

**Development of Country Case Studies and Inputs to
a Possible Thematic Guide on Informal Settlements in the UNECE Region**

1. Background and Purpose

In 2013, the Committee on Housing and Land Management adopted its Strategy for Housing and Land Management 2014-2020, which includes an objective related to addressing the challenge of the informal settlements. According to the strategy, policies (should be established) to provide secure tenure solutions for those living in informal settlements.

Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing, a non-legally binding international instrument agreed by the Committee in October 2014 and endorsed by the Economic Commission for Europe in April 2015, stresses the importance of the provision of “infrastructure and services to people in low income and informal settlements, when possible and appropriate”. It also advises the governments to adopt national policies and programmes that encourage, when possible and appropriate, dwellers of informal construction to regularize and upgrade their constructions provided that the geographic location and other factors allow minimum safety requirements to be met”.

The proposal to develop the Technical Guidelines (TG) on informal settlements was formulated during the WPLA workshop “*The challenges of Informal Settlements*” in February 2015 and this joint activity with the UN-Habitat, FAO and the World Bank was included into the work programme of the WPLA for 2016-2017.

The TGs when developed will also support the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security, which were endorsed by the Committee on World Food Security on 11 May 2012. Based on the principles of sustainable development and in recognition of the centrality of land to development, the Guidelines will therefore contribute to global and national efforts towards promoting secure tenure rights and equitable access to land, fisheries and forests.

A series of Technical Guides are under development to assist in the implementation of the Guidelines, including “Governing Land for Women and Men” (published), “Improving Governance of Forest Tenure” (published), “Respecting Free, Prior and Informed Consent” (published), “Implications for Lawyers”, “Recording of Tenure Rights”, “Commons” and

“Governance of Tenure in Pastoral Rangelands”. A Technical Guide for Informal Settlements is planned but not yet in production.¹

UN-Habitat City Prosperity Index (2012/2013) clearly indicates that significant proportions of informal settlements and dilapidated neighbourhoods in urban contexts impact on the overall city prosperity and life quality of cities. Thus, for sustainable and prosperous urban development, it is key that informal settlements are integrated in the overall national and city development frameworks. Inclusive urban growth is a pre-condition for sustainable urban development.

The World Bank has worked extensively in the UNECE region on land administration and land rights issues, including on the topic of informal settlements. The Bank has produced a number of studies and policy papers on the topic that will be of use to the consultants, including for Montenegro, Azerbaijan, Albania and Macedonia.

The UNECE, FAO and the World Bank under their Memorandum of Understanding between the FAO and the UNECE and a joint action plan agreed to develop Thematic Guide on Informal Settlements in the UNECE Region. The World Bank provided support to a consultant to prepare background information and two case studies as inputs into the possible thematic guide.

2. Ongoing activities

The project period is October 2015 – March 2016. The following outputs will be produced by the World Bank consultant during the period of time:

- i) Literature review (including identification of potential case studies from the literature and communication with the UNECE) of informal settlement issues in the UNECE region. The literature review should provide an overview of the key issues and should refer to the detailed guidelines already prepared by other development partners.
- ii) Two country case studies, which will be based on interviews with UNECE government representatives and other important stakeholders from the countries chosen as case studies. The proposed countries are Serbia and Azerbaijan. But the list may change due to country interest and availability of information.
- iii) A paper on key trends and challenges in informal settlements based on interviews with government representatives (in countries other than the case studies) with the goal to understand definitions of informal settlements, examine their perceptions about key trends

¹ The TG will provide guidance on, but not limited to, the following sections of ‘Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security’ : sections 3 and 4 of the guidelines on general principles, section 5 on Policy, legal and organizational frameworks related to tenure, section 10 on informal tenure, 13 on land readjustment, 16 on expropriation and compensation, and sections related to 18 valuation, 19 taxation, 20 regulated spatial planning and 21 dispute resolution. In addition responses to climate change and emergencies should be addressed – sections 23-25.

and challenges in informal settlements in their country, identify good practices, examine their needs for the future potential development of technical guidelines.

3. Follow-up activities:

Given availability of funding, based on the earlier developed studies and on the ongoing project, the UNECE, FAO and the World Bank in co-operation with the UN-Habitat will develop the Thematic Guide.
