Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Housing and Land Management

Informal Meeting
Geneva, 27 June 2017
Item 1 of the provisional agenda
Geneva Declaration on Sustainable Housing and Urban Development

Draft Geneva Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Housing and Urban Development

Note by the Bureau of the Committee

Summary

This year, UNECE will celebrate the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the Committee on Housing and Land Management during the 78th Session of the Committee on Housing and Land Management on 8-10 November 2017. In order to mark the event, at its 77th Session in September 2016, the Committee also agreed to conclude this high-level exchange forum with the adoption of a Ministerial Declaration.

A first draft of the Declaration was reviewed by the Committee at its Special Session in December 2016 and the Bureau of the Committee on Housing and Land Management subsequently prepared a second draft taking into account the revisions requested by the Committee.

The second draft was circulated to all stakeholders in May 2017 and comments were received from: the governments of Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Spain, Switzerland and United Kingdom; non-governmental organizations, including the International Union of Tenants, the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless, and the International Real Estate Federation; and other individual stakeholders.

This document is the consolidated third draft of the Ministerial Declaration reflecting all the comments received by the deadline. The Committee is invited to discuss and finalise this document so it may be circulated as the final draft to be adopted by the Ministers and heads of delegations participating in the Ministerial segment of the 78th Session of the Committee on Housing and Land Management on 9 November 2017.

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Please recycle

I. History of the decision to prepare a draft Geneva Declaration on Sustainable Housing and Urban Development

1.   At the 77th session of the Committee on Housing and Land Management, the Chair of the Committee noted that the predecessor of the Committee was established as an intergovernmental body in 1947 and the Committee is to celebrate its 70th anniversary at its seventy-eighth session.

2.   To mark the event, the Committee decided to organize a Ministerial Segment at the seventy-eighth session in 2017 and adopt a Declaration on sustainable housing and urban development on the occasion of the Committee's 70th anniversary.

3.   The Committee requested the secretariat to organise an online consultation to prepare a draft Declaration during October-December 2016 and a Committee meeting in December 2016 in Geneva in order to discuss the first draft of the Declaration, the preparations of a Ministerial Segment, and the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Committee during the seventy-eighth session.

4.   At its Special Session in December 2016, the Committee discussed the first draft of the Ministerial Declaration prepared by the secretariat with the inputs received during the online consultation. The Committee agreed on a number of amendments; and requested the Bureau and the secretariat to revise the first draft accordingly so that a second draft would be consulted more broadly with all stakeholders in order to elaborate a third draft.[1]

5.   The Committee agreed to consult further on a third draft of the Ministerial Declaration at an informal Committee meeting before submission for adoption at the Ministerial Segment during the seventy-eighth session of the Committee.

6.   This document represents the third draft of the Ministerial Declaration and its Background Paper for the review of the Committee at its informal meeting on 27 June 2017.

II. Draft Geneva Declaration on Sustainable Housing and Urban Development

to be adopted by the Heads of national delegations and stakeholders of the ECE region participating in the seventy-eighth session of the ECE Committee on Housing and Land Management on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the establishment of the Committee

(Geneva, 9 November 2017)

A. *Preamble*

1.   We, the national government delegations from the member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), as well as relevant stakeholders, including local and regional authorities, intergovernmental organizations, United Nations agencies, professionals and academia, the private sector, civil society, women and youth participating in the seventy-eighth session of the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management in Geneva on 8-10 November 2017, met to discuss the challenges and opportunities of housing in liveable cities and human settlements, and to mark the seventieth anniversary of the Committee.

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[1] Report of the CHLM Special Session, available at
http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E

Commented [DC1]: Proposed by Switzerland with the comment: "In our view it is important and necessary that this is a Declaration on 'sustainable' housing and urban development, that can be seen in the context of sustainable development (and the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda)."

Commented [DC2]: Proposed by Switzerland with the comment: "In our view it is important and necessary that this is a Declaration on 'sustainable' housing and urban development, that can be seen in the context of sustainable development (and the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda)."

Commented [DC3]: Question from Switzerland:" If the declaration is to be adopted by stakeholders too, how will the consultation of the text be organized?"

Commented [DC4]: Comment by a representative from academia: "In line with the primary goals of the Committee and the important milestone the Committee."

