promote sustainable urbanization. Accordingly, UN-Habitat provides information to Governments and the United Nations system on the role of urbanization to ensure that it is adequately reflected in the post-2015 development agenda, including the sustainable development goals. This has primarily involved participating in the United Nations System Task Team on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda and the technical support team to the Open Working Group. Beyond the United Nations system, UN-Habitat has also supported academia-led and civil society-led efforts to strengthen goal 11, including the Urban SDG campaign, the Communitas Coalition for Sustainable Cities and Regions, the World Urban Campaign, and the Global Task Force.

Urbanization is a source of development because economies of agglomeration bring the factors of production into proximity, optimize specialization and increase the relative size of urban markets. As a result, urbanization has reduced poverty, increased economic growth and improved interdependence between urban and rural areas. Some 80 per cent of global gross domestic product is generated in cities, but so are two thirds of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions. The population of the world’s cities will nearly double in the next 35 years as the space they occupy more than triples, with detrimental consequences for peri-urban and rural areas. Focusing on planning for urbanization in advance, with adequate rules and regulations and a viable financial plan, is key to managing this growth. Cities and human settlements will need proactive support from all levels of government. A dedicated global goal on sustainable cities and human settlements is relevant for our increasingly urban world, unique in its focus on space and place, transformational in the achievement of higher-level outcomes, empowering for local governments and timely given the narrow window of opportunity that exists to influence the growth of future cities. This goal will also need to promote a positive, mutually-reinforcing relationship between cities and their hinterlands.

* HSP/GC/25/1.

The theme of the twenty-fifth session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) is “The contribution of UN-Habitat to the post-2015 development agenda: promoting sustainable urban development and human settlements.” Sub-theme 1 is “Enhancing urban-rural linkages across the continuum of human settlements to harness the transformative power of urbanization for sustainable development” and sub-theme 2 is “The role of UN-Habitat in the post-2015 development agenda”.

Regarding the first sub-theme, since the adoption of the Habitat Agenda, UN-Habitat has had a mandate to nurture and strengthen the urban-rural continuum. Several Governing Council resolutions have requested an end to the discussion on the urban-rural dichotomy, highlighting how positive urban-rural linkages can improve living conditions and employment opportunities for both urban and rural populations. That approach was endorsed in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the final report of the Open Working Group. However, national and regional development planning still needs to be strengthened. The physical boundary between urban and rural areas is becoming blurred owing to a lack of planning and coordination at the metropolitan edge, and persistent gaps between urban and rural areas, particularly on issues pertaining to connectivity, infrastructure, energy and the smooth flow of people, jobs, goods, knowledge and finance, remain to be closed.

UN-Habitat has elaborated 10 promising entry points for addressing these urban-rural linkages: (a) spatial flows of products, services and information between urban and rural areas; (b) reducing environmental impact in urban-rural convergences; (c) the urban-rural continuum in the face of disaster; (d) mobility and migration between urban and rural areas; (e) rural urbanization or the development of small and intermediate towns; (f) territory and spatial planning for balanced urban and rural development; (g) food security systems and a “sustainability chain” for all; (h) inclusive investment and finance in both urban and rural areas; (i) enhancing legislation and governance and capacity for urban-rural partnerships; and (j) a global partnership on promoting urban-rural linkages.

Regarding the second sub-theme, proposed goal 11 (to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable) contains 10 proposed targets covering issues related to housing and basic services; sustainable transport; urban planning; cultural heritage; disaster resilience; environmental impact; safe public spaces; urban-rural linkages; climate change policies; and building finance. UN-Habitat might also provide technical assistance on the issues of security of tenure and slum prevention, non-motorized transport, land-use efficiency and other outcomes of urban planning, multipurpose public space and urban finance. Each of the seven subprogrammes of the UN-Habitat strategic plan for 2014–2019 connects strongly to proposed goal 11 and many of the other proposed sustainable development goals.

UN-Habitat has also been involved in three parallel processes related to the post-2015 development agenda: (a) finance and the preparatory process for the third International Conference on Financing for Development; (b) agreement on data required for monitoring the post-2015 development agenda; and (c) localization of the post-2015 development agenda. Once the post-2015 agenda has been adopted, implementation and monitoring thereof will be key, and cities will need clear indicators and baseline data in that regard. Recent progress made on geospatial data gathering is of particular interest as is the recently launched UN-Habitat City Prosperity Index, which takes a systemic view of the city along spatial, demographic, economic, environmental and governance-related dimensions. The United Nations system will provide support to the United Nations Statistical Commission in the indicator selection process and subsequently to member States as they monitor their implementation of the agenda. The role of UN-Habitat lies in continuing to define and concretize the urban dimensions of the post-2015 development agenda, providing technical assistance to member States (including developing tools and guidelines) in relation to implementation and the monitoring of targets. UN-Habitat may also contribute to other relevant goals and targets, engaging in the human rights and localization dimensions of the post-2015 development agenda, supporting the development of urban finance systems and periodically reporting to oversight bodies.

