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Economic Commission for Europe**Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management****Eighty-fifth session**

Geneva, 2–4 October 2024

Items 5, 6, 7 of the provisional agenda

**Review of the implementation of the
programmes of work 2023 and 2024:****Update on technical cooperation activities:****Programme of work of the housing and land management component
of the Housing, Land Management and Population subprogramme
for 2025 and recommendations on key components
of the programme of work for 2026****Activities of the Committee on Urban Development, Housing
and Land Management since its eighty-fourth session****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

This document provides information on the activities of the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management since its eighty-fourth session (Geneva, 4–6 October 2023) and outlines a list of activities for 2024 and 2025. (It is submitted in accordance with A/78/6 (Section 20) and ECE/HBP/219, para 113 (d)).

The Committee is invited to take note of the information on activities implemented. The Committee is also invited to approve, subject to the availability of funding, the list of activities proposed for 2025 that are needed to implement the programme of work of the housing and land management component of the Housing, Land Management and Population subprogramme.

I. Implementation of the programmes of work since the eighty-fourth session of the Committee¹

1. Since the eighty-fourth session of the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management (Geneva, 4–6 October 2023), the Committee continued supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), the Paris Climate Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Geneva United Nations Charter on Sustainable Housing, the Geneva Ministerial Declaration on Housing and Urban Development² and the *Place and Life in the ECE – A Regional Action Plan 2030*.³ The Committee Bureau met regularly to review and provide guidance on the implementation of the mandated work and to prepare for the Committee’s present session. The secretariat convened eight Bureau meetings for that purpose. The following activities were implemented:

A. Affordable, accessible and sustainable housing

2. At the request of the Committee at its last session,⁴ a survey on housing affordability in the ECE region was conducted by the Real Estate Market Advisory Group for Sustainable, Climate-Neutral and Energy-Efficient Buildings and Cities (Advisory Group) focusing on challenges as well as innovative initiatives and best practices for improving housing affordability. (ECE/HBP/2024/5 and ECE/HBP/2024/Inf.3).

3. In consultation with the Committee Bureau, the secretariat prepared a workshop to take place during the present Committee session to showcase relevant international work on housing, as well as to share experiences on the main challenges, and recommended solutions and good practice by national and local authorities and stakeholders for improving access to affordable and adequate housing in the ECE region. A discussion paper outlining challenges and priorities for improving housing affordability (ECE/HBP/2024/4) was drafted drawing mainly from the 2024 survey and study of the Advisory Group as well as *#Housing2030: Effective policies for affordable housing in the UNECE region* –published in 2022.

4. The draft (third) Country Profile on Urban Development, Housing and Land-management of Armenia tabled for the present session (ECE/HBP/2024/9 and ECE/HBP/2024/Inf.7) was jointly prepared and funded by ECE⁵ and United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). It included an in-depth assessment of the country’s housing policies and provided policy recommendations for improving the affordability, accessibility and sustainability of housing. Further to its approval by the Committee at its last session, the secretariat also published a country profile of Albania (ECE/HBP/226). Preparations for the development of a country profile of Montenegro were initiated.

5. The Advisory Group and the Geneva UN Charter Centres of Excellence co-organized a side event at the Committee’s eighty-fourth session on “Promoting access to decent, adequate, affordable and healthy housing for all” (Geneva, 5 October 2023).

Activity impacts/outputs and dissemination of results

6. The following impacts were observed as a result of the work on housing:

(a) Identification of common challenges facing local and national governments in the ECE region to addressing housing affordability;

(b) An improved understanding among local and national governments in the ECE region of best practices and successful policies for ensuring housing affordability.

¹ For detailed information on meetings and publications, please see the website at <https://unece.org/housing>.

² United Nations Publication, ECE/HBP/190, annex I.

³ United Nations Publication, ECE/HBP/215.

⁴ United Nations Publication, ECE/HBP/219, para. 31 (b).

⁵ Funding from the ECE Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation (RPTC).

7. The following dissemination tools were used to promote the work on housing: the ECE website and the #Housing2030 website (housing2030.org) and the social media platforms of ECE, UN-Habitat and Housing Europe.