2.   We appreciate the historical importance of the Committee as a cornerstone of the pan-European cooperation in the field of housing and urban development, including transforming efforts in countries with transition of their economies from the centrally planned economy and administrative dealing with dwellings towards market economies with real property markets and systems of property registration. The Committee is the only open pan-European platform to deal with these topics from all the relevant views – economic, social and environmental. The work of the Committee is aimed mainly at assisting Member States to address a number of major housing and urban challenges, including those with an international nature, like energy efficiency measures in the residential sector, or preventing social exclusion due to unaffordable housing for disadvantageous and vulnerable groups of people, etc. All parameters are discussed and exchange of practical steps and guidelines and methodologies are produced to help namely countries in transition deeply and in result-oriented way.

3.   We reiterate the importance for governments at all levels and relevant stakeholders to promote the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[2], the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030[3], the Paris Agreement on climate change[4], the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development[5], the UN-Habitat Global Housing Strategy[6], the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing[7], the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning, and the Strategy for Sustainable Housing and Land Management in the ECE Region for the Period 2014-2020[8].

4.   We welcome the adoption of the New Urban Agenda by the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development - Habitat III[9] and therefore recognise UN-Habitat role within the United Nations system 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[10]. We underline the need to promote coherence and cross-sectoral links in implementing the above-mentioned global and regional accords.

B. We are aware of the following trends:

5.   Across the region, the shift to a post-industrial, knowledge economy, and the increasingly important role of services, are changing the structure and character of the economy, introducing demands for enhanced qualifications from the labour market and placing different spatial demands on the cities. The knowledge economy and the digital revolution flourish around centres of scientific and educational excellence, and are placing new demands on the physical structure of the cities, including challenges in access to affordable housing for increasing number of population.

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[2] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld

[3] http://www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/sendai-framework

[4] http://newsroom.unfccc.int/paris-agreement/

[5] http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/AAAA_Outcome.pdf

[6] http://unhabitat.org/urban-themes/housing-slum-upgrading/

[7] http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/Publications/UNECE_Charter_EN.pdf

[8] http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/sessions/docs2013/draft.strategy.post.pdf

[9] https://www.habitat3.org/

[10] Art. 171 of New Urban Agenda

Commented [DC5]: Proposed by Czech Republic

Commented [DC6]: Proposed by Czech Republic

Commented [DC7]: Proposed by Czech Republic

Commented [DC8]: Proposed by Czech Republic

Commented [GR9]: Brought forward as per Swiss comment to highlight the context of the 2030 Agenda

Commented [DC10]: Proposed by Czech Republic

Commented [DC11]: Proposed by FIABCI

Commented [DC12]: Proposed by a representative from academia

6.   ICTs play a growing role in the development of smart, sustainable cities, with initiatives aiming at sustaining and improving quality of life in urban areas, though this growth presents its own unique set of challenges, such as privacy, security, defence of public interests, etc.

> **Commented [DC13]:** Proposed by Azerbaijan

7.   Social and spatial inequality within and among the cities in the region has been growing, making some high quality urban areas and housing affordable only to the most affluent. Homelessness and housing exclusion have been increasing. The demographic ageing and the recent wave of migration are exacerbating the complexity of the growing inequalities.

> **Commented [DC14]:** Proposed by Czech Republic

> **Commented [DC15]:** Comment by a representative from academia. "Urban area may be affordable but this does not guarantee access to affordable housing of an appropriate size in the same area – I suggest to add housing. "

8. Lack of affordability of housing is a critical matter, leading to problems of accessibility to adequate housing, social exclusion, and increased spatial stratification in cities[11]. The global financial crisis has changed the way the housing system operate, there is an increased need for affordable housing options in tenure balanced manner that can enable social mobility within cities. The housing sector needs to address these problems while meeting new aspirations, such as energy efficiency and customer-adjusted design, along with the provision of additional services (e.g. for the elderly, the homeless and migrant people).

> **Commented [DC16]:** Proposed by a representative from academia

> **Commented [DC17]:** Proposed by FEANTSA (European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless)

> **Commented [DC18]:** Proposed by a representative from academia – New paragraph addition

9.   There is widespread consensus for intergovernmental action on the environment and climate change. In the cities of the UNECE region, this will mean an accelerated trend to further curbing pollution and more rapidly de-carbonizing urban development and life, requiring adequate environmental regulations while respecting other sustainable development pillars and high volumes of public and private investment.

