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### Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Housing and Land Management

**Seventy-eighth session**

Geneva, 8-10 November 2017

**Item 3(b) of the provisional agenda**

**Review of the implementation of the programme of work 2016-2017**

**Sustainable urban development**

### **Update on the UNECE-UN-Habitat joint programme on capacity building**

**Note by the secretariat**

*Summary*

The Committee at its seventy-seventh session reviewed information on the cooperation between ECE and UN-Habitat on capacity building in urban planning and development (ECE/HBP/2016/5). This Information Document provides an update on the cooperation activities.

The Committee is invited to take note of this information.

## I. Introduction

The Committee at its seventy-seventh session reviewed information on the cooperation between ECE and UN-Habitat on capacity building in urban planning and development (ECE/HBP/2016/5).

The Committee recommended that the joint programme on capacity-building in urban planning and development would:

- Promote key principles of sustainable urban development as outlined in key UN global documents, including the Rio+20 outcome document; the UN Secretary General's Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) Global Action Agenda; the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and especially the Sustainable Development Goal 11 of making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable; the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development; the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030; the Paris Agreement on Climate Change; and the Draft New Urban Agenda. The programme will therefore emphasize cross-sectoral linkages, including those related to environmental quality (outdoor and indoor), climate change, natural and human-made disaster risks, transport, ageing, and other topics;
- Support the implementation of the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing; the UNECE Strategy for Sustainable Housing and Land Management in the ECE Region for the Period 2014-2020; and the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning;
- Promote the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning principles in UNECE countries, particularly in those in transition;
- Coordinate closely with, and build on, relevant work of UN-Habitat; other UN agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR); other institutions and bodies, including the European Commission and its Joint Research Centre, the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), the International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP), the World Bank, and the United Cities and Local Governments; and other stakeholders;
- When feasible, cooperate with other UNECE divisions.

The following possible activities were proposed by the Committee depending on the availability of funds:

- Active dissemination of information on the UNECE, UN-Habitat and other partner organizations' work on urban planning, through the preparation of new publications, the translation of existing ones into national languages, mass media, and the organization of national and local events;
- Capacity-building at international, national and local levels (organization of training, peer-to-peer learning exchange visits, implementation of pilot projects, etc.);
- Networking, including with national governments, cities, regions and other stakeholders; and establishment of the regional community to practice peer-to-peer learning and sharing;
- Studies to review the implementation of sustainable urban development policies at national and local levels;

- The collection and exchange of information on best practices in urban planning;
- Cooperation on the establishment of a network of Geneva Charter on Sustainable Housing Centres as joint centres for capacity-building on sustainable housing and urban development.

## II. Update on the UNECE-UN-Habitat joint programme on capacity building

### *Country profiles on housing and land management*

Since 1997, the ECE Committee on Housing and Land Management supported building capacities for sustainable housing and urban development in countries with economies in transition through its flagship programme, “Country profiles on housing and land management”, which contain analyses of housing, urban development, land management, and policies at country level, and formulate recommendations to governments for the improvement of these sectors .

The Country Profiles on Housing and Land Management<sup>1</sup> is an important tool to analyse countries’ housing and land management policies, strategies, institutional and financial frameworks and to compare the progress made internationally. Guidelines for the preparation of the Country Profiles are regularly revised to reflect experiences and best practices and are adopted by the intergovernmental ECE Committee on Housing and Land Management.<sup>2</sup>

The revised Guidelines prepared in 2017 for the adoption by the Committee on Housing and Land Management, emphasize the importance of using the country profiles as an instrument to review the implementation in countries under review of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda adopted by the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development – Habitat III (Quito, 17-20 October 2016).<sup>3</sup>

Since 2014, a regular cooperation was established between the UNECE and the UN-Habitat Moscow office on the preparation of the Country Profiles on Housing and Land Management. The ECE and UN-Habitat jointly prepared the Country Profiles for Armenia, Republic of Moldova and Kazakhstan. They intend to cooperate on the preparation of the next Country Profile for Belarus.

