

UN-Habitat Internal Policy Paper

Guiding principles to realign and enhance the agency's regional architecture

September 2020



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1. Introduction and background

*Now shall I praise the cities, those long-surviving (I watched them in awe) great constellations of earth.*¹

This¹ internal UN-Habitat policy paper sets out a strategic direction and guiding principles for realigning and strengthening UN-Habitat's global presence to maximize effective and impactful mandate delivery.² The paper builds on the goals articulated in UN-Habitat's Strategic Plan and the agency's role as "a focal point on sustainable urbanization and human settlements, including in the implementation, follow-up to and review of the New Urban Agenda, in collaboration with other United Nations system entities."³

With governmental processes at all levels providing unprecedented opportunities and points of entry for sustainable urbanization, UN-Habitat's norm-setting role has never been more important. It is equally true that the agency's technical cooperation services⁴ and other field-based activities enhance the normative⁵ value of the policies, guidelines and other tools developed and championed by UN-Habitat. An active, engaged country-level presence provides valuable insight into evolving national and regional development priorities, territorial dynamics, and contexts. A smartly designed and administered regional presence further strengthens the agency's role in sustainable development frameworks and within inter-agency thematic groups and issue-based coalitions, and provides a platform for awareness-raising and fostering the partnerships that are essential to the development of global consensus and policy coherence.

a. Establishment of the regional architecture working group

In January 2020, recognizing the value of a strategic regional presence to the agency's overall efficiency and impact and to complete the organizational restructuring commenced in 2019, the Executive Director established a working group tasked to develop a framework

in which recommendations to realign and strengthen UN-Habitat's regional architecture could be made based on an agreed set of principles. The working group's membership drew from diverse professional experiences, perspectives, and backgrounds, was gender-balanced, and included staff from both headquarters and non-headquarters offices and locations. The working group was provided with defined terms of reference.⁶

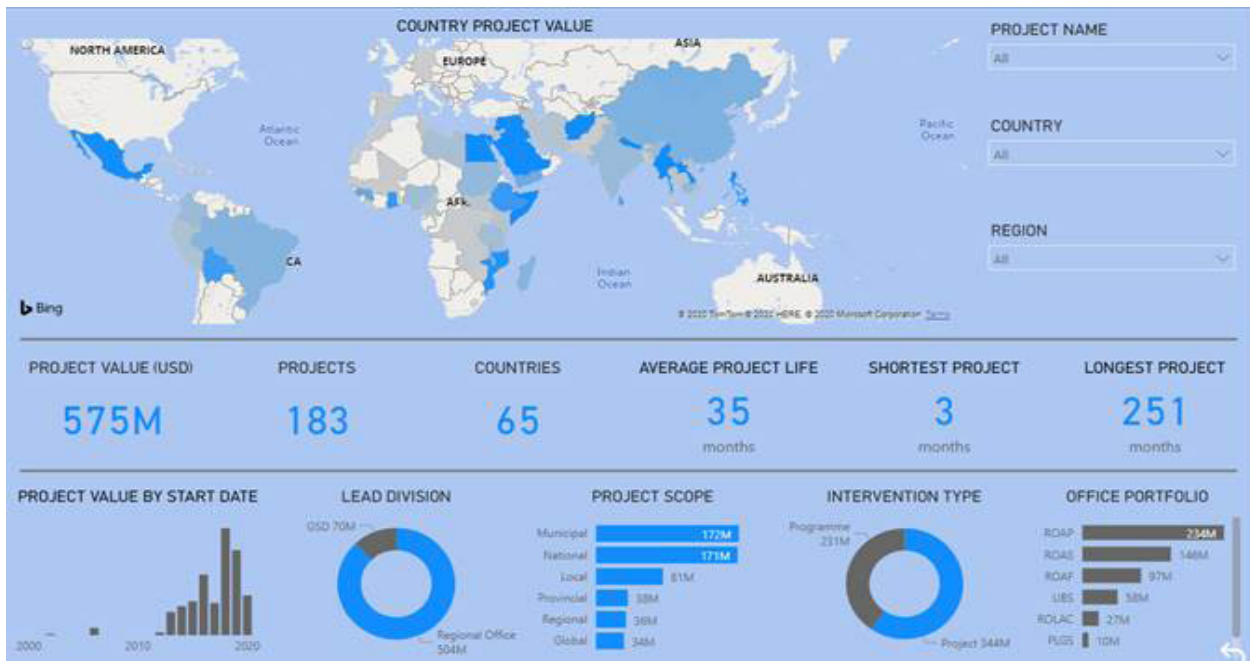
A preliminary step in its terms of reference was that the working group "**conduct a thorough review of UN-Habitat's current global presence, including the creation of an accurate, up to date, visual map of all UN-Habitat's operations** (both programme and project) in the field." This deliverable was met through development of the "Habitat Global Dashboard."⁷

The initial version of the Dashboard (snapshot below) as developed for this aspect of the regional review, was geared towards the capture and visual representation of project-related information.⁸

The primary deliverable set out in in the working group's terms of reference was to develop a "Regional Architecture Strategy ... aligned with the UN Development System and other UN reforms, [that] supports implementation of UN-Habitat's Strategic Plan, and is best able to meet demand at the country level in order to focus UN-Habitat's presence where it is most needed."

To meet these objectives three pillars for reform have been highlighted:

- i. Enhance programmatic effectiveness, efficiency, and the delivery of technical advisory and other services and activities by strengthening and expanding the agency's ability to meaningfully engage at both country and regional levels, e.g., allocate appropriate human resources to strategic locations, expand/realign the mandate of current offices, and establish new offices.