B. Building urban economic resilience

8. Work towards building urban resilience and building back better after the Covid-19 pandemic is based on key related policy documents endorsed by the Committee, including the *Place and Life in the ECE – A Regional Action Plan 2030*. The Regional Action Plan provides an integrated approach for supporting local and national development efforts until 2030, addressing also the needs of the most vulnerable population groups living in informal settlements. It contains guidance for building more resilient, inclusive and sustainable people-centred cities in the ECE region with affordable, accessible and climate-neutral housing.

9. In 2023–2024, related activities included the following:

1. Urban resilience week

10. Urban resilience was the overarching theme for the meetings organized by the secretariat for representatives of national and subnational governments, experts and civil society from the ECE region and beyond to discuss strategies and practical solutions for building more resilient and sustainable cities, focusing on innovative approaches to urban planning and design, urban regeneration, innovative financing instruments for urban infrastructure and community engagement. Their key outcomes included the following:

(a) The Forum of Mayors meeting on “Urban regeneration towards 2030” (Geneva, 2–3 October 2023) adopted a set of recommendations and principles of urban regeneration for mayors to implement (ECE/HBP/2023/1, sections II and III) and agreed on related recommendations addressing the member States, for consideration by the Committee. at its eighty-fourth session (ECE/HBP/2023/1, section III);

(b) The Committee, at its eighty-fourth session (Geneva, 4–6 October 2023), endorsed the above recommendations from the Forum of Mayors;

(c) Side-events were organized throughout the week, including one to launch a multi-stakeholder project (2024–2025) on “Supporting cities in urban resilience building for inclusive responses and recovery,”⁶ co-organized by the United Nations Regional Commissions, UN-Habitat, the Geneva-based Global Cities Hub and Making Cities Resilient 2030.

2. Projects for building urban economic resilience

11. The project “Supporting Member States in urban economic resilience building for inclusive responses and recovery regarding natural, man-made disasters, climate change, internal and external shocks” is currently implemented (2024–2025) by ECE and the other United Nations Regional Commissions, in collaboration with UN-Habitat, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the United Nations Development Fund, and the Global Cities Hub. With funding from the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) programme (16th tranche), the project supports five cities, including Podgorica (Montenegro) in the ECE region, in designing, implementing and monitoring sustainable, resilient, and inclusive economic and financial responses to internal and external shocks to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In particular, the project aims to enhance the pilot ability of pilot cities to engage with donors and international financial institutions, resulting in concrete projects that support urban resilience. The initial implementation steps include a fact-finding mission, followed by stakeholder participation workshops and local expert group meetings. The project builds on the outcomes of the (2020–2022) “Rapid Response” project “Building Urban Economic

⁶ <https://unece.org/housing-and-land-management/events/supporting-cities-urban-resilience-building-inclusive-responses>.

Resilience during and after COVID-19,” which strengthened capacities of local governments in 16 cities, including three cities in the ECE Region – Tirana (Albania), Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) and Kharkiv (Ukraine), through the development of an urban economic resilience diagnostic and planning tool and the exchange of good practices in developing and implementing post-COVID-19 recovery plans.

12. To assist national and local governments in the field of urban resilience, targeted e-learning courses were developed and made available on the ECE City resilience training e-learning platform.⁷ To promote their use and to share related good practice, in particular among countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, the courses were translated into Russian and two related webinars were organized, with funding from the Russian Federation under the project “Enhance capacity of countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia in developing and implementing policies and strategies for sustainable housing and sustainable smart cities” (2021–2024). The webinars consisted of the following:

- (a) Presenting the e-course on urban economic resilience (26 October 2023);⁸
- (b) Building urban economic resilience, case study of Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan (30 November 2023).⁹

3. Formalizing informal settlements and building back better

13. The following outputs related to formalizing informal settlements were delivered:

- (a) E-learning courses were translated into Russian and two webinars were organized, with project funding from the Russian Federation, to promote them:
 - (i) A webinar on: Presenting the e-courses on formalization of informal constructions in the ECE region (18 January 2024);¹⁰
 - (ii) A webinar on: Formalization of informal settlements in the ECE region: case studies (28 March 2024).¹¹
- (b) A webinar on informal settlements: “Formalization and Build Back Better Projects” (14 June 2024)¹² was organized by the Bureau of the Working Party on Land Administration to discuss related challenges as well as solutions and good practice.