I. Introduction

A. Background

1. In its final report (see A/68/970), the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals recommended that sustainable cities and human settlements be addressed as a standalone goal (goal 11).¹ In its resolution 68/309, the General Assembly decided that the proposal of the Open Working Group contained in the report would serve as the main basis for integrating sustainable development goals into the post-2015 development agenda. Proposed goal 11 is to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
2. In response to Governing Council resolution 24/10, UN-Habitat provides information to Governments, United Nations system organizations and other stakeholders on the role of urbanization in sustainable development, with a view to ensuring that sustainable urbanization is adequately reflected in the post-2015 development agenda, including the sustainable development goals.
3. In practice, this has primarily involved participating in the United Nations System Task Team on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda and the technical support team to the Open Working Group. As a result, UN-Habitat co-led 15 other United Nations entities in the production of an issues brief on sustainable cities and human settlements² for submission to the Open Working Group prior to its discussion on sustainable cities and human settlements at its seventh session in January 2014. Moreover, the Executive Director of UN-Habitat delivered a keynote address at the seventh session of the Open Working Group as well as at the 2014 Integration Segment of the Economic and Social Council, whose theme was urbanization, in May 2014.
4. In addition, UN-Habitat remained engaged on the Task Team by making inputs to and providing comments on a number of documents, including the report of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, the annual report of the Secretary-General entitled “Accelerating progress toward the Millennium Development Goals: options for sustained and inclusive growth and issues for advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015”³ and the synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda entitled “The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet.”⁴ As part of the technical support team, UN-Habitat also co-led the development of an inter-agency compilation of existing commitments and proposed targets as well as the prioritization and rating of targets later proposed by the Open Working Group. UN-Habitat was represented at sessions of the Open Working Group throughout its work and responded to real-time requests for clarification by member States.
5. On behalf of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), UN-Habitat, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments for the Post-2015 Development Agenda co-led a consultation on localizing the sustainable development goals in order to supply inputs to the means of implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. The consultation took place in 13 countries and at several regional and global events.
6. Beyond the United Nations, UN-Habitat has also provided support to several academia-led and civil society-led efforts to strengthen the sustainable development goal on sustainable cities and human settlements, including the “Urban SDG” campaign, led by the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network, technical capacity building on key thematic issues, primarily led by the Communitas Coalition, activities of the World Urban Campaign, and the mobilization of local authorities by the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments.
7. Whereas much of the relevant work of UN-Habitat has focused on supporting the development of the proposed goal 11 – to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable – the Programme has also engaged significantly with other processes and constituencies.
8. UN-Habitat contributed to the thematic consultation process on water facilitated under the umbrella of UN-Water, the United Nations inter-agency mechanism on all freshwater-related issues. As vice-chair of the consultation process, UN-Habitat led the thematic consultations on wastewater and co-chaired the task forces on wastewater and water and sanitation. As a result, member States received technical advice on

¹ www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/970&Lang=E.

² <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015>.

³ www.un.org/disabilities/documents/reports/SG_Synthesis_Report_Road_to_Dignity_by_2030.pdf.

⁴ http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5527SR_advance%20unedited_final.pdf.

prioritizing water in the post-2015 development agenda. The outcome of the process is a proposed sustainable development goal 6 “to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”.

9. Recognizing that secure and equitable land rights lie at the heart of poverty reduction, UN-Habitat has also supported their inclusion and advancement in the post-2015 development agenda. The Global Land Tool Network has furthered these efforts through its advocacy and related indicator development. In collaboration with another group of partners, UN-Habitat has also contributed to the formulation of a post-Millennium Development Goals results framework on sustainable transport.

B. Urbanization and development

10. Urbanization is a source of development. Its economies of agglomeration bring the factors of production into proximity, optimize specialization and increase the relative size of urban markets. The so-called “third wave” of urbanization currently taking place is unleashing new productivity and economic growth.

11. The report of the Secretary-General of the Conference on progress to date in the implementation of the outcomes of the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and identification of new and emerging challenges on sustainable urban development (A/CONF.226/PC.1/5) submitted to the Preparatory Committee for Habitat III, in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 67/216, on the 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), points out that urbanization has brought growth and development, including a dramatic reduction in poverty; increased national economic growth; major progress in human settlements connectivity, which helps boost productivity and the creation of opportunities; the merging of cities and towns into new regional spatial configurations that are conducive to faster economic and demographic growth; and a higher degree of interdependence between urban and rural areas that has helped reduce the vulnerability of rural communities and enhance the prospects of more equitable development.⁵

12. In 2008, for the first time in history, more than 50 per cent of the human population was living in urban areas. That figure is projected to rise to 60 per cent by 2030 and nearly 70 per cent by 2050, which equates to up to three billion more people moving into cities in the next 35 years, nearly doubling the existing urban population. Furthermore, the spatial growth of cities is accelerating even more rapidly than urban population growth. Over the last several decades built-up areas have grown twice as fast as the population within them, often with detrimental consequences for peri-urban and rural areas. Beyond its encroachment on agricultural land and natural habitat; low-density, unplanned urbanization can increase travel distances, worsen per capita rates of resource use and emissions and disperse the factors of production.

