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Item 4 of the provisional agenda

Strategy 2014-2020**Draft Strategy for Sustainable Housing and Land Management in the ECE region for the period 2014 – 2020****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

At its meeting on 2 April 2012, the Bureau of the Committee on Housing and Land Management of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe agreed on the need for a Strategy for Sustainable Housing and Land Management containing specific targets to be reached by member States by 2020. The Bureau stressed the importance of promoting more effective housing policy reforms by setting specific targets and monitoring their implementation.

The Bureau prepared the first draft of the Strategy (ECE/HBP/2012/3)¹, which the Committee discussed at its seventy-third session. The Committee decided on the structure of the Strategy and entrusted the Bureau with further developing the vision, objectives and targets. Also, the Committee entrusted the secretariat with conducting a survey of opinions of member States on priorities and challenges in housing and land management in the region

Based on the results of the survey, the draft Strategy was updated. The consultation on the draft continued at the following meetings: Meeting of the Bureau of the Committee (28 November 2012); Stakeholder Meeting (19 February 2013); Joint Bureaux Meeting of the Committee and the Working Party on Land Administration (19 February 2013); and Bureau meeting of the Committee (20 February 2013). Substantive contributions during the meetings were provided by the Working Party, the Real Estate Advisory Group, and various stakeholders including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the International Union of Tenants. The text was then sent to the Committee. On 21 May, during an informal meeting,

¹ Available at <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=29836>

the Committee agreed on the text.

The Strategy, which has a voluntary character, builds on existing and commonly accepted documents from the United Nations system. It aims at promoting sustainable housing and land management in the ECE region. It will guide the work of the Committee, its Working Party on Land Administration and the Real Estate Market Advisory Group. It will also further strengthen the implementation of existing tools and policy guidance of the Committee as well as contribute to the overall improvement of the housing and land management situation both nationally and regionally

The Committee is invited to approve the Strategy, included as an annex, and to recommend it for adoption at the Ministerial Meeting on 8 October 2013.

I. Introduction

1. ECE member States need concerted action to improve housing and living conditions in the region. This proposed Strategy on Sustainable Housing and Land Management has a voluntary character and presents the vision, objectives, targets and activities for the period until 2020. It aims to promote green and socially inclusive human settlements and the long-term sustainability of housing and land management in the ECE region. It also aims to further strengthen the future implementation of the existing ECE housing and land management guidelines, policy recommendations, action plans and other documents.

2. The Strategy reflects the principles and goals of key related documents from the United Nations system as listed in the paragraphs below:

(a) Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights² and Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,³ which provide for the rights to an adequate standard of living and adequate housing for all. Like these documents, the Strategy views housing as more than a mere commodity, builds on the right to adequate housing, and aims at the progressive implementation of its various elements, including: legal security of tenure; affordability; habitability; availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure; accessibility; and location and cultural adequacy.

(b) The objectives *Agenda 21*,⁴ “Chapter 7: Promoting Sustainable Human Settlements Development”.

(c) The Habitat Agenda,⁵ which established the goals of adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development in an urbanising world. In line with the Habitat Agenda, the Strategy recognises the need for Governments to create an enabling environment that allows the involvement of all actors (public and private), in order to achieve the targets. It, therefore, recommends actions to support these issues, supported by international cooperation.

(d) The accepted understanding of sustainable development as reflected in other United Nations documents, including: the report of the Brundtland Commission, “Our Common Future”;⁶ the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development; the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development; and the Rio+20 United Nations Sustainable Development Conference outcome document, “The Future We Want” (A/RES/66/288)⁷. The Strategy considers the three main pillars of sustainability (economic, environmental and social) and takes into consideration the ongoing process for developing a common holistic approach to sustainability in the post-2015 Millennium Development Goals.

(e) “The Future We Want”, which recommends that significant attention be given to the sustainable development of human settlements, especially in urban areas. It emphasises the importance of improving the quality of these settlements through an integrated planning approach. The signatories also recognised the need for policies to

² Available at <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

³ Available at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx>

⁴ <http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?documentid=52>

⁵ Available at http://ww2.unhabitat.org/declarations/habitat_agenda.asp

⁶ Available at <http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm>; adopted by the General Assembly at its forty-second session (A/RES/42/187, available at <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/42/ares42-187.htm>)

⁷ Available at http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/66/288&Lang=E

support inclusive and affordable housing and the importance of adopting energy-efficiency programmes in building management. The Rio+20 outcome document reinforces the mandate of the ECE Committee on Housing and Land Management in all the areas of its work and, in particular, in the area of urban development.