4. Green Financing for Sustainable Real Estate, Infrastructure and Urban Transformation Projects

14. At its last session, in 2023, the Committee endorsed the “Principles for Green Financing for Sustainable Real Estate, Infrastructure and Urban Transformation Projects” (ECE/HBP/2023/3) to guide national, regional and local governments, and other relevant stakeholders towards environmental sustainability and financial resilience in their real estate, infrastructure and urban transformation projects.

15. The Bureaux of the Committee and the Working Party on Land Administration, with support from the secretariat, organized a webinar on “Principles for Green Financing for Sustainable Real Estate, Infrastructure and Urban Transformation Projects” (Geneva/online, 19 March 2024),¹³ which explored how the Principles can effectively facilitate green financing in real estate and infrastructure, driving economically viable and environmentally sustainable urban projects.

⁷ The e-learning courses were developed in cooperation with the University of Geneva as the UN Charter Center of Excellence and are available at: <https://www.cityresiliencetraining.com/course/>. For more information on the activity, please see: <https://unece.org/housing-and-land-management/enhancing-capacity-countries-eastern-europe-caucasus-and-central-asia>

⁸ <https://unece.org/info/events/event/384380>.

⁹ <https://unece.org/info/events/event/385384>.

¹⁰ <https://unece.org/info/events/event/386795>.

¹¹ <https://unece.org/info/events/event/389097>.

¹² <https://unece.org/info/events/event/391375>.

¹³ <https://unece.org/info/events/event/387444>

Activity impacts/outputs and dissemination of results

16. The following impact was observed as a result of work for building urban economic resilience: intergovernmental meetings, e-learning courses, webinars, workshops and fact-finding missions increased awareness among national and local governments, and other stakeholders in the ECE region and beyond about the Regional Action Plan and its implementation, and provided them with evidence-based recommendations, dedicated online training opportunities and good practice examples related to urban regeneration and economic resilience, green financing and formalization of informal settlements.

17. To promote the related work, information was widely disseminated via email, the ECE website, social media platforms and press releases.

C. Sustainable Development Goals Voluntary Local Reviews: measuring progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals at the local level

18. Voluntary Local Reviews are tools to help local and regional governments measure and report on progress in implementing the SDGs, with a view to complementing the national efforts to that end in a coordinated manner. The Committee has endorsed guidelines for the development of Voluntary Local Reviews in the ECE region, at its eighty-second¹⁴ and eighty-third sessions,¹⁵ in 2021 and in 2022, respectively. At its eighty-fourth session, in 2023, the Committee invited the secretariat to update the 2022 Guidelines based on outcomes of their testing in pilot cities and on the feedback to be received from the pilot cities, relevant experts and stakeholders, UN-Habitat, other United Nations agencies and partner organizations. The third edition of the Guidelines tabled for the Committee's present session (ECE/BBP/2024/7) represents a step forward in providing cities in the region with practical and action-oriented guidance and best practices. Through a "hands-on" approach to the development of Voluntary Local Reviews, the guidelines aim to better support cities in tracking their progress towards achievement of Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda at the local level.

19. To promote the implementation of the regional guidelines, ECE, in cooperation with the University of Geneva and other partners, developed an online training course on Voluntary Local Reviews.¹⁶ With the project funding from the Russian Federation¹⁷ the training course was translated into Russian, to bolster the ability of national and local authorities, and relevant stakeholders in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia, to develop and implement policies and strategies for localizing the SDGs.

20. To increase awareness and use of the Guidelines and the training programme, the secretariat organized two webinars:

(a) "Presenting the e-learning course: Development of SDG Voluntary Local Reviews in the UNECE region" (Online, 25 April 2024);

(b) "Development of SDG Local Reviews: Case studies of Voluntary Local Reviews in cities in the ECE region" (Online, 23 May 2024).