13. Some 80 per cent of global gross domestic product is generated in cities.⁶ However, much of this wealth generation is also closely linked with energy consumption, as a result of which cities produce approximately two-thirds of global greenhouse gas emissions. The measurement of carbon footprint is complex and it highlights the need to examine, measure and manage cities beyond their administrative boundaries. Clearly, urbanization that fosters economic productivity while ignoring environmental and social sustainability is detrimental for wider regions and can make everyday life extremely unpleasant for people, whether because of long and expensive commutes, increased disaster risk, insufficient drinking water or air pollution.⁷

14. The report also highlights that urbanization has been unable to respond to many existing and emerging challenges such as urban sprawl, congestion, pollution, emission of greenhouse gases, emerging urban poverty, segregation, increasing inequality and other negative externalities. All of these challenges are associated with a model of urbanization that is not sustainable. The report suggests that a renewed political commitment for sustainable urban development can harness the positive role of urbanization in driving growth and sustainability, address the challenges and reduce the negative externalities.⁸

⁵ <http://unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Progress-to-date-outcome-Habitat-II-ENGLISH1.pdf>.

⁶ www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/overview.

⁷ WHO research shows that in 2012 around 7 million people died – one in eight of total global deaths – as a result of air pollution exposure. See www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2014/air-pollution/en.

⁸ Progress to date in the implementation of the outcomes of the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and identification of new and emerging challenges on sustainable urban development <http://unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Progress-to-date-outcome-Habitat-II-ENGLISH1.pdf>.

15. Focusing on planning for urbanization, including adequate rules and regulations and a viable financial plan, is a realistic and precautionary strategy for the future. In addition to these three essential elements, cities and human settlements will still require support from and adequate management capacity at all levels of government, which need to regard urbanization as a potentially positive phenomenon that can be shaped proactively.

C. Key justifications

16. Including sustainable urbanization in a dedicated global goal is appropriate given the fact that we are living in a predominantly urban world. Such a goal is also important because it represents the agenda of the built environment, which is not addressed by other proposed sustainable development goals. Fortunately, there is a general consensus that housing and basic services, transport, urban planning and urban sprawl, built heritage, and disaster damage to property and public space are issues best addressed by proactively pursuing sustainable cities and human settlements.

17. Proposed goal 11 is also transformational in that it targets the sequential progress that urban planning, the provision of public space, access to basic services and transport would provide toward the achievement of higher-level outcomes in other goals (e.g., poverty eradication, food security and energy efficiency). In addition, the proposed goal is empowering as it reflects cities as arenas of implementation, places where projects are concretized and higher-level aspirations realized.

18. Above all, proposed goal 11 is timely because it highlights the narrow window of opportunity that exists to influence the sustainability of cities and plan for the doubling of their population size within the next generation. This is critical because the form of a city is highly predictive of the behavioral patterns that take place within it. If we miss this opportunity we risk locking new urban areas into inefficient, inequitable patterns that are extremely expensive to correct. If we seize it, however, the positive co-benefits and knock-on effects can be enormous.

D. Sub-themes

19. During the sessions of the Open Working Group, a number of member States went beyond discussing the core substance of a goal on sustainable cities and human settlements to address its possible scope and implementation. Some representatives indicated that it would have to address existing cities as well as those yet to be built, while others insisted that it account for a wide variety of city sizes and be sensitive to local context. Yet others stated that in addition to cities, such a goal would also have to have to benefit rural areas. These issues form the core of the first sub-theme of this paper.

20. The extent of a city can be difficult to determine because the line between urban and rural is frequently blurred. Some functionally urban populations live far beyond the areas officially incorporated into a municipality; other official urban areas include vast, effectively undeveloped rural areas. In addition, many urban dwellers and families maintain vital, long-term linkages with rural areas, and vice versa. Member States agree that a goal on sustainable cities and human settlements must account for the contextual sensitivities around what constitutes “urban”, across the urban-rural continuum. Member States also want such a goal to promote a positive, mutually reinforcing relationship between cities and their hinterlands so that cities provide rural areas with markets and facilities and rural areas provide cities with food security and essential ecosystem services.

21. It is time to advance the dialogue further, demonstrating the roles that UN-Habitat should play in advancing the urban and human settlements dimension of the post-2015 development agenda. These may include driving the normative discussion, leading the technical proofing of proposed targets, supporting the development of indicators, implementation and monitoring. The extent to which the post-2015 development agenda has an impact on the strategic plan of UN-Habitat, and how the one might support the implementation of the other, must also be discussed. This forms the core of the second sub-theme of this paper.

II. Sub-theme 1: enhancing urban-rural linkages across the continuum of human settlements to harness the transformative power of urbanization for sustainable development

A. UN-Habitat mandate

22. The Habitat Agenda, adopted at Habitat II in 1996, firmly established the precepts of the urban-rural continuum. It states that “policies and programmes for the sustainable development of areas that integrate rural regions into the national economy require strong local and national institutions for the planning and management of human settlements” that emphasize urban-rural

linkages linkages and address both cities and villages as two ends of a human settlements continuum.⁹ It also states that “an integrated approach is required to promote balanced and mutually supportive urban-rural development.”¹⁰

23. Since the upgrading of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements into the United Nations Human Settlements Programme in 2002, a number of resolutions have advanced the Habitat Agenda by (a) requesting an end to the urban-rural dichotomy debate; (b) emphasizing ways in which positive urban-rural linkages can improve living conditions and employment opportunities for both urban and rural populations, with a special focus on young people and women, and help in managing urban-rural migration; and (c) prompting the publication of a comprehensive report entitled “Urban-rural linkages approach to sustainable development.”¹¹ At its twenty-fourth session, the Governing Council of UN-Habitat stressed the importance of regional planning in addressing urban spaces and rural areas and requested the Executive Director, in consultation with the Committee of Permanent Representatives, to initiate the elaboration of international guidelines on urban and territorial planning.¹² Soon thereafter, in its resolution 69/226, on 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), the General Assembly invited Member States to facilitate the development and implementation of national urban policies.

