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United Nations Human Settlements Programme

Programme des Nations Unies pour les établissements humains - Programa de las Naciones Unidas para los Asentamientos Humanos

Twelfth Session of the UNECE Working Party on Land Administration

Cooperation with international organizations and agencies working in land administration and land management

Statement by UN-Habitat

1st June 2021

Mr Chair Zetterquist, Mme Secretary Algayerova, your excellencies, colleagues,

Member States have asked UN-Habitat and its predecessors to work with regional commissions in the provision of policy guidance and technical advice relating to land use and administration since at least 1960. It is a privilege to be able to continue that tradition by addressing you today.

As you are aware, land is a basic factor in all national economies, both within the UNECE region and beyond. Land values and land use management are central to a wide range of economic measures and outcomes from gross domestic product figures to access to housing. Access to land and land tenure security are also essential elements of an adequate standard of living, as recognized in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Sustainable Development Goals recognize this central role of land in economic and social development, particularly in Goal 1, ending poverty – Goal 2, ending hunger – Goal 5, achieving gender equality – and, Goal 11's priority on adequate housing, a concept which is recognized as including the right to tenure security. As the development of the indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals highlights, the effectiveness of land policies and administrative reforms can only be measured through robust data collection that responds to specific targets and indicators. Good policy is informed policy. Informed policy is built on good quality data.

The Sustainable Development Goals provide us with a good basis for collecting and reporting comparable land data. Indicators 1.4.2, legal documentation and perceptions of tenure security – 5.a.1, sex disaggregated data for agricultural land holders – and 11.1.1, persons living in inadequate housing – are particularly important in this regard. UN-Habitat works closely with the World Bank as joint custodian for indicator 1.4.2 and actively supports the work of FAO, the custodian of indicator 5.a.1. This is done principally through the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) and the Global Land Indicators Initiative (GLII). Through these networks, we collaborate to find practical solutions to achieve the monitoring



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and reporting of land indicators through national data and statistics institutions across continents and regions.

Despite approval of the global methodology for measuring land tenure indicators by the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators, most countries have not reported on indicators 1.4.2 and 5.a.1 to the UN Statistical Division. The UNECE region is no exception to this. Within the UNECE region, only five member States are recorded by the UN Statistical Division as having reported on land tenure indicator 1.4.2 and only three of those have reported on both the legal documentation and perception elements of the indicator. There are a number of laudable efforts to provide unofficial data on land indicators but, as we have seen on various occasions in the past, only official statistics can provide the basis for a comprehensive and robust discourse on land policy at the global level. 2030 is less than ten years away and, at present, we have no means to measure the status of the Sustainable Development Agenda's land indicators. Without that data, we cannot review progress. Perhaps even more importantly, without land data we cannot undertake meaningful policy reform to support the global aspiration of sustainable development that leaves no one behind.

The interest and commitment of UN-ECE member States to effective land administration is well established. This Working Party is an active forum for sharing experience and advancing norms and standards. UN-ECE member States played a central role in the development of the Framework for Effective Land Administration (FELA) and in its adoption during the tenth session of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management in September 2020. FELA provides an overarching policy guide and reference for UN Member States when developing, renewing, reforming, strengthening and modernizing land administration systems. We also note that, just last month, some UN-ECE member States have committed to the implementation of a new European Union work programme that includes a "new regulatory framework for social statistics and the reinforced role of social indicators, more timely and comparable data". These are all activities that could benefit from, and contribute to, improved monitoring and analysis of land indicators.

There is no doubt that COVID-19 has greatly disrupted data and statistics efforts, mainly at the country level. This has caused prolonged delays in planned censuses, surveys and other data initiatives; a situation that exacerbates global data inequalities. A recent survey conducted by the United Nations and the World Bank (with responses from 122 countries) shows that the pandemic has affected the operations of the vast majority of national statistical offices: 65 per cent of headquarters are partially or fully closed, 90 per cent have instructed staff to work from home, and 96 per cent have partially or fully stopped face-to-face data collection. Despite the enormous challenge associated with this pandemic, we agree with the observation made in the SDG Report 2020 that "the importance of timely, quality, open and disaggregated data and statistics has never been as clear as during the COVID-19 crisis. Such data are critical in understanding, managing and mitigating the human, social and economic effects of the pandemic. They are also essential for designing short-term responses and accelerated actions to put countries back on track to achieve the SDGs".



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The challenge of a lack of data and reporting on land tenure indicators in the SDGs is not unique to UNECE region. However, we call on member States to renew their efforts and to recognise the role of the UN-ECE Working Party on Land Administration in encouraging and supporting the monitoring of land tenure and governance issues, and its engagement with regional and country data and statistical institutions.

Thank you.