21. In addition, the following related capacity-building events were organized by ECE together with UN DESA, UN-Habitat and the Union of Cities and Local Governments, with the UN Development Account funding:

(a) Side event to the third Forum of Mayors' meeting "VNR-VLR studio "Evidence-based approaches to the development of Voluntary Local Reviews: experiences and best practices" (Geneva and online, 3 October 2023);

¹⁴ ECE/HBP/2021/4.

¹⁵ ECE/HBP/2022/6.

¹⁶ <https://www.cityresiliencetraining.com/course/>.

¹⁷ Under the project "Enhancing capacity of countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia in developing and implementing policies and strategies for sustainable housing and smart sustainable cities,"

(b) Side event to the 2024 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development “VNR-VSR-VLR Studio: Unveiling Best Practices for Multilevel Governance in Localizing SDGs” within the Regional Forum of Sustainable Development) (Geneva and online, 13 March 2024);

(c) Side event to the High-level Political Forum “VNR/ VLR lab: Advancing integrated SDG planning and implementation: the role of Voluntary National Reviews and Voluntary Local Reviews” (New York, 11 July 2024).

Activity impacts/outputs and dissemination of results

22. The following impacts were observed as a result of the Committee’s work: increased cooperation between local, regional and national governments on the preparation of their Voluntary Local, Subnational and National Reviews and increased local capacity for evidence-based assessment of progress towards achieving the SDGs.

23. To promote the work on Voluntary Local Reviews, related information was widely disseminated via e-mail, the ECE website, social media platforms, and press releases.

D. Implementation of the United for Smart Sustainable Cities initiative

24. The United for Smart Sustainable Cities (U4SSC) initiative is a global platform dedicated to helping cities harness information communication technologies for achieving the SDGs. The initiative involves developing strategic guidelines and measurement tools for cities to use. Membership includes 14 United Nations organizations and programmes. The ECE Forests, Land and Housing Division, in cooperation with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and UN-Habitat, coordinates the U4SSC activities.

25. Within the framework of the U4SSC initiative, and to promote smart sustainable cities, the Committee secretariat completed the publishing of six Smart Sustainable City Profiles developed under two UNDA-funded projects “Smart Sustainable Cities for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda in the UNECE Region” and the “Inter-regional cooperation for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda” from 2020 to 2023. The projects had supported the transition of selected beneficiary cities – Grodno (Belarus), Almaty and Astana (Kazakhstan), Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), Tbilisi (Georgia), and Podgorica (Montenegro) – towards smartness and sustainability, with the aim of accelerating implementation of SDG 11 and other urban-related SDGs.

26. Activities and outputs related to building urban economic resilience, in alignment with the goals of the U4SSC initiative, are outlined in section II.B, above.

Activity impacts/outputs and dissemination of results

27. The following impacts were observed as a result of the implementation of the U4SSC programme:

(a) Local and national governments were provided with an evaluation of their performance against the Key Performance Indicators for Smart Sustainable Cities and recommendations for developing and implementing evidence-based sustainable urban policies;

(b) Increased awareness among local and national governments about best practices and approaches towards ensuring vertical and horizontal coordination and engaging citizens in the development of sustainable urban policies.

28. The following dissemination tools were used to promote U4SSC activities: the ECE website, press releases and social media platforms as well as a dedicated joint project website (<https://u4ssc.itu.int/about/>).

E. Promoting multilevel governance through the Forum of Mayors

29. Since January 2023, at the decision of the ECE Executive Committee (EXCOM) (ECE/EX/2023/L.4), the Forum of Mayors was established as a subsidiary body of the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management in the form of a Team of Specialists that is to convene its meetings annually, in Geneva, immediately prior to the annual sessions of Committee. That evidenced the Forum's success as a United Nations platform for the exchange of good practice for addressing local, regional and global challenges and realizing the forward-looking vision of the United Nations Secretary-General of "a stronger, more networked and inclusive multilateral system, anchored within the United Nations".¹⁸