24. In the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled “The future we want”, Heads of State and Government and high-level representatives committed to working towards improving the quality of human settlements, including the living and working conditions of both urban and rural dwellers in the context of poverty eradication so that all people have access to basic services, housing and mobility.¹³ The Open Working Group explicitly addressed urban-rural linkages under proposed targets to increase investment in rural infrastructure¹⁴ and support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning.¹⁵

B. Opportunities and challenges

25. The expansion of cities and large towns is due to natural population growth within urban areas, the administrative reclassification of land from rural to urban¹⁶ and migration from rural areas. Many of the migrants from rural areas are pursuing better life opportunities as much as escaping disasters and insecurity. However, new urban migrants often occupy marginalized land with environmentally degraded conditions and few or no basic services. Much of the growth accommodating them is taking place at the metropolitan scale, with cities extending into peri-urban and rural areas. This is yielding new urban-rural interconnections and the physical boundary between urban and rural areas is becoming increasingly grey. However, expansion at the metropolitan edge is often unplanned and uncoordinated.

26. Urbanization and modernization are also blurring the qualitative and lifestyle-based differences between urban and rural areas. The discourse on urbanization must depart from the traditional (and false) dichotomy of urban and rural; in order for urban and rural areas to be sustainable they must develop in tandem. Recognizing the urban-rural continuum also highlights how partnerships, collaboration and unity in action can yield dividends for all people, regardless of age, gender and whether they live in urban or rural areas. Positive outcomes of development based on this recognition include food security, increased employment, improved equity and better governance.

27. To further the urban-rural continuum in the post-2015 development agenda, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) issued a position paper entitled “Leveraging the rural-urban nexus for development”, in which it recommends reducing the gaps between urban and rural areas, particularly on issues pertaining to connectivity, infrastructure, energy, and the smooth flow of people, jobs, goods, knowledge and finance. It also recommends investment in quality data and information in order to improve the quality of services and opportunities and ensure inclusive territorial and ecosystem governance. Furthermore, over the past year UN-Habitat has engaged with

⁹ *Report of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), Istanbul, 3–14 June 1996* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.97.IV.6), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para.163.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, para.169.

¹¹ Resolution 19/6.

¹² Resolution 24/3.

¹³ General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex, para. 134.

¹⁴ Target 2 (a).

¹⁵ Target 11 (a).

¹⁶ <http://unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Progress-to-date-outcome-Habitat-II-ENGLISH1.pdf>.

the Communitas Coalition, IFAD, the United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and other United Nations entities to advance the thinking and related action planning on the urban-rural continuum.

C. Proposed entry points to enhancing urban-rural linkages

28. Achieving sustainable development can be maximized if we achieve a definite departure from the political, social and geographical dichotomy between urban and rural urban areas and a better understanding of the continuum of space between urban and rural development. The following ten areas have been identified as possible entry points for UN-Habitat to work on enhancing urban-rural linkages in partnership with other organizations:

(a) *Spatial flows of products, services and information between urban and rural areas.*

Cities can be used as tools for achieving mutually supportive urban and rural spatial sub-systems. Physical, economic, social, political and technological linkages are all useful in this process. UN-Habitat can promote such linkages through regional planning that establishes development corridors connecting urban areas and their rural hinterlands and ensuring efficient flows between them. Encouraging overlapping spatial flows in this manner would ultimately break down the false dichotomy and strengthen the urban-rural continuum;

(b) *Reducing environmental impact in urban-rural convergences.* By many accounts cities consume more than 70 per cent of the world's energy and are responsible, directly or indirectly, for a similar proportion of its greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time, cities are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, which are likely to raise tensions over dwindling strategic resources, reduce agricultural productivity and exacerbate rural-urban migration. Yet cities also have a role to play in solving environmental problems. There are clear benefits to integrated planning across urban and rural spheres to protect ecosystem services, especially water and watersheds. UN-Habitat should continue to encourage planned city extensions as one way to reduce per capita rates of energy use and emissions, and ultimately mitigate further climate change. Planned city extensions, implemented with adequate resources, capacity and political commitment, can also help in managing the sustainable development of peri-urban areas, particularly biodiversity hotspots and other environmentally sensitive areas. Cities, through district energy systems, could not only reduce their energy demand, but also initiate energy generation from renewable sources that are abundant in most developing countries. Moreover, sustainable urban policies for the transport, warehousing, wholesale and retail aspects of food production and consumption can strengthen the capacity of small towns and ultimately enhance food security;

(c) *Urban-rural continuum in the face of disaster.* Disasters such as floods, hurricanes and mudslides sometimes prompt the migration of communities leading to pockets of internally displaced people. Conflicts also may lead to mass displacement of communities. Proper planning and adequate capacity are required to avoid humanitarian crises and the proliferation of informal settlements. UN-Habitat should encourage the development of coping strategies for vulnerable groups, and, where appropriate, mechanisms for resettlement. UN-Habitat could also work toward the delivery of a more coherent, predictable and effective response to the needs of refugee returnees and internally displaced people.¹⁷ Small and intermediate cities also provide an opportunity to settle such people and plan for their repatriation;¹⁸