- ii. Enhance headquarters support to regional and country offices, including project offices/field-based operations, in particular with respect to monitoring, reporting, evaluation, risk management and other human resources related matters.
- iii. Strengthen internal coordination and accountability, e.g., refining and/or establishing reporting lines between headquarters-based divisions, as well as between those divisions and offices away from headquarters, including project offices and related operations.⁹

Note: this paper primarily addresses actions and recommendations related to Pillar I; the actions necessary to effectuate Pillars II and III will be addressed in greater detail separately given the complexity of the issues and the need for wider engagement.¹⁰ The question for example of reporting lines between headquarters and field-based staff within the “communities of practice” as well as with Country Offices/the Regional Representatives is critical to the functioning and purpose of the regional reform and, as such, must be considered carefully with active engagement and input from all stakeholders.

b. Benefits of a parallel two-track realignment implementation strategy

In view of global circumstances, including the COVID-19 pandemic, internal and external financial constraints, and administrative and operational realities, it is recommended that the realignment exercise be implemented using a parallel two-track approach:

Track 1: Strengthen the agency's existing regional architecture. Locations/existing offices to be prioritized for strengthening based on strategic considerations, the principles articulated in this paper, and financial sustainability (a proposed business plan drafted by the Office of the Executive Director to be distributed separately from this paper).

Track 2: Establish new offices away from headquarters (an important consideration in this regard is raised below). An avenue to implement Track 2 that is touched on in this paper is to encourage expressions of interests by Member States to host a new UN-Habitat office (e.g., a global programme office). Decisions on host country locations would be based on clear criteria via a transparent process. These criteria may differ depending on the nature of the functions of the proposed offices.

c. Secretariat process for establishing offices away from headquarters

In December 2019, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General issued a directive on *Procedures for the Establishment of United Nations Offices away from Headquarters*. The EOSG directive was transmitted to the heads of all Secretariat entities.¹¹ Notably, the requirements of the EOSG directive only apply in cases where the entity seeks to establish a new office away from headquarters.¹²

What constitutes a "new" office is not readily apparent from the directive; however, it is understood that establishing an office by way of a host country agreement (HCA) with a Member State with which the entity does not already have such an agreement (even where the entity has a cooperation or other agreement with the government in place¹³) would constitute the establishment of a "new" office and, as such, would be subject to the EOSG requirements. Further clarity has been sought at the working level on the procedures set forth below, as well as the anticipated timeframes.

Procedures for the Establishment of United Nations Offices away from Headquarters:

1. Executive Director seeks "approval in principle" from the Secretary-General to establish the proposed office. EOSG to consider "institutional policy or political aspects, including any offer of financial and/or in-kind support from the prospective Host Government."
2. Technical, financial and legal aspects of the proposed office, as well as legal instruments to be discussed with the "relevant Offices and Departments of the Secretariat."
3. Office of Legal Affairs to provide "legal assistance with the negotiation of the host country or other office agreement with the Host Government, as well as any related financial and administrative agreements."
4. UN-Habitat remains responsible for "reporting to legislative bodies, including the United Nations General Assembly, as needed and deemed appropriate."

NOTE

new requirements for Secretariat entities when concluding a memorandum of understanding, cooperation or other such agreement were established in a separate EOSG directive issued in December 2019; however, the head of entity need only inform the EOSG and provide a copy of the document.

2. Enhanced impact through a strategic, varied, cost-effective regional architecture

Guiding principle: significant variation exists between countries and one size does not fit all; moreover, UN-Habitat has finite resources to deploy for maximum coverage and realization of its mandate.

Globally, many developing countries share urbanization-related challenges (e.g., unequal access to housing, high levels of pollution). Countries and regions also share challenges due to other commonalities, e.g., related environmental characteristics like rising sea levels for coastal cities, or transborder challenges such as migration and resettlement.

It is equally true that each region and country is shaped by its own unique history, culture, geography, and institutions. Urban policy from design to implementation and impact further depends on a variety of factors at all levels, including the scale, speed and source of urbanization, the size of cities, and the stage of urban development. Thus, to both manage the challenges and realize the benefits of urbanization requires unique initiatives tailored to specific contexts.

a. Current regional architecture

“It is critical that the UN development system moves away from a somewhat standardized model of physical presence, which largely reflects the historical evolution of each individual entity.”¹⁴

The UN development system (UNDS) concentrates a wide range of capacities at the regional level, mostly within the UN regional economic and social commissions (RECs). The UN funds and programmes and the specialized agencies generally maintain a regional presence, inter alia, to provide strategic guidance, technical backstopping, and policy as well as operational support to

the entity's country and sub-regional/multi-country offices, and to generate regionally focused data and analysis.

UN-Habitat's "regional presence" is represented by the organizational elements as set out below; these organizational elements include the full scope of UN-Habitat's presence and activities, from headquarters to its offices away from headquarters, and field-based project and programme offices.

Regional Programme Division

UN-Habitat's organizational structure (endorsed by the Executive Board in November 2019), includes a new and important element, the headquarters-based Regional Programme Division (RPD). Administratively, the Director RPD (D-2 level) is to serve as the First Reporting Officer for the Regional Representatives and has principle responsibility, inter alia (with support, input and guidance from other divisions and offices as necessary and appropriate), for project/programme development, planning and coordination (both with headquarters and field-based staff and offices), as well as for the implementation and monitoring of regional programmes and country activities.

Due to a lack of funding, the position of Director RPD remains unfilled; nor have any positions been filled in the RPD Coordination Office, which is to support the Director in their varied functions and responsibilities. Filling the position of Director RPD should be afforded the highest level of priority; the role is critical to the functioning of the regional architecture and the agency broadly.