> **Commented [DC19]:** Proposed by Czech Republic

> **Commented [DC20]:** Proposed by Czech Republic

> **Commented [DC21]:** Proposed by Czech Republic

10.   International standards in housing and sustainable development are driving action towards resilient, connected, spatially - and socially- integrated and compact cities in an equitable partnership with rural areas. There is a trend towards people-centred and integrated planning through urbanism and housing as its central element.

> **Commented [DC22]:** Proposed by a representative from academia

11.   These aims and processes will continue to require collaboration, consensus and positive action among national and city governments, technical and social stakeholders, and participation of other communities. Addressing these evermore-complex social, economic and environmental challenges will require new paradigms and a redoubling of efforts from the governance systems to achieve access to decent housing for all and sustainable urbanization.

> **Commented [DC23]:** Proposed by Czech Republic

> **Commented [DC24]:** Proposed by FIABCI

> **Commented [DC25]:** Proposed by Czech Republic

> **Commented [DC26]:** Proposed by a representative from academia

C. We invite national governments and relevant stakeholders, including local and regional authorities, intergovernmental organizations, United Nations agencies, professionals and academia, the private sector, civil society, women and youth, to work together to address the above housing and urban challenges in line with the UN Geneva Charter of Sustainable Housing, in particular by

> **Commented [DC27]:** Proposed by a representative from academia

> **Commented [DC28]:** Proposed by a representative from academia with the comment: "It seems that the Economic, Social and Environmental dimensions are taken from the UN Geneva Charter for Sustainable Housing. This is very good, it may be good to acknowledge it in some way. "

(a)   Economic dimension

12.   Promoting innovative and productive cities to increase cities' attractiveness with a focus on innovation, inclusiveness, improvement of youth perspectives, and job creation through entrepreneurial-friendly environments.

13. Promoting access to decent affordable housing for all. Reducing the economic polarisation in growing cities that is the result of the housing market imbalances by (a) promoting tenure balanced housing policies and by supporting all tenures: social housing, homeownership and private rent; (b) addressing housing cost induced poverty and household ineptness arising from

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[11]https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/Publications/Social_Housing_in_UNECE_region.pdf

high housing costs; (c) promoting housing supply in growing cities and addressing housing abandonment in shrinking cities and areas.

14.   Promoting the improvement of access to basic services allowing sustainable growth, access to affordable housing and job creation. The empowerment of women and better gender equality are priorities of the urban development policy.

(b)   *Social dimension*

15.   Strengthening the use of housing and spatial planning and urban design, ensuring participation in planning by all key stakeholders and the inhabitants, as planning cities is an important part of civilization.

16.   Introducing effective financial systems at the national and municipal levels, enabling local governments of cities to better implement the plans elaborated and support the equitable and sustainable development of housing and human settlements.

17.   Promoting inclusive cities by addressing the multiple aspects of housing and urban poverty and exclusion; ensuring the right to adequate housing for all, and reducing homelessness with a view to its gradual elimination. Especially, ensuring that the housing is in the way that can ensure social mobility within cities and human settlements. This entails support to tenure balanced affordable housing supply along housing continuum (eg. homeownership, social housing, private rent and innovative forms of affordable housing such as community land trusts etc)

18.   Developing and implementing capacity-building programmes for participatory, integrated, sustainable, resilient and affordable housing and human settlement planning enabling the involvement of all relevant stakeholders.

19. Ensuring a suitable environment for disabled and elderly people in the process of providing a sustainable urban development.

(c)   *Environmental dimension*

20.   Promoting green, compact and resilient cities by increasing urban resource efficiency[12].

21. Promoting standards of housing provision and renovation to increase energy efficiency, and ensure accessible and healthy housing supply for all.

(d)   *Principles of governance*

22.   Promoting national housing and urban policies conducive to balanced housing and urbanization, and their translation to localized housing and urban legislation and regulations, promoting the strategic planning of human settlements; and enacting measures at national and local levels to ensure that policies are appropriate for each scale of governance; thereby guaranteeing the most effective results.

23.   Stressing that approaches will be locality-specific, and, to be effective, be as varied as the diversity of the countries, economies, societies and cultures in the region.

24.   Promoting smart and sustainable cities as well as an integrated and holistic approach to planning and managing cities, and facilitating the use of ICTs.

