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**Economic Commission for Europe****Committee on Housing and Land Management**

Seventy-first session

Geneva, 20–21 September 2010

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

**Work of the Bureau and the report of the Housing  
and Urban Management Advisory Network (HUMAN)****Report of the Bureau meetings of the Committee on Housing  
and Land Management for the period 2009–2010****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

This note contains the reports of the meetings of the Bureau of the Committee on Housing and Land Management, held in Prague on 21 December 2009, and in Geneva on 19 March 2010. It provides information supporting the annotated provisional agenda of the meeting (ECE/HBP/161) as well as the programme of work for 2010–2011 (ECE/HBP/2010/1), as many of the issues and proposals agreed at the Bureau meetings will be presented and considered at the seventy-first session of the Committee.

**I. Bureau meeting, 21 December 2009, Prague****A. Programme of work: action taken since the seventieth session of the  
Committee on Housing and Land Management**

1. The Bureau was briefed about action taken to implement the programme of work for 2009–2010 since the Committee's seventieth session in September 2009. The following was highlighted:

(a) The successful outcome of the Vienna International Forum on Energy Efficiency in Housing, which had been held from 23 to 25 November 2009. The meeting had benefited from the participation of over 350 experts, who had had an opportunity to provide input to the draft United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Action Plan for Energy-efficient Housing in the UNECE Region. The document had been considered to be of very high quality, as had the UNECE publication on *Green Homes* (ECE/HBP/159), launched on that occasion.

(b) Current work on the UNECE study on climate change adaptation and mitigation in cities, including progress made in identifying experts to contribute to the study. A complete outline would be presented at the next meeting of the Bureau in March 2010;

(c) Progress made with country profiles, notably, the launching of the Belarus country profile in early December 2009; the upcoming final review of the country profile of Kyrgyzstan; the finalization of the country profile of Azerbaijan; and the upcoming fact-finding mission to Tajikistan (7 February 2010);

(d) The launching of a video jointly prepared by United Nations Television and the secretariat on energy efficiency in housing, and the side event held during the fifteenth Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Copenhagen, which had benefited from the presence of the Executive Secretary of UNECE and the Chair of the Committee on Housing and Land Management;

(e) Upcoming workshops in 2010 were announced. The need to develop related concept notes for each workshop was stressed and a call for presentations, already circulated to through the Committee's "Vital Spaces" newsletter, was also made. The following workshops were planned: the Working Party on Land Administration workshop on Transparency in Land Administration (Baku, March 2010); the workshop on Building and Construction Safety (Baku, mid-March 2010); and the workshop on Greening the Real Estate Market (Dessau, Germany, end of April);

(f) The development of a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) office in Moscow for future cooperation and mutual support, including the proposal for the development of training courses on affordable housing and energy efficiency.

2. The Bureau welcomed the development of the joint training courses with UN-HABITAT, and invited the secretariat to inform them about further actions in that regard. It was also suggested to develop a similar proposal for South-Eastern Europe. The delegate of the Republic of Moldova mentioned the intention to hold a workshop on affordable housing for the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in 2011.

## **B. Provisional calendar of Committee on Housing and Land Management events in 2010**

3. The Bureau reviewed the calendar of Committee-related events. The Bureau also considered the invitation of UN-HABITAT to the secretariat to a meeting in Serbia on social housing in February 2010, noting that it was important to stress the UNECE work on housing in that country.

### **C. Ministerial Segment of the Committee in September 2010**

4. The secretariat informed the Bureau that the Committee's seventy-first session and the related ministerial meeting were scheduled to take place on 20 and 21 September 2010. The meeting would be held in Geneva if no host country were found.

5. At the meeting, the ministers would be requested to adopt the draft Action Plan for Energy-efficient Housing in the UNECE Region. The Bureau further suggested that ministers be presented with a background document containing a policy framework for affordable, healthy and green housing in the UNECE region. The background paper, to be prepared by the secretariat with the assistance of experts, should offer the basis for an in-depth discussion on the issue, including the development of a framework convention on affordable, healthy and green housing for UNECE.