The Regional Offices

The agency's regional presence presently operates from four distinct "Regional Offices." Each Regional Office is headed by a Regional Representative (D-1 level), and each has a mandate to cover operations and activities within the countries in separate groupings of Member States: the Africa Region (ROAF); Arab States Region (ROAS); Asia-Pacific Region (ROAP); and Latin America and the Caribbean Region (ROLAC). Information on projects and programmes currently being implemented by each of the Regional Offices at the region and country level (including on staffing), is available on the Global Dashboard.¹⁵

The Dashboard also contains information on projects being implemented by units/sections within the Global Solutions Division in countries covered by the Regional Offices.¹⁶

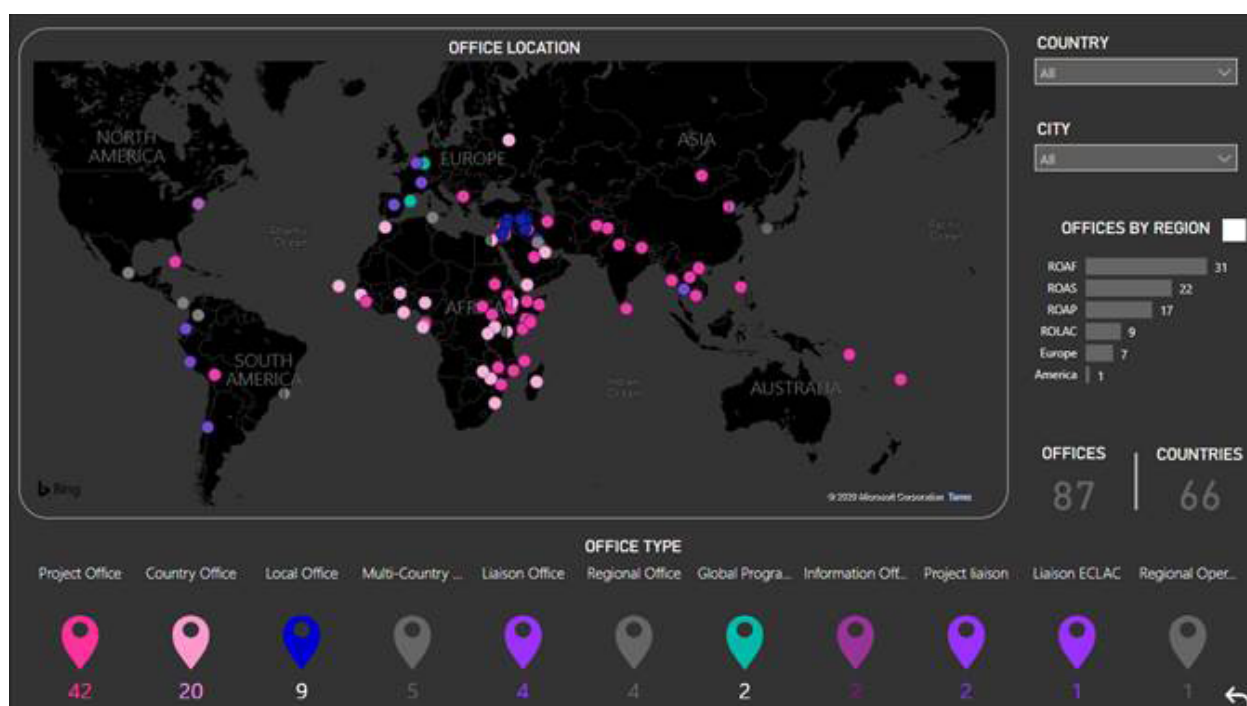
Additional project related information, including the countries within each designated region with ongoing projects/programmes, is available on the Global Dashboard.

While UN-Habitat maintains several offices and other types of presence within Continental Europe (the offices at Geneva and Brussels are addressed in limited detail below), the agency does not have an office specifically mandated to manage the "Europe Region," nor is there a Regional Representative for Europe.

Whether to designate a Regional Office for Europe and/or establish a Regional Representative for Europe, remains an open question; should it be decided to pursue either possibility, the way the geographical scope of the "Europe Region" is configured will require careful consideration.

NOTE

There is no single methodology for grouping Member States by region/sub-region in the UN system; however, the groupings employed by UN-Habitat do not widely align with those used by other UN entities. Moreover, the number of countries included under the four existing Regional Offices (as well as the overall geographic scope of the regions) varies widely, as does the project portfolio in the four regions (in terms of both value, number of activities, and projects being conducted).



Liaison and other offices away from headquarters¹⁷

The UN-Habitat Office at Brussels (formerly the Office for Europe and European Institutions) has primary responsibility, inter alia, for the agency's collaboration and engagement with EU Member States, European Institutions, and other Europe-based strategic counterparts. The Office also provides support to the Country Office for Spain, as well as several long-standing programmes in the region, e.g., the office in Kosovo.

The UN-Habitat Office at Geneva (formerly the Geneva Liaison Office) has primary responsibility, inter alia, for facilitating the agency's representation, participation and coordination with Geneva-based humanitarian and development entities and interagency bodies (UN and non-UN), including the Interagency Standing Committee (IASC).

Together with the UN-Habitat Office at New York (formerly the New York Liaison Office), the Geneva Office also serves as a focal point within the agency for intergovernmental as well as interagency advocacy, coordination, and collaboration. The New York Office has the additional responsibility of representing the agency within the UN Development Coordination Office, as well as for the overall integration of the UN development system reforms.

NOTE

No UN-Habitat office has an analogous liaison relationship vis-à-vis a UN system entity, specialized agency or Bretton Woods institution with which it is collocated, e.g., UNDP (New York), the World Bank (Washington, DC); WHO (Geneva); UNV and UNFCCC (Bonn).

b. Benefit of a varied and flexible typology of presence

UN-Habitat cannot and should not operate in the same manner across all locations. A strategic, diverse typology of presence will enable the agency to best meet the expectations of Member States, as well

as to support and facilitate coordination and collaboration with UN sister agencies and other strategic partners. For example, a robust in-country presence (e.g., a well-funded Country Office) would provide a strong platform from which the agency could lead on sustainable urbanization through, e.g., catalytic projects and technical advisory services. A more limited presence can still be effective by leveraging programmes (including joint programmes) and other means to influence UN entities and strategic partners to promote and implement sustainable urbanization principles.