25.   Promoting good urban governance by supporting and building capacity at local level of local authorities and other stakeholders such as homeowner and tenant associations and housing cooperatives, a key element for the sustainable development of urban areas.

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[12] For example, improving the consumption of energy, water and land, reducing waste, improving air quality, and improving cities' resilience to floods, heat waves and natural hazards.

Commented [DC29]: Proposed by a representative from academia – new paragraph addition

Commented [DC30]: Proposed by a representative from academia

Commented [DC31]: Proposed by a representative from academia

Commented [DC32]: Proposed by Switzerland

Commented [DC33]: Proposed by Switzerland

Commented [DC34]: Proposed by Switzerland

Commented [DC35]: Proposed by a representative from academia

Commented [DC36]: Proposed by a representative from academia

Commented [DC37]: Proposed by FEANTSA

Commented [DC38]: Proposed by a representative from academia

Commented [DC39]: Proposed by a representative from academia

Commented [DC40]: Proposed by Czech Republic

Commented [DC41]: Proposed by Bulgaria

Commented [DC42]: Proposed by a representative from academia – new paragraph addition

Commented [DC43]: Proposed by a representative from academia

Commented [DC44]: Comment by Switzerland: "unclear"

Commented [DC45R44]: The secretariat suggests to change as "sustainable"

Commented [DC46]: Proposed by a representative from academia

Commented [DC47]: Proposed by a representative from academia

Commented [DC48]: Proposed by Czech Republic

Commented [DC49]: Proposed by Czech Republic

Commented [DC50]: Proposed by Azerbaijan

Commented [DC51]: Proposed both by UT and Czech Republic

26.   Focusing on capacity-building and institutional support, especially for countries with transition economies, to promote policy implementation.

27.   Creating regional networks of governments, experts and stakeholders; organizing workshops and study trips; creating synergies using existing platforms and involving relevant programmes, agencies, bodies and other stakeholders, to ensure consistency and complementarity, and allow effective collaboration on housing and land-related issues.

28.   Promoting secure tenure and the availability of housing options, including the neutral treatment of tenure options (such as ownership or renting), in order to encourage the development of adequate supplies of affordable housing.

(e)   Means of implementation

29.   Elaborating country-specific policy guidance and recommendations on challenges related to housing, urban development and land management in the UNECE region, through regional and thematic studies.

30.   Developing cutting edge research in-depth assessments and flagship reports on specific housing and urban development issues highlighted in this declaration, including a series of Country Profiles on Housing and Land Management.

31.   Harmonizing methodologies and definitions in the area of housing, urban development and land management and administration at all levels, supporting development of common terms, language definitions and standards.

32.   Promoting dialogue between governments and relevant stakeholders using existing platforms, to facilitate the exchange of experience and the sharing of good practices, such as the Committee and its working and advisory bodies, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), other relevant UN programmes and agencies, the European Commission, the European Union housing focal points, the Intergovernmental Council for Cooperation in Construction of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Housing Europe - the European Federation of Public, Cooperative and Social Housing, the International Union of Tenants, Housing Cooperatives International, FIABCI, the International Real Estate Federation; local authorities and their unions and networks; and the Geneva UN Charter Centres for Sustainable Housing and Urban Development.

33.   Particularly sharing experiences and documents related to the formalization of informal settlement, that especially if combined with the supply of internet and communication facilities, could mitigate in next years the huge immigration trend to UNECE region and the urbanization trend in their own nations, allowing to the poorest people to make their living in much better condition where they live.

34.   Regularly monitoring and following up the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, Sustainable Development Goals and other targets, including those in the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing, the Strategy for Sustainable Housing and Land Management in the ECE Region 2014-2020, and the UNECE/ITU Smart Sustainable City Indicators; and, for that purpose, strengthening the capacity of national statistical services improving mechanisms for information exchange and using monitoring tools that ensure a coherent methodology across the region and global comparability.

D. We confirm our commitment to promote the implementation of the above-mentioned agreements through synergies and cross-sectoral actions. We commit to foster national and global implementation of the economic, social and environmental actions mentioned above.

Commented [DC52]: Proposed by IUT - New paragraph addition

Commented [DC53]: Proposed by Czech Republic

Commented [DC54]: Question from Switzerland: " Who would produce these studies and with what objective?"