### **National Action Plans on Sustainable Housing and Urban Development**

Country profiles provide concrete policy recommendations. It is important to ensure the implementation of those recommendations through the development and implementation of policies and programmes at national level. This is why following the preparation of country profiles, the Guidelines recommend that governments prepare national action plans (NAPs) with specific measures for the implementation of country profile policy recommendations.

To support the preparation and then to review the implementation of the NAPs, countries are also recommended to form interagency steering committees, which should include all key ministries and agencies involved in housing, urban planning and land management as well as representatives of local authorities, academia, private sector and civil society. It is recommended that the steering committees are established officially by governments, for

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unece.org/housing/countryprofiles.html>

<sup>2</sup> Please see the latest guidelines at

[http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/2015/ECE\\_HBP\\_2015\\_6\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/2015/ECE_HBP_2015_6_ENG.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/2017/ECE\\_HBP\\_2017-5e.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/2017/ECE_HBP_2017-5e.pdf)

instance, through an order of a minister or a head of the lead agency. The steering committee should meet regularly to discuss the implementation of the national action plan.

To assist countries in the development of NAPs, the ECE Housing and Land Management Unit and UN-Habitat implemented in 2014-2017 a project “Strengthening national capacities for sustainable housing in selected countries with economies in transition”. The project was carried out in four selected countries with economies in transition (Armenia, Republic of Moldova, Serbia and Tajikistan). Its implementation was supported from the funds of the United Nations Development Account 9<sup>th</sup> tranche.

## **II. UNDA 9<sup>th</sup> tranche project activities**

The project supported the development of National Action Plans for Sustainable Housing and Urban Development (NAPs) in Armenia, Republic of Moldova, Serbia and Tajikistan.

Guidelines for drafting the National Action Plan for the implementation of recommendations of UNECE Country Profiles on Housing and Land Management in transition economies were prepared which were aimed to assist the governments in the preparation of the NAPs, including in the formulation and prioritisation of tasks, organizing the work of the government institutions involved in the preparation and implementation of NAPs, organizing interaction between all major stakeholders, including government, businesses, local self-governing authorities, international organizations and foreign donors.

Using the Guidelines and with assistance of international experts provided by ECE and UN-Habitat, the draft NAPs of Armenia, Republic of Moldova, Serbia and Tajikistan were elaborated.

The draft NAPs were peer-reviewed and validated by national and international stakeholders through the organisation of a series of national workshops with participation of national and local governments, academia and civil society.

The ECE and UN-Habitat also provided upon request of the countries, advisory services by their international experts who reviewed the NAPs and provided recommendations for their update and revision. The NAPs were presented by the participants at the regional workshop in Belgrade, Serbia on 31 January-2 February 2017.

Further, UN-Habitat and the ECE organised a survey of experts who participated in the project in the pilot countries. The survey objective was to learn about experiences of the project implementation.

Based on the survey, a report and a policy paper were drafted which will be presented at the project final workshop on 10 November 2017 in Geneva.

More information on the project activities is available at the project webpage.<sup>4</sup>

## **II. Next steps**

As identified by the survey conducted within the UNDA 9<sup>th</sup> tranche project, there is a need for the continuation of the work on the methodology of the preparation of the NAPs and ensuring the proposed actions in the NAPs are concrete and measurable; the financing of the NAPs activities should receive special attention.

There is also a need for the continuation of cooperation on organisation of joint capacity-building activities on specific topics (organization of training, peer-to-peer learning

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.unece.org/housing/unda.html>

exchange visits, implementation of pilot projects, etc.). The government of Armenia, for instance, has already requested a study visit on the topic of management of multiapartment buildings.

The ECE and UN-Habitat already started discussions on possible cooperation on the establishment of joint centres of excellence in some countries based on the Geneva Charter on Sustainable Housing Centres which are already established under the ECE. The partners should work to establish a regional community of practice peer-to-peer learning and sharing through capacity building activities. ECE joined as a networking partner the UN-Habitat, OECD and City Alliance joint National Urban Policies Programme. Cooperation under this programme could include preparation of specific studies to review the implementation of sustainable urban development policies at national and local levels as well as the collection and exchange of information on best practices in urban planning. This work could contribute to the development of the shared knowledge base for the further joint capacity building activities.

The Committee is invited to take note of this information.