6. The Bureau was of the opinion that the development of such a framework convention would provide countries with an effective tool for the sustainability of the housing sector and further support the application and implementation of already existing UNECE housing tools (e.g. social housing guidelines, housing finance principles, the draft Action Plan on Energy-efficient Housing, etc.). The ministerial meeting would offer an occasion to have a high-level exchange on that topic and to consider the opportunity to develop such a framework convention.

7. It was agreed that the secretariat would issue a notification to all UNECE ministers announcing the high-level segment and its format (one day, with half a day dedicated to the draft Action Plan, and the other to the discussion of the policy framework for affordable, healthy and green housing). The letter would refer to the background documents and the proposal of considering the development of a UNECE framework convention, as mentioned above.

8. The secretariat would work immediately on the identification of suitable experts for the drafting of the background document related to the draft framework convention.

9. Bureau members stressed the importance of linking that process to the European Union (EU) meeting of housing ministers to be convened by Spain. It was agreed that EU ministers should be provided early in advance with the agenda of the UNECE high-level segment and have an opportunity to discuss it during their June meeting.

### **D. Social Housing Summit: participation and contribution of the Committee on Housing and Land Management**

10. UNECE had been invited to sponsor the Social Housing Summit to be held in October 2010 in the Netherlands. The Bureau had requested the secretariat to withdraw its support, however, as not enough information was available on the aim and objectives of that meeting. Moreover, payment of fees was required, which was not in line with United Nations policy. The secretariat was requested to inform the Social Housing Summit's organizers about the Bureau's decision.

### **E. Green building workshop in Canada and cooperation with the UNECE Timber Committee**

11. Bureau members were presented with a preliminary programme of the green building workshop to be held in Canada, but were also informed that the secretariat had already submitted detailed comments on it, as the copy provided was a very preliminary draft that had needed updating.

12. The Bureau reiterated its willingness to cooperate in the workshop; however, some Bureau members highlighted the potential risks of having a one-sided view projected, and recalled the interest of the private sector representatives. The Bureau therefore cautioned the secretariat to ensure a balanced approach to topics in the programme. It was suggested that the workshop should reflect a holistic approach to green building. If that were not possible, then the title should be changed to reflect simply the contribution of timber to green building.

13. In relation to the current programme, the Bureau stressed the need to focus on the outcome of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, and to consider innovative solutions and case studies, in order to provide useful guidance and insights to UNECE countries. The role of UNECE should be stressed if UNECE were to remain as an organizer.

14. The Bureau looked forward to receiving a revised version of the programme for the workshop by the Timber Committee and its secretariat at the earliest opportunity, and would provide input accordingly.

#### **F. Cooperation with the EU: proposals for future coordination**

15. During its EU Presidency, the Czech Republic had been tasked to develop an interdisciplinary approach and to bridge different topics on the EU agenda, including housing. For example, the Czech Presidency had facilitated the exchange of experience needed in areas of urban planning, housing and energy efficiency, which could be extended to UNECE countries through the Committee on Housing and Land Management. The Czech Republic had also decided to host a workshop on urban planning in early May 2010 to continue that exercise.

16. Bureau members reiterated the importance of linking the Committee's work and agenda to current EU work under the Spanish Presidency, as well as to Eurocities, given the relevance of their agenda to the Committee.

#### **G. Any other business**

17. The secretariat announced that the European Congress on Housing Finance: beyond Subprime, organized by the European Federation of Building Societies and Verband der Privaten Bausparkassen, would be held in Munich, Germany, in May 2010. HUMAN members who were also involved in the event had asked UNECE to be co-organizers. The announcement had already been circulated to Committee members and it was decided that it should be circulated to members of the Working Party on Land Administration as well.