30. The third Forum of Mayors meeting took place in Geneva, on 2-3 October 2023, immediately prior to the Committee's last session (Geneva, 4-6 October 2023). Focusing on the theme of "Urban regeneration towards 2023," it brought together around 300 in-person participants, representing cities and member States from across the ECE region and beyond, the other United Nations Regional Commissions and specialized organizations, non-governmental organizations and academia. During the meeting, mayors and vice-mayors from over 40 cities shared experiences in finding people-centred solutions that simultaneously meet the needs and aspirations of their citizens, hedge against disasters and rise to the challenges of climate change in a manner that ensures the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda. These experiences were shared under four thematic segments of the Forum: the interregional segment; projects for urban regeneration; regeneration towards sustainable and resilient urban environments; as well as localizing the SDGs and urban regeneration.

31. The Forum of Mayors meeting also featured the following side events:

(a) "Woman and Mayor: A Gender Perspective on Challenges and Visions for Cities" organized by ECE and supported by the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations, Geneva (Geneva, 2 October 2023);

(b) "Local governments are taking the lead in paving the path toward sustainable global food systems" organized by Global Cities Hub, the City of Ghent and the Federal Public Service, Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Kingdom of Belgium (Geneva/online, 3 October 2023);

(c) "Urban Peace Dialogues: When Mayors Become Architects of Peace" organized by City Diplomacy Lab at Columbia Global Centers (Paris), the United States, the Nicosia Initiative promoted by the European Committee of the Regions, and the European and French Chapters of Mayors for Peace (Geneva, 3 October 2024, in person and online);

(d) "VNR-VLR studio "Evidence-based approaches to the development of Voluntary Local Reviews: experiences and best practices" organized by Switzerland, ECE and the other Regional Economic Commissions, DESA, Global Cities Hub, the Union of Cities and Local Governments and the University of Geneva (Geneva/online, 3 October 2023).

32. Starting from December 2023, the secretariat administered the preparatory work for the Forum's fourth meeting and its side events, scheduled to take place in Geneva, on 30 September–2 October 2024, prior to the Committee's present session, convening monthly meetings of the Bureau elected by the Forum of Mayors. As decided by that Bureau, the Forum's fourth meeting, the "Cities Summit of the Future", would focus on implications and responsibilities for local authorities from the Pact of the Future to be adopted at the Summit of the Future (New York, 22–23 September 2024). The Bureau also drafted an output statement on the "Future of Cities" for consideration of the participating mayors during consultation meetings held prior to the Forum's meeting. The participation of mayors from outside the ECE region was facilitated by the Global Cities Hub in cooperation with the secretariat.

¹⁸ *Our Common Agenda – Report of the Secretary-General* (United Nations publication, 2021). Available at <https://unfoundation.org/our-common-agenda>.

33. The secretariat also administered a review of the Forum of Mayors, which had to be undertaken before the extension of the Forum beyond 2024 could be recommended, in accordance with the procedure governing Teams of Specialists (ECE/EX/2/Rev.1) and the relevant decision of EXCOM (ECE/EX/2023/L.4). The review consisted of an online feedback survey in October 2023 sent to some 370 representatives of member States, cities and stakeholders that had registered for the third meeting of the Forum of Mayors and a review meeting (Geneva and online, 21 February 2024). Its positive outcomes are reported on in document (ECE/HBP/2024/Inf.1) tabled for the Committee's present meeting.

34. The Committee Bureau prepared a draft decision by the Committee on the extension of the mandate of the Forum of Mayors beyond 2024, the related resource requirements and the revision of the Forum's Terms of Reference (ECE/HBP/2024/3), which would be subsequently submitted for consideration by EXCOM. The secretariat also organized three rounds of informal consultations on the draft with the representatives of the Permanent Missions of the member States, that allowed the Bureau to take account of their feedback in the drafting process (Geneva/online, 9 April, 21 May and 20 June 2024).

35. In March 2024, ECE signed a memorandum of understanding with the Secretariat of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. The partnership focuses on supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at national and subnational levels, enhancing multilevel governance and collaboration with local and regional authorities. Key areas of cooperation include empowering local authorities, addressing societal inequalities, improving access to housing and care, tackling environmental issues in cities, promoting sustainable urban policies and developing smart cities.