(d) *Mobility and migration between urban and rural areas.* Mobility and migration are among the most dramatic factors defining the urban-rural continuum. In many cases economic and spatial policies and regulatory frameworks have encouraged urbanization and supported rural-urban mobility. However, as ever-larger numbers of people have migrated to a limited number of large cities in an increasingly chaotic manner, migration has become more challenging. Territorial planning suggests ways in which rural migrants might be attracted to a wider variety of small and intermediate towns. Balanced mobility – one of its tenets – reduces the focus on primary cities by encouraging better planning of secondary, intermediate and small cities. With the appropriate cooperation mechanisms between tiers of government, good financial models, participatory planning approaches and effective regulatory and legal frameworks, secondary cities can also provide adequate housing, infrastructure,

¹⁷ Secretary-General's Policy Committee decision No. 2011/20, durable solutions: follow-up to the Secretary-General's 2009 report on peacebuilding, of 4 October 2011.

¹⁸ Tacoli, C. (2009) *Crisis or adaptation? Migration and climate change in a context of high mobility. Environment and Urbanization*. Vol. 21(2): 513–525. DOI: 10.1177/0956247809342182. International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).

services and access to employment, especially for youth and women. At the same time, in certain regions there is a countertrend of migration from urban to rural areas and this too must be considered;

(e) *Rural urbanization: the development of small and intermediate towns.* Rural populations are increasingly becoming urbanized because they live in an environment influenced by increased knowledge, economic activities, communication, media and social relations that have a predominantly urban orientation. All the same, small and intermediate towns are important because they are often more accessible to rural populations, acting as a bridge between them and larger cities. However, many of these secondary cities – particularly in sub-Saharan Africa – are struggling to manage urbanization, attract investment and meet the demand for housing, land tenure, infrastructure and basic urban services. Often they are poorly managed, have weak communication systems within and between them, struggle to create and retain jobs, have high levels of unemployment, and find it difficult to diversify and strengthen their economies, retain capital and attract investment. UN-Habitat can design tools and systems to help such towns add value by securing public space and effective street networks, promoting land tenure security, developing plotting systems that accommodate mixed-use development and utilizing appropriate legal, financial, economic and land tenure tools;

(f) *Territorial and spatial planning for balanced urban and rural development.* Taking a city-region approach recasts urban areas as part of a wider functional region. Such an approach, in combination with territorial and spatial planning strategies and other tools, can ultimately promote more equitable, integrated urban and rural development. This includes the development of synergies and linkages between cities, towns and their hinterlands with particular attention to the comparative advantage that certain cities and towns might have in terms of advantageous location, strategic facilities or local expertise. UN-Habitat already provides support to cities in developing policies that promote competitiveness and specialization among wider systems of cities. As a result, many city-regions are increasing in vibrancy and overall investment, including by harnessing the potential of youthful urban populations towards equitable economic growth. Meanwhile, UN-Habitat and its partners are continuing to implement the proposed international guidelines on urban and territorial planning;

(g) *Food security systems and a “sustainability chain” for all.* An increasingly urban future will only be truly equitable if the world sustainably manages its land and natural resources. However, limited quantities of land have increased competition between its different uses. Land conversion, land overuse and lack of good governance are only exacerbating the situation. Food security is one of the first casualties of poor land management and it is simultaneously a rural and urban challenge that disproportionately affects women, the poor and other vulnerable groups. Urban-rural linkages can ensure that food production occurs close to and within cities and towns, as well as in rural areas located favourably to inputs and markets. In parallel, regions need to improve access to land, tenure security and natural resources for all whose livelihoods depend on them. These need to occur within a human rights framework with attention to gender equity and sensitivity to youth;

(h) *Inclusive investment and finance in both urban and rural areas.* Creating an enabling environment for increasing rural productivity is essential. Recognizing the flow, quality and impact of both public and private investment is critical. Incentives and safeguards are needed to ensure that investment builds assets that help urban and rural economies become more productive, sustainable, inclusive and resilient. UN-Habitat continues to assist local governments in generating and implementing local economic development strategies that are strategically aimed at capitalizing on existing areas of comparative advantage, leveraging local assets and generating equitable outcomes;

(i) *Enhancing legislation and governance and capacity for urban-rural partnerships.* The interconnection between urban and rural areas calls for cohesive interaction between both administrative boundaries and actors. Enhancing the interaction between urban and rural areas therefore requires adequate governance arrangements (i.e., recognizing and negotiating both the formal and informal) and adequate capacity (i.e., institutional, human and system-related). UN-Habitat can design systems and tools to articulate optimal multi-level, multi-actor, horizontal and vertical governance systems. UN-Habitat will also continue to promote decentralization as an element of good governance, delivery of basic services for all and effective public administration;¹⁹

(j) *A global partnership on promoting urban-rural linkages.* A new paradigm for urban-rural synergies would provide clear directives and action items for policy, legislation and planning agencies and foster partnerships between them. UN-Habitat, UNDP, IFAD, FAO, UNCRD, UNEP, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and others have

¹⁹ <http://unhabitat.org/books/international-guidelines-on-decentralization-and-access-to-basic-services-for-all/>.

already helped raise the awareness and understanding of urban-rural linkages and related enabling measures. Several academic institutions, non-governmental organizations and external support agencies are actively engaging on this topic as well. Capitalizing on these efforts through a more formal global partnership on urban-rural linkages would help with resource mobilization.