Ultimately, a regional architecture based on a harmonized yet flexible and varied typology of presence is not only durable but it also aligns with a directive from the Member States and guiding principle of the Secretary-General's reforms that the UN development system (UNDS) move away from a one size fits all mentality to an approach that ensures "the right system-wide capacities and encourage[s] more integrative, effective and agile ways of working" for greater impact at the country level.¹⁸

Guiding principles: for a flexible, varied approach to succeed there must be a clear and agreed understanding of the roles, responsibilities, and distinctions between each typology of presence.

In addition to headquarters, the working group identified the following six typologies of presence:

Regional Office; (2) Country Office; (3) Multi-Country Office; (4) Liaison Office; (5) global programme office/thematic hub; and (6) project offices or other forms of country-level programme presence.

Proposed essential terms of reference for each typology are set out in Annex I of this paper.¹⁹

Note: typologies of presence may serve multiple functions, e.g., a Regional Office may also provide a liaison function vis-à-vis a regional body of strategic interest.

c. Maximizing programmatic range of coverage and impact effectively and efficiently: the case for multi-country offices

A well-resourced country office offers a host of benefits including enhanced understanding of national and local political and cultural contexts and the opportunity to develop close relationships with government counterparts. Moreover, strong national programming is key for UN-Habitat to provide high quality data, mapping, and targeted interventions necessary to ensure sustainable urbanization is prioritized. However, the agency cannot operate in the same manner in every location where its services are needed. While all means – including virtual – by which UN-Habitat's services may be provided should be explored, it is well-documented that the agency has the greatest impact where it is closer to the ground.

Moreover, the more countries in which UN-Habitat actively engages in these processes, the greater the range and depth of information from which the agency can identify urbanization trends and understand where demand for the agency's services is greatest.

One factor limiting the agency's ability to effectively engage with UNCTs is that its offices away from headquarters often operate with extremely limited resources. The level of personnel varies widely and is frequently not aligned with the size of the portfolio. Some projects (and even Country Offices at times) do not employ a single UN staff member, creating several organizational risks as well as a situation in which the agency is unable to meaningfully engage with the UNCT. It is also true that there are countries in which the agency has little or no footprint, including those that warrant priority status.

One means to expand programmatic coverage at the country level is through a network of offices mandated (and adequately resourced in staff and funding) to cover operations and activities in both the host country as well as in a designated sub-group of countries (especially where the agency is limited to a programme presence), i.e., a multi-country office or MCO modality.

One way in which an MCO typology could be initiated in the near term and in a manner that would expand the agency's effective participation within UNCTs (including, e.g., the CCA/Cooperation Framework processes) is through the reassignment of current staff to strategic offices/locations from which to manage operations and activities in multiple countries.²⁰ This would also effectively operationalize the "communities of practice" envisaged in the overall organizational reform, as well as reduce project and non-project expenditures, enhance overall efficiencies, and align with an imperative of the Secretary-General's reforms that oversight and decision-making be moved closer to the point of delivery.

Operating from the proposed MCO typology of presence would help to ensure that UN-Habitat is well-positioned to provide demand-driven, high quality services to Member States, as well as active, substantive support to UN Country Teams (UNCT) in an operationally and economically efficient manner.

In sum, operating from an MCO modality could provide a viable means for the agency to deliver support that is focused on the needs and expectations in more countries and enhance the agency's coordination and collaboration with UNCTs, while maintaining a light administrative footprint.

With the reform of the UN Development system, it has never been more critical that UN-Habitat engages closely with UNCTs in the development and implementation of the Common Country Analysis (CCA) and UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (Cooperation Frameworks).

d. Prioritization and location assessment to increase country-level engagement

There is the need as well as the potential for UN-Habitat to enhance and expand its presence at the country and regional levels. However, for reasons discussed, the agency cannot maintain the same level of presence in all locations. Moreover, ultimately the suitability and sustainability of any form of presence is determined by the effectiveness of the services provided and thus a strategic, flexible approach is advised.

For example, where “gaps” in programmatic coverage are identified at either the country or sub-regional level, i.e., those locations where there is significant need for UN-Habitat’s services but where there is inadequate capacity on the ground to deliver, it is likely that an MCO typology of presence would be best suited to close this gap at the country level.²¹

NOTE

Note: the working group has developed a set of criteria to assess and compare proposed locations from which to enhance programmatic coverage in a specific country/sub-region. Further detail and information on the criteria, as well as the assessment methodology.

Another possibility by which the agency could enhance its global presence is through the establishment of a new geographic region within the RPD structure. For example, in the context of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, a more clearly defined/established regional presence in west-central Asia could significantly enhance the agency’s level of participation in the newly established UN Regional Collaborative Platform for Europe and Central Asia (the Regional Collaborative Platforms are addressed in detail below).

Moreover, as noted above, there are presently significant imbalances in both the number of offices, as well as the range, number and size of projects and programmes being implemented by each of the four existing Regional Offices. For example, UN-Habitat currently maintains an office or other form of presence in 31 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, while the agency has almost no presence in the Caribbean subregion.²²

e. Financial considerations and the establishment of new offices

UN-Habitat maintains a large portfolio of projects financed almost entirely by hard-earmarked funds and technical cooperation agreements. One potential avenue to increase resources is to explore Member State interest (including financial) in hosting a new UN-Habitat office. One example is the establishment of an MCO with adequate resources to implement a comprehensive programme (including multiple clusters of projects) for sustainable urbanization that is tailored to the country and sub-regional context.

However, while large scale projects and programmes generate greater programme support cost, to grow and maintain its portfolio an office must benefit from unearmarked core resources as well. In short, for UN-Habitat to fully align its programme of work with the wider UNDS and maintain its normative authority, higher levels of voluntary or soft-earmarked funding is necessary.

To this end, in addition to establishing an MCO as described above, another means by which the agency may be able to generate soft-earmarked funding to support UN-Habitat’s normative work in particular is to invite expressions of interests from Member States to host a global programme office (e.g., GWOPA in Bonn) or a “thematic hub” (e.g., a global hub for data and innovation or urban adaptation and resilience). Should it be decided to pursue this option, further discussion to identify potential programmes/thematic areas would be warranted.