Commented [DC55]: Question from Switzerland: " Who would produce these studies and with what objective?"

Commented [DC56]: Proposed by a representative from academia

Commented [DC57]: Proposed by Czech Republic

Commented [DC58]: Proposed by Czech Republic

Commented [DC59]: Comment by a representative from academia - The writer also may consider other platforms for other housing tenures for example: social housing, homeowners, private rent (landlords), agencies for the homeless... etc..

Commented [DC60]: Proposed by FIABCI

Commented [DC61]: Orna Rosenfeld again on the FIABCI comment - Please note that informal settlements and immigration are not always connected in the UNECE region.

Commented [DC62]: Proposed by FIABCI – new paragraph addition

Commented [DC63R62]: Orna Rosenfeld comment fully reported as it has been sent to the secretariat: " FIABCI suggestion accepted. It should be edited a bit though, for example.

Sharing experience and knowledge regarding the formalisation of the informal housing and settlements (that have specific characteristics in the UNECE region). Advancement of the ICT facilities, cadastres and land administration.

Advancing knowledge and practice in housing and integration of new migrants. In order to ensure future cohesive cities and societies.

Commented [DC64]: Proposed by FIABCI

Commented [DC65]: Proposed by FIABCI

Annex I: Background paper to the Draft Geneva Declaration on Sustainable Housing and Urban Development "Towards a City-Focused, People-Centered and Integrated Approach to the New Urban Agenda in the UNECE Region"

1.   The ECE region is home to 1.3 billion people, some 17% of the total global population. It contains at least 263 cities of 500,000 or more inhabitants, and contributes to more than 40% of the world's GDP. The large proportion of its population living in its cities is still growing, albeit slowly, but in some cities in the region it is decreasing.

2.   The countries are very diverse in almost all features: size, geography, economy and culture. The region corresponds mostly to what is referred to as 'the Global North'.[13]

3.   It is characterized by the following trends and patterns:

(a)   Urbanization and demography

4.   Within the urban population, there is a trend towards urban concentration and agglomeration into super-cities, such as those in the metropolitan regions from Boston to Washington, D.C., or London through the Randstad and the Ruhrgebiet to the cities of Northern Italy.

5.   Using approaches to planning and managing city development that place quality of life at the core of decision-making and integrate economic, social, environmental as well as health considerations into urban plans, policies and projects, is therefore key to avoiding all risks, protecting vulnerable groups and enhancing economic, social, environmental and health benefits for the urban populations.

6.   There is a countervailing trend towards shrinking cities within less successful and more remote regions where the population is declining. This often goes along with ageing, as the young and/or highly qualified leave. This problem is almost exclusive to the ECE region.

7.   There is a general tendency towards urban sprawl, not only in cities experiencing population growth. This poses problems for environmental and economic sustainability. These problems are likely to be exacerbated by the consequences of the ageing of the population.

8.   A rapidly-ageing population is most prominent in Western, Central and Eastern Europe. Ageing and population decline both pose serious challenges for cities, particularly in regards to diminishing local tax revenues, the provision of services, transportation, and housing, and the accessibility of public space. Conversely, Central Asian countries in the region are experiencing growth in the young population, posing difficulties regarding housing and job provision.

9.   Migration is a key issue throughout the region. Its magnitude and significance has increased in the past 20 years. It has led to increased diversity in some cities, but also brings challenges for social cohesion. Migrants settle mainly in large cities that leads to urban polarization putting pressure on the local housing systems, The host and migrant destination cities need support in terms of housing provision and migrant integration services. ,

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[13] The Part A of the Declaration is based on the analyses, conclusions and recommendations of the Habitat III Regional Report for the UNECE Region, http://www.unece.org/housing/habitat3regionalreport.html

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Commented [DC66]: Proposed by Switzerland with the comment: "In our view it is important and necessary that this is a Declaraion on 'sustainable' housing and urban development, that can be seen in the context of sustainable development (and the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda)."

Commented [GR67]: Original title of the document

Commented [DC68]: Proposed by Azerbaijan

Commented [DC69]: Comment by a representative from academia: "The agglomeration trend is very important. But we have to take into consideration that the number of super cities in the UNECE region is much smaller than the number of UNECE member states. In countries in transition that seem to be the focus of the declaration there is one super city alone – Moscow."