3. The Strategy also aims to contribute to the UN-Habitat Global Housing Strategy to the Year 2025, while maintaining its focus on the specific housing challenges of the region. The goals and challenges contained in the *ECE Strategy for a Sustainable Quality of Life in Human Settlements in the Twenty-First Century* (ECE/HBP/120)⁸, are considered, while taking into account the progress made by member States and the need to address emerging issues.

4. The Strategy is also in line with the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention),⁹ the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention)¹⁰ and the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Kyiv Protocol).¹¹

5. Through its objectives and targets for sustainable urban planning, and its focus on the efficient use of urban land and compact, inclusive and green cities, the Strategy should also contribute to the 2016 third United Nations conference on housing and sustainable urban development (HABITAT III), with a focus on the global commitment to sustainable cities.

6. The Strategy should, therefore, guide member States in developing national laws, programmes, strategies and policies. It should also serve as a basis for coordinating actions to assist member States in its implementation. Further, it will help relevant State authorities to meet their international reporting obligations.

7. It should serve as a guide for the Committee to structure and build its biennial programmes of work. It should help focus the work of the Committee and address housing, urban development and land management challenges in an integrated and comprehensive way.

8. It also attempts to ensure synergies within the ECE and with other international organizations, while avoiding the duplication of work.

II. Trends and developments in the ECE region

A. Housing and real estate in the twenty-first century:

9. Countries of the ECE region are faced with several challenges in developing a sustainable housing and real estate sector. In November 2012, the ECE secretariat

⁸ Available at <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/2001/ece/hbp/ece.hbp.120.pdf>; adopted by the Committee Ministerial Meeting in 2000 (ECE/HBP/119/Add.1, available at <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/2000/ece/hbp/ece.hbp.119.add.1.e.pdf>)

⁹ Available at <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/documents/cep43e.pdf>

¹⁰ Available at

<http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/eia/documents/legaltexts/conventiontextenglish.pdf>

¹¹ Available at

<http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/eia/documents/legaltexts/protocolenglish.pdf>

conducted a survey of challenges and priorities in housing and land management in the ECE region (ECE/HBP/2013/2).¹² A questionnaire was sent to:

- Government representatives responsible for housing and urban planning.
- Government representatives responsible for land registration and cadastres.
- Representatives of international organizations, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and academia.

10. Respondents considered the main challenge in the housing sector and the highest priority for government action to be the inefficient use of energy.

11. Due to a lack of effective management and investments for maintenance and repairs, a large share of the region's residential housing stock has deteriorated, affecting the quality of life of the residents and causing energy losses. In the countries concerned, policy priorities include: achieving effective housing management; investing in large-scale retrofitting, including for energy efficiency; and developing housing financing mechanisms.

12. There exist challenges related to affordability, including: the lack of affordable housing solutions for young people; decreased housing affordability as a result of the economic crisis and unemployment; limited access to the affordable and healthy housing of adequate quality in the market; and reduced access to credit for households as a result of the financial crisis.

13. Thus, the survey demonstrated concern over growing economic disparities in the region and the need to promote social cohesion by making housing more affordable both for young people and for vulnerable groups in the population.

14. Stable and transparent real estate markets are a pre-requisite for available and affordable housing. The 2008 crash in asset prices and the subsequent financial and economic crises underscored the vital role that the real estate market plays in the world economy. There is a need for more robust regulatory frameworks in the ECE region to ensure stability and transparency of the real estate market.

B. Urban and rural settlements

15. In a globalised economy, cities and regions strive to attract investment. This poses several challenges for spatial-planning authorities, who should respond with adequate policies for the distribution of economic activities, and for urban management authorities, who should promote the improvement of technical and social infrastructure, urban regeneration and affordable housing.

16. Climate change has become a tangible reality, with rising global temperatures, flooding, droughts, storms and landslides affecting people's lives and assets and causing economic losses. Houses and human settlements need to become resilient to extreme weather events.

17. Housing provision, management and demolition have an impact on the environment through the consumption of primary resources, such as land and building materials, and emissions. Reducing this impact would require the serious engagement of governments and ECE assistance, coordinated with other international organizations. Introducing the concept of life-cycle approach in design should be promoted as one way to reduce the impact of this sector on the environment.