Activity impacts/outputs and dissemination of results

36. In general, the impacts observed since the establishment of the Forum of Mayors as part of the United Nations intergovernmental structure included: increased engagement of the local governments with the United Nations; exchange of experiences and good practice between mayors of cities related to topics of the Forum and the mandate of the Committee, covering strategic plans, actions and joint initiatives for addressing regional and global challenges, and the 2030 Agenda, in particular SDG 11 and other relevant targets; and support to the implementation of the work of the Committee and subprogramme 8.

37. The third Forum of Mayors meeting, together with the last session of the Committee, received wide media coverage, generating 212 media articles in 15 languages, with a cumulative potential reach of some 74 million. The Forum provided evidence-based principles and recommendations on urban regeneration for city leaders, and for national governments which were subsequently endorsed by the Committee. A Chair's summary on the Forum's main outcomes was shared with the Committee and annexed to the report on the eighty-fourth session.¹⁹

38. The following dissemination tools were used to promote the Fourth Forum of Mayors meeting: a dedicated website (<https://forumofmayors.unecce.org>) and social media platforms of ECE and its partners.

F. Activities of the Geneva United Nations Charter Centres of Excellence for Sustainable Housing and Smart Sustainable Cities

39. To support the implementation of the Geneva United Nations Charter on Sustainable Housing, endorsed by ECE member States in 2015, a network of Geneva United Nations Charter Centres of Excellence for Sustainable Housing and Smart Sustainable Cities continued providing capacity-building activities and implementation of projects in close cooperation with the Committee secretariat. The Centres conduct research and analysis on housing and urban development policies and undertake outreach activities to promote the Charter. They also engage in a range of activities on the ground within their specialization and expertise. The Centres report on their activities to the Committee at its annual sessions

¹⁹ ECE/HBP/219, annex.

and hold meetings in between the sessions. In addition, at the Committee’s last session, the Centres organized a panel discussion in cooperation with the Real Estate Market Advisory Group focusing on key challenges in the housing sector. Presentations from that session are available on the ECE website²⁰ and summarized in the session report.²¹ In between the sessions, the secretariat convened two online meetings (in December 2023 and June 2024) for the Centres to provided updates on their activities.

40. The following outputs were delivered by the Geneva United Nations Charter Centres of Excellence:

(a) The Centre of Excellence on Sustainable and Resilient Development at the Polis University (Tirana, Albania), in collaboration with the Academy of Science of Albania, organized an international scientific conference on “Issues of Housing, Planning and Resilient Development of the Territory-Towards Euro-Mediterranean Perspectives” (Tirana, 13–14 October 2023). Additionally, the Centre hosted the Tirana Planning Week event on 22–26 April 2024, partnering with the Department of Architecture of Ferrara University, the University of Thessaly, and organizations including ECE, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Albania, Albanian Union of Architects, Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies of Rotterdam, Association of European Schools of Planning, International Society of City and Regional Planners and the European Network for Housing Research;

(b) The Centre of Excellence on Youth Homelessness Prevention, hosted by York University (Toronto, Canada), in addition to significant research and government relations work in Canada, organized the following international capacity-building activities: Hosted a two-day symposium which united individuals connected to the child welfare and youth homelessness sectors (Vancouver, Canada, October 2023); Supported European policymakers, researchers and practitioners in collaboration with the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless through ongoing communities of practice and presentations and workshops at their annual forum in Austria (Vienna, June 2024) and research conference in Hungary (Budapest, September 2025); Provided training and technical assistance on youth homelessness prevention interventions to local partners in Spain (ongoing) and the United States (Oklahoma, December 2023 and March 2024); Presented at conferences across the ECE Region including the OECD’s virtual conference for Preventing Homelessness and Securing Long-Term Housing Solutions in Paris (November 2023), and in-person presentations and keynote addresses in the United States (Seattle, November 2023; Washington D.C., February 2024; Atlanta, April 2024; New York City, April 2024), England (London, May 2024), Ireland (Cork, May 2024), and Czechia (Ostrovia, June 2024);