D. Issues for discussion

29. The following questions are intended to stimulate further discussion:

- (a) How can Governments manage a system of urban and rural areas such that economic connectivity, environmental sustainability and social wellbeing are maximized?
- (b) What is the role of the various stakeholders in relation to urban-rural linkages, including different levels of government, the private sector and workers' unions?
- (c) Which types of metropolitan governance mechanisms would improve the function of metropolitan regions, including the role of small, intermediate and secondary towns?
- (d) Which practices have successfully used participatory methods for urban planning where the needs for future generations are fully incorporated and given priority?
- (e) How can urban sprawl be managed, particularly in high-potential agricultural areas?
- (f) Which practices have successfully integrated urban and rural financial and capital markets and services?
- (g) How can transportation corridors be managed such that economic connectivity is maximized?
- (h) Building transport infrastructure, the development of secondary cities, training and capacity-building, public-private partnerships and appropriate institutional frameworks are all key to achieving better urban-rural linkages. What can be done to promote these?
- (i) How can UN-Habitat and its partners ensure tenure security, protection of land and other related rights of women, the poor and other vulnerable groups in the context of the urban-rural continuum?
- (j) How can UN-Habitat support national and local governments in developing effective legal and institutional frameworks that are locally relevant and advance the principles of the rule of law and human rights?
- (k) How can UN-Habitat and its partners ensure balanced territorial planning that addresses the urban-rural migration currently under way in certain regions?

III. Sub-theme 2: the role of UN-Habitat in the post-2015 development agenda

A. Finalizing the framework of goals and targets

30. Proposed goal 11 of the sustainable development goals, which aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, contains 10 proposed targets, each with inherent opportunities and challenges to promote sustainable urban development and human settlements. UN-Habitat has a role to play in contributing expertise to ensure that these opportunities are maximized and the challenges addressed.

31. Proposed goal 11 contains targets that cover the issues of access to housing and basic services; slum upgrading; sustainable and safe mobility; urban planning; cultural and natural heritage; disaster resilience; the environmental impact of human settlements; access to safe public spaces; urban-rural linkages; mitigation of the effects of climate change; and sustainable building methods. As these targets are refined through the process of selecting indicators, UN-Habitat might provide, at the request of member States, technical assistance relating to the issues of, inter alia, tenure security and slum prevention, non-motorized transport, land-use efficiency and other positive outcomes of urban planning, multipurpose public space, quantifying urban-rural linkages and urban finance.

32. UN-Habitat can play a role in the implementation of the proposed goal and its targets given its long experience in promoting sustainable cities and human settlements. It can, for example, continue to develop partnerships that would provide substantial technical assistance to member States on the implementation and monitoring of targets. UN-Habitat also maintains a comparative advantage in developing tools and guidelines that would guide the implementation of these targets. Moreover, the

increased focus of UN-Habitat on national urban policies, legislation, territorial, regional, metropolitan and urban planning and planned city extensions equip it to help better define, concretize and implement the agenda addressed by this proposed goal and its targets. At the same time, its increased focus on local economic development and municipal finance will help support the economic base to sustainably finance these targets.

33. UN-Habitat can also provide policy and technical support to partner countries and local authorities in its traditional areas of expertise: land, local governance, water, sanitation, waste management, mobility, and energy. Moreover, UN-Habitat has deep experience in post-conflict and post-disaster reconstruction and urban climate change adaptation and mitigation. It can bring this bear as it supports other international agencies, local governments, civil society and the private sector in implementing related elements of the sustainable development goals. This will require, inter alia, strategies for mitigating and recovering from conflicts and natural disasters, mainstreaming adaptation into urban planning and building local government capacity to address climate change effectively.

34. Other goals and targets of the Open Working Group proposal are also relevant for the work of UN-Habitat. “Ending poverty in all its forms everywhere” will also depend on enhancing urban–rural convergences and building on the positive aspects of planned urbanization in achieving inclusive prosperity and ending poverty. Similarly progress under the goal that aims to “ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages” and the associated targets of ending the preventable deaths of newborns and children under the age of 5 and halving deaths from road traffic accidents, will to a great extent, depend upon the provision of basic services such as the supply of water and sanitation and sustainable mobility. And the goal aiming to “protect, restore and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss” will depend in part on the maximization of urban land-use efficiency and minimization of urban environmental impact.

B. Links with the strategic plan for 2014–2019 of UN-Habitat

35. Each of the seven subprogrammes of the UN-Habitat strategic plan for 2014–2019 has strong links with proposed goal 11 and with its ten proposed targets. Many of the subprogrammes also have pertinent links with other proposed sustainable development goals and targets, as described below.