¹² Available at <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=32586>

In many parts of the ECE region, emigration and low birth rates have led to the shrinking of cities and the diminishment of rural settlements. A declining population requires less land and creates a shrinking tax base for local governments, but the population still needs basic utility services such as roads, electricity and sanitation. Maintaining these services imposes a financial burden on local authorities.

18. In other parts of the region, ongoing urbanisation has led to the continuing expansion of urban areas and urban sprawl, thus reducing the land available for other uses. This urbanisation has often been uncontrolled, creating and expanding “informal” settlements, which lack security of tenure and social and physical infrastructure.

19. The efficient use of land is a priority challenge for most of the countries of the region which have or are still undergoing a process of transition from a centrally planned to a market economy. The regeneration of neglected urban areas and re-use of ex-industrial sites, which are often located within urban structures, need to be supported by appropriate policies and mechanisms, including promoting public-private partnerships.

20. Natural as well as human-generated disasters, including those created by a changing climate, have resulted in large-scale damage to housing across the ECE region and present serious challenges for governments. This calls for common efforts by member States to develop frameworks for climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. This includes emergency preparedness, contingency planning and risk-prevention measures through building safer houses in safer places and locating hazardous industry and other activities at safe distances from housing, in line with the ECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents.¹³ Such measures will contribute to the global implementation of the UNISDR Hyogo Framework for Action,¹⁴ as well as to the development of a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction.

21. In light of the above, spatial planning should prioritise the following, while ensuring a more balanced development of regions and cities:

- Supporting economic development.
- The relocation of economic activities.
- Environmental protection.
- Reuse of abandoned sites.
- Resilience of cities towards natural as well as human-generated disasters, including those resulting from a changing climate.

22. At the local level, urban planning and management should, inter alia:

- Promote the use of strategic environmental assessment for plans and programmes prepared for land use and urban planning.
- Consider the implications of demographic changes such as changing family structures, migration and the housing needs of young people and vulnerable groups.
- Promote social inclusion and market development, respecting cultural diversity and protection of the environment.
- Make efficient use of urban land.
- Promote compact urban development as well as green and sustainable housing.

¹³ Available at <http://www.unece.org/env/teia/about.html>

¹⁴ Available at www.unisdr.org/2005/wcdr/intergover/official-doc/L-docs/Hyogo-framework-for-action-english.pdf

23. With the ageing of the population in Europe, national regulations should provide for barrier-free housing, taking into account the infrastructure, facilities, public spaces and universal design.

C. Land management

24. Without efficient, accessible, non-discriminatory and transparent land administration systems, people cannot be guaranteed full security of tenure and enjoyment of real property rights. Land administration supports the implementation of land-related policies and land management strategies. Robust land administration systems need to be established in all the countries of the ECE region.

III. Committee on Housing and Land Management

25. The Committee on Housing and Land Management was established in 1947 to provide support to governments in the post-war reconstruction of the housing stock in Europe. It subsequently broadened its area of work to cover other aspects that contribute to the formulation of housing policies. After 1960, it incorporated urban planning and land use into its work.

26. In 1996, it created a subsidiary body to deal specifically with issues related to land management, which later was given the name Working Party on Land Administration.¹⁵

27. Being home to one fifth of the world's population and producing more than half of the world's gross domestic product, the ECE region is uniquely positioned to tackle challenges in housing, spatial and urban planning, and land management.

28. The draft Strategy builds on the strengths of the Committee and aims to guide its work over the coming years to develop practical solutions to the challenges of developing sustainable housing and land management. It acknowledges that member States are at different stages of development and also in a different position vis-à-vis the attainment of the targets included in the Strategy. In this light, the Committee aims at providing support that is tailored to the specific housing and land management needs of ECE countries and subregions.

29. As established by the outcome of the ECE Ministerial Conference on Housing held in 2000, and as reconfirmed by the Ministerial Conference held in 2006, the mandate of the Committee is "to promote the sustainable development of human settlements in the ECE region while fostering economic and social prosperity and supporting democratic governance".¹⁶

30. Its mission is to improve the housing and land management situation throughout the ECE region in a sustainable manner, in particular by providing practical solutions and guidelines. "Sustainable development", as used in the mission statement, should be understood to cover all three pillars of sustainability: economic, environmental and social.

31. The Committee is the only intergovernmental body dealing with housing and land management for the entire ECE region. In order to best address the region's housing challenges, its work is divided into three themes: (a) sustainable housing and real estate markets; (b) sustainable urban development; and (c) land administration and management.