Commented [DC70]: Proposed by a representative from academia

Commented [DC71]: Proposed by a representative from academia. Comment: "The background paper seems to have too much focus on health. While this is important message from the WHO, other crucial issues mentioned in the UN-Geneva Charter for Sustainable housing are omitted."

Commented [DC72]: Proposed by a representative from academia

Commented [DC73]: Proposed by a representative from academia

Commented [DC74]: Comment by a representative from academia: "There seems to be an over emphasis on the aging population while other types of the population in need seem to be omitted (eg. women, youth, homeless, migrants, refugees, vulnerable groups, poor etc) The UNECE research suggests that there are different groups of population that are affected by the current urbanisation and housing trends. "

Commented [DC75]: Comment by a representative from academia: "same as before"

Commented [DC76]: Comment by a representative from academia: "same as before"

Commented [DC77]: Comment by a representative from academia: "very important"

Commented [DC78]: Proposed by Azerbaijan

Commented [DC79]: Proposed by a representative from academia

(b) **The Economy of Cities**

10.   A substantial part of the region has undergone economic transition in recent decades, from centrally-planned economies to market ones. In general, large and capital cities have prospered, while smaller ones and rural areas have fared less well, economically, socially, physically, environmentally and culturally. The economic restructuring posed huge challenges for some industrial cities, company towns in particular, in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia.

11.   The manufacturing industry has declined in the region since Habitat II. However, it remains important. There is a shift to cleaner, greener manufacturing with smaller spatial demands. The rise of the knowledge economy in the region, built on a digital revolution, is bringing both opportunities and challenges for cities. These changes demand different forms of space that better suit new conditions of economic production, social requirements and cultural institutions. While globalization remains significant, the local qualities of cities become ever more important. The urban rural links are important for the sustainable territorial development.

12.   The digital revolution brings both challenges and opportunities for governments in the region. Technical innovation and ICT[14] offer new opportunities for urban planning and development, land use (e.g. driverless vehicles), interaction with the public (e.g. crowd sourcing), public participation in decision-making, awareness-raising, and transparency of urban management and advancement of tenure security through effective land administration. However, data privacy, security and ownership are challenging the capacity of governments to utilize these technical innovations in defence of the public interest.

(c) **Living in cities**

13.   The global financial crisis that started in 2008 has led to more inequalities in the region, lowering the income of a substantive part of the population, and affecting many aspects of people's lives of which the lack of housing affordability is critical.

14.   Social interactions in cities have changed over the past 20 years. There has been, on the one hand, a tendency to develop closed communities and shopping malls, and, on the other, a reaffirmation of the central role of public spaces as frameworks for innovation and social interaction.

15.   Many of the factors that support equity in a city also support the health and well-being of all its inhabitants. These include access to housing, transportation, energy and water supplies, public services, public participation in decision-making, the availability of, and access to, safe and healthful food, green spaces, and the reduction of emissions. There is a growing recognition of the relevance of healthy urban settings and buildings in countries throughout the region.

(d) **Housing**

16.   Lack of affordability of housing is a critical matter, leading to problems of accessibility to adequate housing, social exclusion, and increased spatial stratification in cities[15]. Despite being less acute than in other regions, homelessness and informal settlements remain a growing problem in the UNECE region. The housing sector needs to address these problems while

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[14] Information and communication technologies.

[15] The Part D of the Declaration is based on the analyses, conclusions and recommendations of the UNECE research Social Housing in the UNECE region: models trends and challenges. https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/Publications/Social_Housing_in_UNECE_region.pdf

Commented [DC80]: Proposed by a representative from academia with the comment: "Please note that the rural areas in the UNECE region, especially in the countries in transition suffer from poverty in comparison to towns and cities. Women are the most affected by poverty in the rural areas."

Commented [DC81]: Proposed by Azerbaijan

Commented [DC82]: Proposed by a representative from academia

Commented [DC83]: Proposed by a representative from academia

Commented [DC84]: Proposed by a representative from academia

Commented [DC85R84]: The secretariat suggests an alternative wording in case this addition would be accepted "including lack of affordable housing"

Commented [DC86]: Comment by a representative from academia: "Point focuses on health again… "

Commented [DC87]: Proposed by Azerbaijan

Commented [DC88]: Comment by a representative from academia: "Too much focus on health"

Commented [DC89]: Proposed by a representative from academia – Footnote addition

Commented [DC90]: Proposed by FEANTSA

Commented [DC91]: Proposed by Azerbaijan

meeting new aspirations, such as energy efficiency and customer-adjusted design, along with the provision of additional services (e.g. for the elderly, the homeless and migrant people).