(c) The Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Housing, Estonian Union of Co-operative Housing Associations (Tallinn, Estonia) engaged in a capacity-building and cooperation programme for housing recovery in three cities of Ukraine: Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, and Zhytomyr, focusing on renovation projects and management plans for financing apartment building reconstructions. Additionally, the Centre has been developing a project (“INSPIRenov”), aimed at creating blended financing schemes to support energy efficiency renovations in Bulgaria, with a high potential for replication across Europe, addressing anticipated financial gaps as grant availability decreases. At the national level, the Centre is one of the key partners in a European-Union funded research and development programme (“Life IP BuildEST”) pursuing Estonian national climate ambition through smart and resilient renovation in cooperation with state authorities, municipalities and universities;

(d) The Centre on Smart Sustainable Cities of the City Diplomacy Lab at Columbia Global Centers (Paris, France) hosted three peer-learning webinar series: on Cities and Climate Solutions, in partnership with Columbia Global Paris Center (spring and fall 2023); Cities and Social Solutions, in partnership with Columbia Global Paris Center, UNESCO, and the WHO (Winter-Spring 2024); Urban Innovation to Achieve Just and Sustainable Cities, in partnership with the German Development Agency (GIZ), Cities

²⁰ <https://unece.org/info/events/event/374940>.

²¹ ECE/HBP/219, para. 59.

Alliance, and the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) (Spring-Summer-Autumn 2024). The Centre's in-person events included: the Urban Peace Dialogues, an official side event to the Forum of Mayors third meeting, in collaboration with Mayors for Peace and the Nicosia Initiative (October 2023); Digital Creation at the Heart of Sustainable Urban Development, in partnership with the City of Enghien-les-Bains (France) and a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Creative Cities of Media Arts (June 2024); Additionally, in December 2023, the Centre conducted the Mixed Migration and City Diplomacy online training with partners such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This training equipped municipal officers with tools to develop action plans for urban migration;

(e) The Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Finance for Cities and Infrastructure at the Cattaneo University (Castellanza, Italy) completed an analysis of the role of European Infrastructure Funds in public-private partnerships and issued a case study on the Arexpo urban regeneration project. It managed its proprietary website and database, explored financing opportunities, and conducted research on public and private partnerships and on green finance for real estate. The Centre organized workshops on sustainable city finance, contributed to publications on public and private partnerships and sustainable infrastructure, and supported the development of green financing principles. It also supported the UN4Mykolaiv project task force in the development of a vision for the city of Mykolaiv master plan;

(f) The Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Housing, hosted by the Norman Foster Foundation (Madrid, Spain), was leading the development of a vision for the new master plan for the city of Kharkiv in Ukraine. Additionally, the Centre hosted its third sustainability workshop (Madrid, 13–17 November 2023), to empower students with strategies for sustainable urban development;

(g) The Centre of Excellence on Smart Sustainable Cities and Sustainable Urban Development, hosted by the University of Geneva (Geneva, Switzerland), supported the secretariat to enhance housing data, and developed an open-access e-learning platform²² to host ECE e-learning content on urban sustainability. It contributed to the development of an inter-generational dialogue methodology by convening a town-hall meeting between ECE leadership and the participants of Geneva Summer School on Sustainability Leadership. It continued its successful collaboration with a Republic of Korea non-governmental organization on a sustainable city programme. Additionally, it co-organized a preparatory workshop for the 29th United Nations Climate Change conference (COP29) "Urban Sustainability: Integrating Science, Policy and Citizen Action and Recommendations for the Contribution of the Global Pledges for COP29;"

(h) The Centre of Excellence on Smart Sustainable Cities at Glasgow Urban Laboratory, Glasgow School of Art, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, has consulted on engagement experiences to address varying awareness among the government departments about activities of the United Nations and explored how to adapt the centre to contemporary challenges posed by artificial intelligence and hybrid working models.