(a) *Subprogramme 1, urban land, legislation and governance*, has strong links with the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals and proposed elements of the sustainable development goals relating to poverty, food and gender; it also relates to the elements on peace and security of the sustainable development goals;

(b) *Subprogramme 2, urban planning and design*, has links with many of the newer aspects of the post-2015 development agenda, most strongly with the unique space-oriented and place-oriented dimensions of goal 11. It also links strongly with elements of poverty eradication and climate;

(c) *Subprogramme 3, urban economy*, has cross-cutting links with the elements of inclusive economic growth, employment and decent work, with particular focus on youth;

(d) *Subprogramme 4, urban basic services*, links with the expanded service provision aspects of the sustainable development goals as well as to elements relating to poverty reduction, health, water and sanitation, energy and sustainable consumption and production;

(e) *Subprogramme 5, housing and slum upgrading*, furthers the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals and connects with the broader goal 11 through housing policy and slum prevention;

(f) *Subprogramme 6, risk reduction and rehabilitation*, has additional strong links to elements of the goals relating to poverty reduction and climate;

(g) *Subprogramme 7, research and capacity development*, has important connections across all the targets of proposed goal 11, particularly in relation to the monitoring of urban trends, knowledge of urban issues and the capacity-building of governments responsible for the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. Furthermore, there are strong linkages with cross-cutting issues, including gender, youth, the human rights-based approach and climate change.

36. There will be opportunities to further align the strategic plan for 2014–2019 with the post-2015 development agenda through the operationalization of the UN-Habitat work programmes for 2016–2017 and 2018–2019. Meanwhile, possible strategic areas of convergence with the post-2015 development agenda may include leveraging specific country-based projects of UN-Habitat toward its implementation. An additional possibility is forging a bidirectional, iterative link between the post-2015 development agenda and the Habitat III preparatory process (including the drafting of the new urban agenda).

C. Other post-2015 processes

37. Extending from its mandate established at Rio+20, the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing met regularly in the sidelines of the Open Working Group, issuing its final report²⁰ in August 2014. The report explores the changing global context of finance, including evolving finance needs and patterns of resource flows. In pursuit of a new strategic approach it outlines five potential sources of sustainable development financing: (a) domestic public; (b) domestic private; (c) international public; (d) international private; and (e) blended. The report has provided input for the preparatory process of the third International Conference on Financing for Development to be held in Addis Ababa in July 2015. As part of that process, two substantive meetings held in 2014 have provided input for three drafting meetings to be held in 2015. UN-Habitat has participated in the workstream through the related working group on sustainable development financing, overseen by the United Nations System Task Team, and has made inputs to the preparatory process of the third International Conference on Financing for Development by emphasizing the role of sustainable urbanization for endogenous resource mobilization.

38. The Secretary-General's Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development met regularly in 2014 and issued its final report²¹ in November 2014. The report highlights two big global challenges with regard to the current state of data: (a) the challenge of invisibility, i.e., gaps in the availability of data and the delays in filling those gaps, and (b) the challenge of inequality, i.e., gaps between those who have and those who don't have information, and what they need to know in order to take their own decisions. The report also suggests how a UN-led effort to mobilize a data revolution might address these challenges, namely, by (a) fostering and promoting innovation to fill data gaps; (b) mobilizing resources to overcome inequalities between developed and developing countries and between data-poor and data-rich people; and (c) leading and coordinating the data revolution. These recommendations have already informed the synthesis report of the Secretary-General and will continue to inform the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda throughout 2015.

39. As part of a second round of global consultations on the means of implementation for the post-2015 development agenda, the United Nations Development Group, UN-Habitat, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments for the Post-2015 Development Agenda co-led a consultation on localizing the sustainable development goals in order to supply inputs to the means of implementation of the post-2015 development agenda (see paragraph 5). The objective was to determine how to implement the entire post-2015 development agenda at the local level. The consultation process concluded that (a) local governments are key actors of development, being in a unique position to identify, and to respond to, citizens' development needs; (b) the new agenda needs to be translated nationally and locally to ensure ownership, avoid duplications and promote effectiveness; (c) decentralization, subsidiarity and governance at all levels (including strong national commitment) are essential to implementing the new agenda; and (d) effective local governance can ensure the inclusion of a diversity of local stakeholders, creating broad-based ownership and accountability.

D. Monitoring and implementation

40. The United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network makes clear that data and metrics are essential for development goals to be met.²² Indeed, cities will require monitoring systems with clear indicators, baseline data, targets and goals if they are to successfully implement long-term sustainable development plans. Such systems must also provide a general framework that allows cities, countries and the international community to identify possible constraints and adapt to national and local

²⁰ <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/4588FINAL%20REPORT%20ICESDF.pdf>.

²¹ www.undatarevolution.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/A-World-That-Counts2.pdf.

²² Sustainable Development Solutions Network (2014), *Indicators and a monitoring framework for SDGs: launching a data revolution*.

contexts.²³ Data and metrics will help cities to take appropriate decisions on the best policies and means to track changes and systematically document performance at the outcome level.

41. The recent progress made on global spatial data gathering (e.g., from satellite imagery) is of particular interest for the issue of sustainable cities and human settlements. Increased investment and technical application are needed to expand on this progress. UN-Habitat is already engaging research institutions to develop a representative data set of urban areas that would make possible the monitoring of urban land-use efficiency, land-use mix, street connectivity and other key factors of sustainable urban development.