18. World Urban Forum. The UNECE Executive Secretary had agreed with the UN-HABITAT Executive Director at a meeting in Moscow that he would participate in the Forum and deliver a speech at the opening of the session in Brazil. An invitation to make a presentation in a dialogue was also received by the Director of UNECE's Environment, Housing and Land Management Division, and a request for a networking event had been submitted by UNECE to UN-HABITAT. The Bureau suggested that a letter from the Housing and Land Management Committee Chair be sent to the Executive Director of UN-HABITAT, to ask for confirmation of the participation of UNECE in the above events. The secretariat was also asked to identify Committee delegates that would be present in Rio in order to involve them in those side events.

19. Given the high number of workshops in 2010 and the need to streamline reporting, the secretariat suggested that only one document be prepared containing short summaries of

all intersessional workshops for the next session of the Committee. The Bureau endorsed that proposal.

20. The secretariat circulated a concept note prepared by the secretariat of the UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents, including the proposal for a joint seminar on land-use planning and industrial accidents. The seminar to be co-organized by the two UNECE bodies was intended to exchange information between experts in the two sectors on respective responsibilities and opportunities for cooperation. The concept note suggested the convening of a task force to be established also with experts from the Housing and Land Management Committee. The Bureau endorsed the idea in principle and asked to be informed about future developments at its next meeting in March 2010.

21. The secretariat informed the Bureau about a meeting held on the previous day with two members of HUMAN and conveyed the apologies of the Advisory Network for not being present at the Bureau meeting. The discussion with HUMAN had been very productive and the HUMAN Chair would provide the secretariat with a short note identifying areas for HUMAN contributions and future activities. The note would be presented at the next meeting of the Bureau.

22. As per customary practice, the Bureau agreed that, should a country offer to host the seventy-second session of the Committee on Housing and Land Management and its ministerial meeting, a representative of that country would be included on the Bureau as an observer.

23. The Chair highlighted the importance of continuing to promote the activities of the Committee and to identify further strategies to increase its visibility. It was suggested that a discussion on that issue be held at the next meeting of the Bureau.

24. The Chair and the secretariat thanked the host country for the excellent organization and generous support to the meeting.

## **II. Bureau meeting, 19 March 2010, Geneva**

### **A. Progress in the implementation of the programme of work**

25. The secretariat reported on action taken to further implement the Committee's programme of work 2010–11, and highlighted in particular:

(a) Ongoing country profile exercises (in Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan) at different stages of completion and countries that had indicated interest in a future review (Ukraine and Uzbekistan);

(b) The outline of the study on climate neutral cities, as prepared by a consultant;

(c) The final version of the draft Action Plan on Energy-efficient Housing in the UNECE Region;

(d) Upcoming workshops: in Dessau, Germany, on Greening the Real Estate Market (26–27 April 2010); in Munich, Germany, on Housing Finance beyond Subprime (17–19 May 2010); in Prague, on Enhancing Urban Performance (3–4 May 2010); and in Baku, on Building and Construction Safety (November 2010);

(e) A planned workshop in conjunction with the UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention on land-use planning (November 2010).

26. The Chair of the Working Party on Land Administration reported on the implementation of section 3 of the programme of work, namely land registration and land markets. In particular he stressed:

(a) Recent and future workshops of the Working Party, including the successful outcome of the recent workshop held in Baku; the upcoming workshop on e-governance in Minsk (8–9 June 2010); and future host countries and venues (Antalya, Turkey, and Italy, at a venue to be decided);

(b) The request of the Republic of Moldova to have a Land Administration review performed;

(c) The publication of the Real Estate Market Advisory Group study, entitled “Policy Framework for Sustainable Real Estate Markets”, which would serve as the basis for future work of the Advisory Group;

(d) Progress made in the development of a study on fraud in electronic conveyancing.

27. The Bureau approved the choice of the consultant for the outline for the study on climate neutral cities and the timeline for the study. The Bureau also agreed on the final version of the draft Action Plan, which would be submitted to the Committee’s seventy-first session for adoption.