¹⁵ www.unece.org/housing-and-land-management/about-us/the-committee/history.html

¹⁶ www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/2001/ece/hbp/ece.hbp.120.pdf

IV. Structure of the Strategy

32. The strategy is presented as an annex to this document.
33. The first part of the Strategy contains 14 objectives (A to N) and 35 targets. These are organized under four themes:
- Sustainable housing and real estate markets.
 - Sustainable urban development.
 - Sustainable land administration and management.
 - Cross-cutting themes (topics which cover two or three of the other areas).
34. The second part of the Strategy outlines the types of activities that the Committee will use to achieve its objectives and targets. These activities were highlighted as priorities in the results of the 2012 survey on challenges and priorities in housing and land management for the ECE region.

Annex: Draft Strategy for Sustainable Housing and Land Management in the ECE region for the period 2014 – 2020

I. Vision, objectives and targets

1. In line with the Committee's mandate and mission, the following vision, objectives and targets by the year 2020 have been developed to guide the Committee's work in support of member States efforts to achieve sustainable housing and land management.

2. Vision: By 2020, the ECE region continues to be in the forefront of promoting sustainable housing and land management. Green, inclusive, compact and resilient cities are a priority in national policies and in regional cooperation. Investment in the housing sector is encouraged by transparent and efficient land use, property registration and a sound financial system. The housing sector offers a range of options, including for those with special needs and other vulnerable population groups.

A. Sustainable housing and real estate markets

1. Environmental dimension

(a) Objective (A)

To reduce energy use in the housing sector as compared to 2012 and continue the downward trend

Targets: By the year 2020

- A1. Policies and legal frameworks are in place to support and stimulate retrofitting of the existing residential housing stock in order to reduce its ecological footprint and make it more energy-efficient, making use of traditional knowledge and local building materials when possible.
- A2. Energy performance requirements and legislation are in place for the issuance of energy performance certificates for new and existing residential buildings.

(b) Objective (B)

To reduce the impact of the residential sector on the environment, taking into account the life cycle of buildings

Targets: By the year 2020

- B1. The life-cycle approach is integrated into housing and building legislation
- B2. All new housing construction is designed and built according to the life-cycle approach

(c) Objective (C)

To improve the resilience of buildings to natural and human-generated disasters

Target: By the year 2020

- C1. Building regulations are reviewed and adapted to better respond to seismicity and the effects of climate change and climate variability

2. Social dimension

(d) Objective (D)

To improve the overall access of all to adequate, affordable, good-quality, healthy and secure housing and utility services, with particular attention to young people and vulnerable groups

Targets: By the year 2020

- D1. Investments in social and/or affordable housing are increased, as appropriate
- D2. Policies are established for supporting access to affordable and secure housing, especially for socially and economically vulnerable groups
- D3. Policy instruments are in place which ensure an adequate contribution of new residential construction to social and affordable housing
- D4. Strategies are in place and investments provided for reducing the gaps between urban and rural areas in the provision of infrastructure and services
- D5. Regulations are in place to ensure the legal security of tenure for all, regardless of the type of tenure, including rules and procedures with regard to evictions, and based on international standards and guidance¹⁷

(e) Objective (E)

To improve the access of persons with disabilities to barrier-free housing

Targets: By the year 2020

- E1. Universal design¹⁸ criteria are included in national standards systems
- E2. New buildings apply universal design criteria
- E3. Existing public housing is adapted, to the extent possible, to universal design criteria

3. Economic and financial dimension

(f) Objective (F)

To support and encourage private investment in the housing sector;

Targets: By the year 2020

- F1. Policies are approved that stimulate employment through investments in the green economy and innovation in technology in the field of housing and urban planning

¹⁷ See the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment 7, "The Right to Adequate Housing: Forced Evictions" (available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cescr/comments.htm>), and "Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-Based Evictions and Displacement", Annex 1 to A/HRC/4/18 (available at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G07/106/28/PDF/G0710628.pdf?OpenElement>).