3. Enhanced regional and system-wide coordination and engagement

a. Programmatic alignment with the wider UN Development System

Guiding principle: actions taken to strengthen or amend the agency's current regional architecture should take into consideration the principle of enhanced alignment and integration at all levels within the reformed UNDS and wider UN system.

The present exercise presents an excellent opportunity for UN-Habitat to align its global presence to best enhance the agency's integration into the wider UN system, as well as the level of engagement with a range of strategic partners, including the regional UN Sustainable Development Group.²³

The UNDS is undergoing a deep and far-reaching reform intended to yield a system that is more integrated and better focused on delivery and impact on the ground. An important objective of the reform is to enhance the "collaboration, effectiveness and efficiency of joint work at the regional level and linkages to the global and country levels."²⁴ The Secretary-General in his recent report to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on the progress of the reform of the development system directed that all UNDS entities review and "take immediate concrete steps to align and better utilize United Nations regional assets."²⁵

The newly established Regional Collaborative Platforms provide a compelling example of the Secretary-General's commitment to enhancing system-wide coordination, including between the UN commissions, UNDP, and the enhanced Resident Coordinator system.

The Regional Collaborative Platforms (the Platforms) will serve as a "unifying mechanism to harness regional assets and translate the outcomes of the Regional Sustainable Development Forums into concrete programmatic responses by regional entities." The Deputy Secretary-General will serve as the chair for each of the Platforms, while the Under-Secretary-General of the respective regional commission, together with the UNDP regional director (at the Assistant Secretary-General level), will serve as vice-chairs. The Platforms will include a "policy and an operational pillar, drawing on the respective mandates and strengths of regional economic and social commissions and other regional offices of the UN development system."²⁶ Each platform will further be tailored to the respective region. In Africa, for example, "meetings between the Platform and the African Union will be organized to reflect the special relationship and effective implementation of our joint framework with the African Union for sustainable development."²⁷

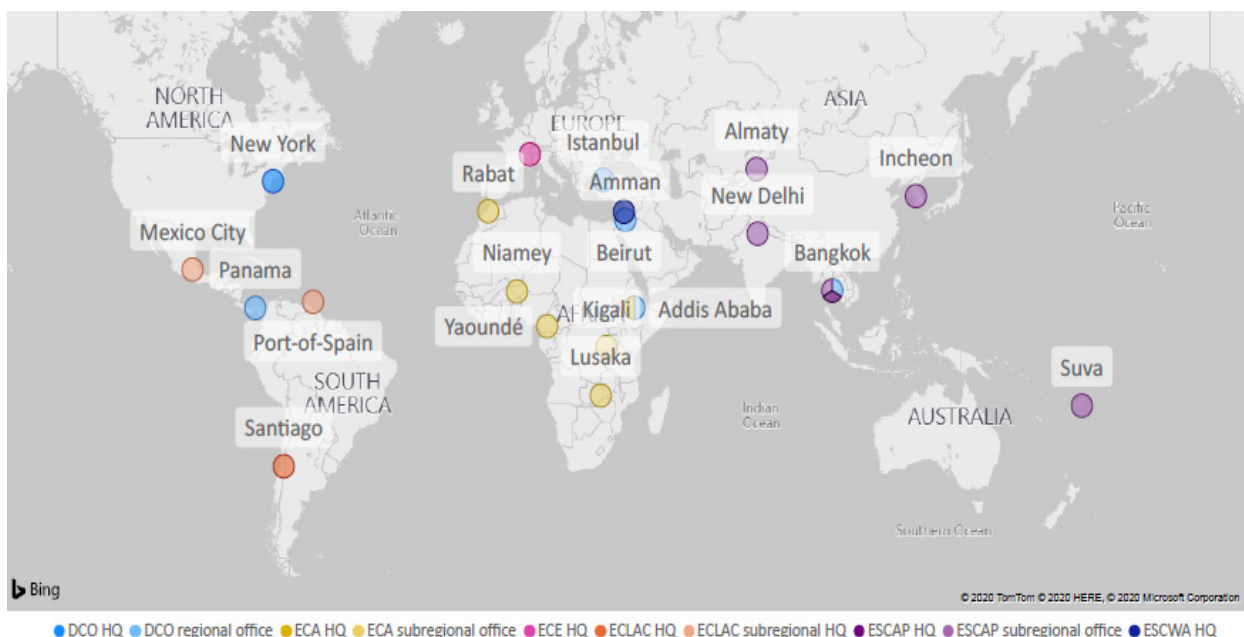
Achieving a harmonized "One UN" approach to the SDGs and other development agreements and accords will require extensive interaction, coordination and collaboration with sister agencies, funds and programmes, and other international bodies. Moreover, UN-Habitat's convening authority critical to achieving its integrated mandate is amplified by active engagement in regional coordination bodies and mechanisms.

Governing Council Resolution no 17/4 (1999) on 'Regionalization' mandates the elaboration of a comprehensive strategy for country-level activities and co-locating offices with the UN Development Programme, as well as collaboration with the Regional Social and Economic Commissions.

It is recommended to prioritize the allocation of appropriate levels of resources (both in terms of staff and funding) to locations that will enhance and support the agency's ability to engage in multilateral coordination, e.g., the regional Development Coordination Offices (DCOs), UN commissions or other such regional bodies.

NOTE

Given the focus on representation and coordination activities, the level and experience of staff assigned to such locations should be an important factor. That is to say, unlike a busy MCO which requires a range of staff and personnel at various levels and grades to perform an array of functions and responsibilities – including those directly related to project implementation – a small number of staff at the appropriate level would enable the agency to meaningfully engage with multilateral coordinating bodies.



In addition to the UN DCO in New York, there are five regional UN DCOs, some of which are co-located with the corresponding UN Regional Commission.²⁸

b. Bridging the humanitarian-development nexus

Guiding principle: realignment of the agency's current architecture should take into consideration the mandate to reduce risk and vulnerability to realize a future in which no one is left behind.