## **B. Programme of work of HUMAN**

28. The representative of HUMAN introduced the programme of work prepared in cooperation with the other members. Activities proposed were endorsed by the Bureau. In addition the member of HUMAN offered to work on a “housing cluster” within the next six months. That structure would facilitate understanding and communication of housing issues within a broader spectrum of stakeholders. The Bureau welcomed the offer.

## **C. Ministerial Segment**

29. The Bureau identified a number of factors that made the organization of the Ministerial Segment in September 2010 problematic, including uncertainties within the EU on ministerial gatherings on housing issues, which would also limit high-level participation in the UNECE ministerial meeting; the lack of a host country for the UNECE Ministerial meeting in 2010; and a shortage of staff within the secretariat.

30. The Bureau thus decided to postpone the ministerial meeting to September 2011. Moreover, the Bureau felt that as the ministers were to decide about the development of a convention on affordable, healthy and ecological housing, it would be advisable to dedicate a regular Committee meeting to the discussion of the related paper, and have the Committee recommending the development of such a convention. So far, the recommendation had come only from the Committee’s Bureau.

31. The Committee on Housing and Land Management’s seventy-first session would thus last two days only and would have on its agenda as priorities the adoption of the draft Action Plan for Energy-efficient Housing in the UNECE Region and the discussion of the policy paper on affordable, healthy and ecological housing.

## **D. Policy paper on affordable, healthy and ecological housing**

32. The Bureau considered the extended outline of the paper on affordable, healthy and ecological housing and suggested some amendments. It was decided to allow further comments to the paper until 15 April, including suggestions on policy papers to be referenced. Comments and suggestions should be addressed to the secretariat. The consultants could, however, already start drafting the final version, which needed to be submitted to the Committee's seventy-first session and therefore had to be completed by mid-June at the latest. The Bureau also took notice of the position paper on affordable housing published by Eurocities in 2010, and of an EU Consensus Conference in December 2010 on the role of housing in achieving social inclusion (European Consensus Conference on Homelessness).

## **E. Visibility of the Committee on Housing and Land Management**

33. The secretariat presented the final version of the video prepared in cooperation with United Nations Television. The video would be posted on the UNECE website, as well as on YouTube, and made available to all Committee members at the next session. The Bureau welcomed the video and discussed further opportunities to enhance the visibility of the Committee's work. It was agreed to develop another short video on country profiles, featuring the preparation process as well as the impacts of the review. It was also suggested that suitable opportunities be identified for the involvement of permanent missions in Geneva in the Committee's work.

## **F. Training courses and cooperation with other organizations**

34. The secretariat informed participants about the recent decision of the CIS-UN-HABITAT commission (part of the CIS Committee on Construction) to develop UNECE/UN-HABITAT training courses on affordable housing. The Government of Belarus had already offered to host the first course in Minsk in November 2010. UNECE and UN-HABITAT were now cooperating to develop the programme and curriculum of the course, and to identify trainers.

35. A training course on the legal aspects of housing and land management had been developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Georgia based on the results of the country profile. More information on that course would also be forwarded to Committee members in due course. The secretariat also relayed information on an upcoming UNDP publication on the Millennium Development Goals, which would include reference to the Committee's work as a best practice for the reduction of informal settlements and in enhancing housing affordability.

## **G. World Urban Forum events**

36. The secretariat informed members about its planned participation in the World Urban Forum and related events. The Executive Secretary of UNECE would be attending the event and making a presentation in Dialogue 4. A UNECE networking event on climate neutral homes had also been organized and would feature different presentations from member States and international governmental organizations. The secretariat also provided details about its efforts to reduce participation costs to the minimum, given the far away location of the 2010 Forum (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil).

**H. Any other business**

37. The secretariat presented the Bureau with the biennial performance evaluation per cluster of activities 2008–2009 and agreed to submit the new proposed biennial evaluation plan per cluster of activities 2010-2011. The Bureau agreed on both documents.

38. The Bureau also took the opportunity to thank Paola Deda, who has been promoted to another Division, for her excellent work at the secretariat over the past two years and to wish her the best success in her new job.

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