¹⁸ "Universal design" means the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. (Article 2 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, available at <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml>)

- F2. Appropriate financial regulations and valuation of the risk of real estate assets backing financial products are supported and encouraged

(g) Objective (G)

To ensure efficient management of the housing stock

Targets: By the year 2020

- G1. Legislation is in place to establish, regulate and manage condominium housing, including appropriate aspects of establishing and operating condominiums
- G2. Instruments and incentives are in place to support public, private and community partnerships in order to increase investments in sustainable housing and retrofitting projects

(h) Objective (H)

To contribute to well-functioning efficient, equitable and transparent housing and land markets which respond to different types of housing demand

Targets: By the year 2020

- H1. Easy, clear and transparent procedures, as well as appropriate institutions are established for ensuring efficient housing and land markets
- H2. Legislation and flexible tools are approved, which provide opportunities for the use of instruments that promote and stimulate public private partnerships for housing development
- H3. Policies that support a functional non-profit housing sector are in place

B. Sustainable urban development

(i) Objectives (I)

To balance the competing demand for and limited supply of available land, minimise the loss of rural land and increase the efficient use of urban land

Targets: By the year 2020

- I1. Strategic directions/policies for the sustainable spatial development of the entire territory are developed with the participation of all stakeholders
- I2. Territorial plans and/or other instruments to enforce regulations are developed, at least for the following:
 - Areas prone to natural and human generated disasters
 - Attractive areas for private investments
 - Ecologically sensitive areas and heritage sites
 - Inner-city densification, urban regeneration, mixed-use development, re-use or redevelopment of blight areas and brownfield sites.

C. Sustainable land administration and management

(j) Objective (J)

To have in place an efficient, accessible and transparent land administration system, which provides all with security of tenure and real property rights, facilitates real estate investments and transactions and ensures effective and transparent property valuation, land-use planning and sustainable land development

Targets: By the year 2020

- J1. Efficient, accessible, transparent and non-discriminatory land registration systems with adequate appeal mechanisms that cover all the national territory are in place that ensure security of tenure and property rights and reduce: conflicts over land and housing claims; insecurity in real property transactions; and corruption related to real property registration
- J2. Policies are in place that ensure security of tenure
- J3. Policies are in place to provide secure tenure solutions for those living in informal settlements

(k) Objective (K)

To set up, or improve the performance of those organizations, such as land registries, cadastre agencies, courts and other public authorities which are essential for a well-functioning land administration system

Targets: By the year 2020

- K1. Up-to-date data are easily accessible to all users
- K2. Mechanisms and policies are in place to facilitate data-sharing among public authorities through a national spatial data infrastructure
- K3. Information related to land administration is publicly accessible through electronic databases

D. Cross-cutting themes

(l) Objective (L)

To ensure investment in innovation and research, with particular attention to energy savings, social innovation, green, compact, inclusive and smart cities

Targets: By the year 2020

- L1. Investment in research and innovation is encouraged, specifically in the areas of energy saving, social innovation and green economy in the housing sector
- L2. Implementation of innovative projects in the above areas is reported by member States in order to share experiences and best practices with others

(m) Objective (M)

To support good governance, effective public participation and the rule of law in the areas of housing, urban planning and management and land administration

Targets: By the year 2020

- M1. Legal and administrative measures are in place which ensure consultation with and the participation of all stakeholders in transparent and opened decision-making processes
- M2. Policies are in place for building or improving the capacities of the public sector in housing and land management at national, regional and local levels
- M3. Horizontal and vertical coordination and cooperation between different levels of public administration are strengthened

(n) Objective (N)

To ensure that specific provisions on non-discriminatory processes are duly reflected in existing housing, urban planning and land management legislation

Target: By the year 2020

- N1. Laws that ensure equal treatment and non-discrimination, especially for women and minority groups, are part of national legislation on housing; urban planning and management; and land administration and procedures to ensure their implementation and enforcement are established

(o) Objective (O)

To intensify the regional and international exchange of experience and cooperation in the areas of housing, urban planning and land management

Targets: By the year 2020

- O1. Exchanges of experience and knowledge between countries are intensified
- O2. Cooperation, networks and synergies between international organizations are strengthened

II. Activities

To assist member States in achieving these targets, the Committee will implement this Strategy based upon an Action Plan that will be developed to cover the period from 2014 to 2020 and the activities to be included in the programme of work. The Committee will build on its own strengths by:

- Providing member States with country-specific policy guidance and recommendations on challenges related to housing and land management in the ECE region.
- Issuing in-depth assessments and flagship reports, including a series of Country Profiles on the housing and land administration sectors.
- Providing a platform for dialogue between Governments to facilitate the exchange of experience and the sharing of good practices by creating regional networks of experts, organizing workshops, and managing study trips.
- Promoting capacity development through high-quality training courses, advisory services and publications.
- Harmonising methodologies and definitions in the area of housing and land management at the regional and international level and supporting the development of common terms, language definitions and standards.

Cooperating with relevant United Nations programmes, agencies and bodies and other stakeholders to ensure consistency and complementarity and allow collaboration on housing and land-related issues.