A priority of the SDGs is to build resilient societies and to deliver effective support for sustainable recovery in crisis and post-crisis countries.²⁹ In this context, UN-Habitat is

mandated to “assist Member States in disaster prevention, mitigation, and preparedness, as well as post-disaster rehabilitation capabilities in human settlements.”³⁰ Additionally, an important goal of the overall reforms of the UN system is to bridge the historic gap between the UN's humanitarian and development mandate.

For UN-Habitat to fulfil its two-pronged humanitarian mandate requires that the agency develops and maintains a two-fold capacity: (i) the ability to deploy appropriately trained staff where/as needed to provide technical advisory services within the scope of the agency's mandate, on a temporary basis (i.e., crisis deployment); and (ii) staff strategic locations at the appropriate level to represent/advocate for the agency's role (e.g., resilience and building back better) with the IASC and other bodies, and to engage in fundraising appeals and other joint humanitarian activities.

Presently the UN-Habitat Office at Geneva facilitates the agency's participation as a member of the IASC and is the focal point for humanitarian affairs at the interagency level.

4. Next steps

- **Consider budgetary implications** of various scenarios and related capacity to deliver at different levels of funding, e.g., establishment of premises for locations where there are either no existing UN-Habitat premises, or where the existing premises are inadequate for the requirements of the office. The levels of necessary recruitment will likely vary between regions/countries.
- **Consult with Member States** as appropriate (individually and/or regional groupings) to explain rationales for proposed structural elements and secure their support.
- **Commence implementation in a pilot phase** in a region/sub-region reflecting opportunity and feasibility in the specific context. Recruitment of full staffing complement is a prerequisite for delegation of authority. Communicate to national/regional partners on the mandate of the office.

Annexes

Annex I: Typologies of Presence

Regional Office (RO)

Headed by the Regional Representatives (D-1 level), Regional Offices serve a wide range of functions, e.g., promoting the agency's mandate in regional platforms as well as political and other forms of coordination and representation (including collaboration and coordination at the regional level with other UN agencies); mobilizing funds for regional and country-level activities; supporting countries on national policy development regarding sustainable urbanization; providing technical backstopping, policy and operational support to their country offices; and producing multi-country and regionally-focused data and analysis.

Regional Offices require consistent funding that is sufficient to support their multi-faceted mandate. Ideally, funding is derived from varied sources (in addition to the host country) under multi-year commitment(s).

Constitutive instrument: *Host Country Agreement (HCA)*.

Liaison Office (LO)

Liaison Offices support the agency's information and advocacy work, including facilitation/participation in fundraising campaigns (e.g., Geneva's role in Consolidated Appeals Processes (CAPs), or Bangkok within ASEAN). A Liaison Office should also serve a representational role forging strategic partnerships around issue-based coalitions and enabling policy and normative coherence.

Liaison Offices are managed by at least one UN staff member (level and grade guided by the scope/range of responsibilities/functions performed by the specific office).

Liaison Offices require predictable funding sufficient to support the mandate of the specific office (the scope and depth of which will likely vary by office). Ideally, funding is

derived from a range of sources, including core, i.e., non-earmarked funding.

Constitutive instrument: *HCA or other appropriate agreement(s)*.

Country Office (CO)

Country Offices oversee the implementation of a designated country programme aligned with UN-Habitat's strategic plan and orientation, the scope of which is established in agreement with the host country. Among other functions and responsibilities (which may vary by office), a Country Office works directly with the government's central coordinating organs and sectoral ministries, multilateral financial institutions, the regional commissions and bilateral programmes and non-governmental organizations. Country Offices are responsible for the management and coordination of in-country technical cooperation services under overall guidance of the Regional Programmes Division and in close coordination with headquarters.

Country Offices are headed by a UN staff member at the appropriate level and grade (e.g., P-4/P-5); or a National Officer of the appropriate level (e.g., NOC). There is a strong preference for Country Offices to be headed by internationally recruited professional level staff; it is further strongly encouraged that the incumbents of these positions are not a national of the host country.

Country Offices are to remain operational for an undefined or multi-year (often renewable) period and, as such, require the financial and human resources necessary to, inter alia, manage and implement multiple projects/programmes simultaneously.

Constitutive instrument: *HCA/ basis for individual/related projects established by agreement(s) between UN-Habitat and one or more party (e.g., CA, UNDP SBAA)*.

Multi-Country Office (MCO)

An MCO is distinguished from a Country Office based on a mandate to oversee and provide support for programmatic activities in the host country, as well as within a defined group of neighbouring/related countries. The purpose for the expanded mandate is to facilitate access to an increased number of countries, including those with significant need but where the agency may not be present. Other functions performed by an MCO may include representation, fundraising, advocacy, and coordination.

MCOs are headed by a UN staff member at the appropriate level and grade (e.g., P-5/D-1). Due to the nature of its mandate, an MCO may not be headed by a National Officer.

MCOs are intended to remain operational for an undefined or multi-year (often renewable) period. Funding is ideally diversified between one or more Member State (including the host country) and/or other sources. An MCO can only perform its intended purpose if provided sufficient financial and human resources to manage and implement multiple projects/programmes simultaneously in multiple countries.

Constitutive instrument: HCA; separate project-specific agreements covering operations in all countries served by the MCO (e.g., CA, UNDP SBAA).

Global programme office

These offices are programme-specific and refer to offices hosting a major global programme (e.g., CRGP in Barcelona), or thematic hubs. Staff of the office work in close collaboration with headquarters and

other offices (e.g., ROs) to ensure appropriate support for the design and delivery of programme activities in countries around the world. Duration and funding arrangements are established by an agreement between UN-Habitat and one or more other parties, host country/city/partner.

UN-Habitat global programme offices are managed by at least one professional-level staff member.

Project Office/programme presence

Project Offices (i.e., where Habitat maintains a physical presence in a country with which the programme does not have an HCA); Project Offices should only be established when demonstrably necessary for the agency to implement a project/programme, or cluster of projects.