17.   The past two decades have witnessed a general trend towards increasing home ownership and reinforcing housing markets in the region. The total stock of, and investment in, social and public housing is decreasing. Social housing stock in advanced economies has been reduced, while the former public housing in countries with economies in transition has been rapidly privatized, leaving little time for local governments and individuals (especially owners) to adapt.

18.   In the eastern part of the region, the phenomenon of 'poor owners' has become endemic, as a result of the privatization of public housing, a lack of maintenance, and energy inefficiency. Delays caused by collective decision-making by owners of large housing estates, whether in 'affluent' or 'poor' areas, have increased costs and often resulted in the deterioration of apartment blocks, particularly in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

18. There has been an increase in informal housing and settlements in the UNECE region. The specificity of informality in the UNECE region in general and counties in transition in particular has to be taken into consideration vis a vis greater goals for tenure security, sustainable urbanisation and city development[16],

> **Commented [DC92]:** Proposed by a representative from academia – New para and footote addition

(d)   Environment and disaster risks

19.   The region is among the largest emitters of greenhouse gases (GHGs) per capita, and atmospheric pollutants remain high. Environmental threats are often also health threats. Action taken to reduce environmental pollution will also help to secure public health and well-being.

> **Commented [DC93]:** Comment by a representative from academia: "focus on health again"

> **Commented [DC94R93]:** Following this comment from academia, the secretariat suggests to remove the sentence "Environmental threats are often also health threats".

> **Commented [DC95]:** Comment by a representative from academia: "same as before"

20.   Air pollution, flooding and heat-waves are the most prevalent environmental issues of the region, with cities being the most vulnerable. Disaster risk reduction (DRR) is an issue more pressing in parts of the region, with an increased threat/risk of natural disaster exacerbated by climate change. This has a negative impact on quality of life, mainly in urban areas, and can even endanger lives.

21.   Urban sprawl has increased and resulted in the growing consumption of land and pressure on green spaces. The extension of road networks and increasing traffic congestion have further affected the availability of land for other uses and contributed to the deterioration of air quality. There is a need to limit the negative impact of housing on the environment, and enhance the energy efficiency of the housing sector. Numerous programmes have taken initiatives to improve urban environmental conditions and the impact of cities on the global climate. However, urban areas still lag behind.

> **Commented [DC96]:** Proposed by Azerbaijan

(e)   Governance

22.   There has been an increase in the importance of the role of local governments, with a corresponding growth in that of city networks, electronic access to information, and public participation.

23.   The region exhibits a wide variety of different governance models. However, urban and housing governance has experienced decentralization. These differences reflect both the local context and history. Successful governance modes and institutional structures often cannot be simply transplanted from one part of the region to another: context is crucial.

> **Commented [DC97]:** Proposed by a representative from academia

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[16] Point 18 of this Background Document is based on the analyses, conclusions and recommendations of the UNECE study Informal settlements in countries with economies in transition in the UNECE Region, available at https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/Publications/Literature_Revie w_on_Informal_Settlements.pdf

24.   Many challenges for urban governance remain, such as the effectiveness in limiting urban sprawl (especially in case of informal settlements), the creation or reinforcement of socially-cohesive and culturally diverse neighbourhoods, the secure management of urban technology, the management of urban functional areas that extend over several administrative jurisdictions, the resistance to change of highly fragmented institutional frameworks, the harmonization of norms, and the role of participatory frameworks and platforms for inhabitants' involvement in urban governance and balancing of the housing demand and supply within cities.

25.   The private sector plays an important role in the development and transformation of urban areas. In general, a reduction of the public sphere was observed since Habitat II, resulting in more opportunities and responsibilities for the private sector.

26.   The growing use of e-Government, e-Governance, e-Participation and e-Inclusion at city level has been driven by the supply of new ICT services. Local authorities' capacity to maximize the benefit of the digital revolution without undermining their democratic mandate is a challenge that remains to be addressed. The progress of e-Governance is variable and, in some countries, there is room for further development.

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