42. In 2012, UN-Habitat launched a new global monitoring tool to measure sustainability at the urban level. The City Prosperity Index takes a holistic, integrated and systemic view of the city, and enables Governments to make use of data relating to spatial, demographic, economic, environmental and governance-related challenges. The City Prosperity Index is a composite index, composed of 6 dimensions, i.e., quality of life, productivity, infrastructure, equity, social inclusion, environmental sustainability and urban governance. As such, it also enables city authorities and local stakeholders to identify opportunities for and potential areas of intervention.

43. The City Prosperity Index offers several highly advantageous elements: (a) a systemic approach to the city; (b) a single composite value; (c) global benchmarks; (d) baseline data and information; (e) a global platform for comparability; (f) clear priorities for sustainable urban development that can be disaggregated; (g) an evidence base for policymaking and accountability; and (h) local/national monitoring systems. An initial comparative analysis of the proposed targets for goal 11 shows high convergence with many of the indicators of the City Prosperity Index. It could be used as a local monitoring tool to identify, quantify, evaluate, monitor and report on progress made by cities and countries on proposed goal 11. It also offers the possibility for local and national governments to establish their own monitoring mechanisms that facilitate reporting in a more systematic manner. The City Prosperity Index also has the potential to integrate new indicators in a reciprocal manner as the process of sustainable development goal indicator formulation evolves.

44. Proposed goal 11 cannot be implemented in isolation from the other proposed sustainable development goals. Achieving sustainable urban development will underpin the achievement of all other sustainable development goals and targets, and vice versa. Inasmuch as the City Prosperity Index could be used as a monitoring tool for the implementation of proposed goal 11, several other proposed sustainable development goals could also be localized and monitored at the city level. The Index might still provide a framework of analysis of the interrelation between proposed goal 11 and the urban dimensions of other proposed sustainable development goals. This would enable local and national governments and the international community to monitor and report on proposed goal 11 in a more holistic manner.

45. The implementation of the urban dimension of the post-2015 development agenda will also require concerted efforts from other stakeholders in other sectors such as water. Proposed goal 6 aims at ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. The World Health Organization, UN-Habitat and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) are organizing the first consultation of the Global Expanded Water Monitoring Initiative to develop a coherent framework for monitoring water in the post-2015 period. The proposed framework builds on existing monitoring of water and sanitation to include wastewater management, water quality and water resources management. As an outcome, the Global Expanded Water Monitoring Initiative will provide support for harmonized reporting and better targeting of resources and investments in the water sector.

46. At a wider scale, UN-Habitat and the United Nations Statistics Division will need to continue to provide support to the Statistical Commission as it proposes the best indicators for the entire sustainable development goals framework. Once the monitoring process begins, UN-Habitat will need to provide support to relevant governmental bodies – whether at national, subnational or local scales – and the global United Nations system, depending on which institutions are determined to be most appropriate for monitoring which parts of the post-2015 development agenda.

47. Beyond 2015, the role of UN-Habitat in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda should be guided by the final outcome document of the post-2015 development agenda as well as the outcome of Habitat III. UN-Habitat may be well placed to take up some of the following roles in the implementation and monitoring of the post-2015 development agenda:

(a) Coordination and ensuring policy coherence in the implementation of the goal on sustainable cities and human settlements and its targets;

²³ UN-Habitat (2014), *Urbanization and sustainable development: towards a new urban agenda*.

- (b) Leading the implementation of specific targets, including those for which UN-Habitat has a clear comparative advantage over other multilateral organizations (e.g., urban and territorial planning, housing and slum upgrading, public space);
- (c) Contribution to all the other targets of the proposed goal on sustainable cities and human settlements;
- (d) Contribution to other relevant goals and targets that have a strong bearing on urban and territorial development (e.g., those relating to water, energy, waste, employment);
- (e) Engagement in the human rights dimensions of the post-2015 development agenda, including forced evictions, tenure security and displaced persons;
- (f) Continued engagement in localizing the post-2015 development agenda;
- (g) Provision of support for the collection of data and testing of new metrics for selected indicators;
- (h) Provision of support for developing urban finance systems as an endogenous source of finance and as part of the means of implementation of the post-2015 development agenda;
- (i) Periodic reporting to oversight bodies such as the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

E. Issues for discussion

48. The following questions are intended to stimulate further discussion:

- (a) What other possibilities exist for strengthening the role of sustainable urbanization in the final intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda?
 - (b) Which mechanisms might be optimal for the implementation and monitoring of the sustainable development goals and what might be the corresponding coordination and implementation role for UN-Habitat?
 - (c) Can we avoid some of the shortcomings of the Millennium Development Goals by targeting the drivers of unsustainable urbanization and quantifying ambitions proportionally?
 - (d) Whereas the proposed sustainable development goals focus explicitly on the importance of land for poverty reduction, gender and food security, land is not explicitly addressed within the context of sustainable cities and human settlements. How might this be remedied?
 - (e) How can sustainable urbanization enhance endogenous resource mobilization for the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda?
 - (f) What might be the role of UN-Habitat in localizing the implementation of the sustainable development goals?
 - (g) How can member States, in collaboration with UN-Habitat, its partners and other urban stakeholders, ensure that the sustainable development goals lead to meaningful transformation?
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