Funding is derived from the project budget for a specific duration as per an agreement of cooperation (or analogous agreement) between UN-Habitat and one or more other parties.

This type of presence does not provide/establish a formal legal relationship with a host country, such as that provided by an HCA, and often does not consistently provide access to relevant coordination platforms. Funding is derived from the project budget for a specific duration as per the agreement. Project Offices and other forms of in-country programme presence should be administratively linked to a Country Office/MCO.

Project Offices are managed by at least one professional-level staff member or National Officer.

Annex II: Terms of Reference for key positions

Director, Regional Programmes Division (RPD)

Director, RPD oversees the entire regional and national programme portfolio and its implementation. The Director RPD ensures country and local priorities are in alignment with the organization's corporate policies and strategic objectives. The Director RPD brings opportunities and challenges to the attention of the Executive Committee (EC), including responses to urgent demands and requests from Member States.

Administratively, the Director RPD serves as First Reporting Officer for the Regional Representatives, and as Second Reporting Officer for the heads of Country Offices/MCOs.

Regional Representative

Under the supervision of the Director RPD, Regional Representatives guide the agency's approach as to the way to best position sustainable urbanization in the region, including overall programmatic strategic direction, the nature and form of support provided at the country and regional levels, and the agency's role, e.g., advocate, facilitator, implementer, and investor.

Administratively, Regional Representatives serve as First Reporting Officer for Country Offices/MCOs.

Regional Representatives coordinate UN-Habitat's participation in regional/interagency processes, and work to strengthen the agency's relations with governments and intergovernmental bodies in the region. Regional Representatives advocate for sustainable urbanization by mobilizing regional partners, including encouraging participation in global and regional events (e.g., World Urban Forum, World Urban Campaign, Urban October) and through other instruments of advocacy and communications. Regional Representatives further support the heads of Country Offices/MCOs by, inter alia, providing strategic and policy advice, and facilitating global/regional reports, data collection and trend analysis. Regional Representatives are responsible for monitoring regional and national programme performance.

Interregional Adviser (Sec 23 RB 3 P-5 posts)

The Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation (RPTC) was established by GA resolution 58(I) of 1946 with a stated purpose to "support developing countries, least developed countries, countries in economies in transition, and countries emerging from conflict in their capacity development efforts."

The RPTC mechanism is intended to provide "the operative flexibility for implementing entities to respond to urgent, unanticipated needs of developing countries, in a rapid-response capacity that is usually not provided for in voluntary funds." Programme activities should "promote the sharing of experiences across countries and regions, South-South cooperation and the building of knowledge networks to facilitate exchange and assistance ..." Activities are to be "small scale, demand driven and focused, targeting ... capacity development to meet international commitments arising from the outcome of UN conferences and summits." Ideally, these small scale "pilot activities" are used to link "the programme with better-endowed funds so as to generate largescale benefits."³¹

One of the sanctioned ways in which RPTC-funded activities may be implemented is in "the form of advisory services provided by inter-regional and regional advisers ... including preparation of technical studies," and trainings and other initiatives to develop capacity.³²

UN-Habitat Interregional Advisers (P-5 level) are tasked to leverage synergies and complementarities between the normative and operational work of UN-Habitat, to mobilize the agency's expertise in an integrated manner that complements broader United Nations efforts, and to coordinate activities to connect the needs of a specific country or partner with the communities of practice within Global Solutions Division.

Head of Office (Country Office)

Heads of Country Offices are Senior Human Settlements Officers (SHSO) or Chief Technical Advisors (CTAs) and represent the agency at the country level. Under the overall guidance

and supervision of RPD at the divisional level, they have overall responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of a country programme developed in cooperation with the Host Country. The Head of Office should identify and analyse urbanization-related trends and corresponding policy options and mobilize resources at the country level as well as secure external support for improving the condition of human settlements.

Head of Office (Multi-country Office, MCO)

MCOs are headed by a Senior Human Settlements Officer (SHSO) or Chief Technical Advisors (CTA) who represent UN-Habitat at the country level (in the Host Country), as well

as in the countries within the specific multi-country grouping. Under the overall guidance and supervision of RPD at the divisional level and with support from Country Offices and headquarters-based Divisions, they are responsible for ensuring consistency of the New Urban Agenda and SDGs as well as UN-Habitat's corporate policy and strategic priorities for operations and activities within the multi-country grouping. The Head of Office is also tasked to foster and develop strategic and programmatic partnerships at the country and sub-regional levels, and to mobilize resources from a variety of channels for delivery of the Strategic Plan and work programme.

Endnotes

- 1 Fragment of an Elegy, Rainer Maria Rilke.
- 2 On 1 January 1975, the General Assembly established the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation (UNHHSF), the first official UN body dedicated to urbanization. Then under the umbrella of UNEP, its task was to assist national programmes relating to human settlements through the provision of capital and technical assistance activities particularly in developing countries. The mandate was expanded in 1977 (A/Res 32/162), which transformed the Committee on Housing, Building, and Planning into the Commission on Human Settlements serviced by the Centre for Human Settlements (known as "Habitat"). Under its expanded mandate, Habitat served as the focal point for human settlements actions and the coordination of activities within the United Nations system. In 2002, through its resolution 56/206, the General Assembly merged the UNHHSF, the Commission on Human Settlements, and Habitat into a programme of the United Nations (now referred to as "UN-Habitat"). The main documents outlining UN-Habitat's mandate further include, e.g., the Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements (Habitat I), the Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements (Habitat II and the Habitat Agenda), and the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium.
- 3 A/RES/71/256 (23 December 2016), para. 165.
- 4 Technical cooperation (initially known as "technical assistance") has a fundamental place in development. At its best, technical cooperation is tailored to socioeconomic, physical, and ecological realities, and both recalls and celebrates the fact that every country has unique knowledge (particular experience or ingenious solution) and that with an increasing number of countries facing common challenges, all countries – developed and developing – have valuable knowledge to share to promote best practices and implement real solutions. In 1959, there was a change in the official nomenclature when the General Assembly amended its practice and "technical assistance" was replaced with "technical cooperation" (UNGA, 1959).
- 5 The United Nations Evaluations Group has defined normative work as "the support to the development of norms and standards in conventions, declarations, regulatory frameworks, agreements, guidelines, codes of practice and other standard-setting instruments at the global, regional and national level. Normative work also includes the support to the implementation of these instruments at the policy level, i.e., their integration into legislation, policies and development plans, and to their implementation at the programme level."
- 6 A copy of the working group terms of reference were provided to the members of the Programme Management Committee by way of memorandum from the Executive Director, 15 January 2020.
- 7 The UN-Habitat Global Dashboard has been configured for access on computers and mobile devices. Users are required to log in to the Microsoft Power BI platform at <https://app.powerbi.com/groups/c4d2f968-9761-41f9-a315-a315-0b17750fe58c/reports/4605aaa3-4dfd-4a41-8d5a-fe8d5a805c25?ctid=0f9e35db-544f-4f60-bdcc-5ea416e6dc70> or to download the Power BI App.
- 8 The Dashboard remains a "work in progress"; for example, it is currently being further developed to serve as a donor relations and advocacy tool in alignment with the deliverable articulated in the working group terms of reference "to identify potential areas for growth and opportunities for enhanced alignment with other development actors." Note also, while some information has been gathered for this purpose during the Dashboard building exercise, the deliverable that the working group, "together with MACS and the Regional Representatives, carry out an audit of the financial situation of all the field-based operations" has been delayed.
- 9 Final alignment of reporting lines will be based on the UN-Habitat corporate-level RACI.
- 10 While MACS and RPD have submitted inputs on Pillar II, recommendations will be finalized once the principles of Pillar I have been endorsed. Regarding Pillar III, the RPD RACI will serve as the starting point for full divisional alignment once implementation and review period of the corporate RACI has run (i.e., December 2020).
- 11 Guidance on the implementation process for the directive at the administrative level remains pending.
- 12 New requirements for Secretariat entities to follow when concluding memorandum of understanding, cooperation, and other such agreements were also established in a separate EOSG memorandum (also dated December 2019). The new requirements, however, only require the Head of Entity to inform the EOSG of the agreement and provide the office with a copy. As such, it may prove expeditious to realign the mandate of existing offices where possible to achieve an organizational objective, given the more onerous requirements for opening an entirely new office.
- 13 The working group TORs include a mandate to "together with the Legal Unit and the Regional Representatives, conduct a desk-review of the modalities/legal instruments under which UN-Habitat's operations are being carried out (e.g., Host Country Agreement);" this work remains on-going and is concurrent with the terms of reference of a "legal taskforce" established by the UN DCO (September 2020); the taskforce is chaired by the Office of Legal Affairs and comprised of representatives from all UNDS entities.
- 14 Secretary-General's report on Repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: our promise for dignity, prosperity and peace on a healthy planet, 20 December 2017, A/RES 72/279, para. 38.
- 15 The Dashboard is accessible at: <https://app.powerbi.com/groups/c4d2f968-9761-41f9-a315-0b17750fe58c/reports/4605aaa3-4dfd-4a41-8d5a-fe8d5a805c25?ctid=0f9e35db-544f-4f60-bdcc-5ea416e6dc70>
- 16 The information available via the Dashboard for GSD projects in the regions remains incomplete.
- 17 This is a non-exhaustive list; information on country and project offices is available via the Dashboard.
- 18 See, e.g., A/RES 72/279.
- 19 This exercise was aligned with the deliverable articulated in the TORs for the working group to "develop criteria for typologies of in-country presence (e.g., Programme/Project Office, Country Office, Multi-Country Office)."
- 20 As a general rule, an MCO should be no more than a half day's travel from any location where it is responsible for operational implementation and monitoring.
- 21 The working group has developed a proposed methodology to map the nexus of the need for programmatic intervention, with demand (opportunity for implementation) and current capacities.
- 22 See the UN-Habitat Global Dashboard for further information.
- 23 The Regional undg Teams consist of the regional directors of the UN funds, programmes and specialized agencies active in the respective regions; in some regions the RECs are also part of the Regional undg Team.
- 24 <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/other/news-public/updates-un-development-system-reform>

- 25 SG Report “on the implementation of the 2016 quadrennial comprehensive policy review and the reforms of the United Nations development system”, para. 179.
- 26 See DSG remarks <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/dsg/statement/2019-05-22/deputy-secretary-generals-remarks-day-2-of-the-economic-and-social-council-operational-activities-for-development-delivered>
- 27 SG Report on the implementation of the 2016 quadrennial comprehensive policy review and the reforms of the United Nations development system. Para. 180: Secretariat services for the RCPs will be provided by the DCO, the regional commissions, and UNDP. The regional commissions and UNDP will provide logistical support “drawing on their strong expertise and operational capacities”, while the DCO will have primary responsibility to “support for the chair in organizing the annual planning meetings of the platforms” as well as to provide “support to the vice-chairs throughout the year, alongside the other members of the secretariat.”
- 28 The Regional undg Teams consist of the regional directors of the UN funds, programmes and specialized agencies active in the respective regions. In some regions the RECs are also part of the Regional undg Team.
- 29 The UN system crisis portfolio is split over Geneva (clusters, large humanitarian agencies) and New York (peace and security, UNDP crisis bureau, UNICEF, OCHA leadership).
- 30 See, e.g., GA/RES 59/239 (22 December 2004), para. 18; Humanitarian Affairs, and the Role of UN-Habitat, Strategic Policy on Human Settlements in Crisis and Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction Framework (2008).
- 31 See <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/2015/11/regular-programme-of-technical-cooperation/>
- 32 See A/59/397, para. 96 (<https://undocs.org/A/59/397>)

UN-Habitat Internal Policy Paper

Guiding principles to realign and enhance the agency's regional architecture

UN HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

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