Activity impacts/outputs and dissemination of results

41. The following impacts for local and national governments in the ECE region were observed as a result of the activities of the Geneva United Nations Charter Centres of Excellence: Improved understanding of the guiding principles contained in the Geneva United Nations Charter on Sustainable Housing and increased exchanges of experience and best practices for supporting its implementation.

42. The work of the Geneva United Nations Charter Centres of Excellence was promoted mainly via videos and information available at a dedicated ECE website (<https://unece.org/housing/charter>) and through the respective websites of the Centres.

²² www.cityresilience.com.

G. Activities of the Real Estate Market Advisory Group

43. The Real Estate Market Advisory Group continued to support the Committee and the Working Party on Land Administration. It organized regular meetings, participated in the last Committee session and the monthly meetings of the Bureaux of the Committee and Working Party, and contributed to various thematic events and studies. As needed, it also attended meetings of the UN Charter Centres of Excellence.

44. The Advisory Group delivered the following outputs:

(a) Organization of a side event to the eighty-fourth Committee session on affordable and energy-efficient housing;

(b) Preparation of a survey and a study on housing affordability in the ECE region, with the outcomes presented at the Committee's present session; and contribution to the report on "Ecosystems and security for future land administration arrangements";

(c) Promotion of the work of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies and the exchange of good practices during key relevant events, such as the CEE Sustainable Finance Summit (Prague, 27–29 May 2024); the 14th Forum of Local Economic Development "Healthy City - Green, Ecologically Clean Environment, Flexible and Sustainable Urban Development, (Tbilisi, 6–7 June 2024); and the 2024 Regional Transformation by Tourism Conference (Paris, 30 May 2024), focusing on renovation and reforms triggered by tourism;

(d) Support to the International Fire Safety Standards Coalition in promoting the implementation of the International Fire Safety Standards: Common Principles "Safe Buildings Save Lives" (ECE/HBP/2020/7).

Activity impacts/outputs and dissemination of results

45. The following impacts were observed as a result of the activities of the Advisory Group:

(a) Support to the Committee and the Working Party in the implementation of their programmes of work;

(b) Increased exchange of experience and best practices among local and national governments in the ECE region in the areas of affordable and energy-efficient housing, smart sustainable cities and land administration.

H. Land administration and management

46. The Working Party on Land Administration promotes security of tenure and improvement of cadastres and land registries, including institutional arrangements for land registration. Its sessions are held every two years.²³ Since the Committee's last session, the Working Party focused on ecosystem and security in land administration. Its Bureau held monthly (online) meetings, serviced by the secretariat.

47. The following events related to land administration and management were organized:

(a) A workshop on "Ensuring tenure security after natural and man-made disasters", organized jointly with Spanish Land and Business Registrars Association, under the umbrella of the Spanish Presidency of the European Union Council (Madrid/online, 2-3 November 2023);²⁴

(b) A webinar on "Cyber Security - How are land authorities responding to evolving threats to maintain system security?", (online, 22 February 2024);²⁵

²³ The thirteenth session of the Working Party was held in Geneva on 4 and 5 April 2023. For more information, see the session report ECE/HBP/WP.7/2023/2.

²⁴ <https://unece.org/info/Housing-and-Land-Management/events/382803>.

²⁵ <https://unece.org/info/Housing-and-Land-Management/events/387871>.

(c) A workshop on “Principles for Green Financing for Sustainable Real Estate, Infrastructure and Urban Transformation Projects”, organized jointly with the Committee Bureau, (Geneva/online, 19 March 2024);²⁶

(d) A webinar on “Ecosystems in land administration” (online, 18 April 2024);²⁷

(e) A joint webinar with the Real Estate Market Advisory Group “Challenges of Cyber Security in Digital Land Administration: Digital security in the area of data, artificial intelligence and sustainable cities” (25 April 2024);²⁸

(f) A webinar on “Informal Settlements: Formalization and Build Back Better Projects?” (14 June 2024).²⁹

Activity impacts/outputs and dissemination of results

48. The following impacts/outputs were observed as a result of the work on land administration and management: The workshop and webinars provided national and local authorities and experts with good practice and recommendations for holistic land management, while addressing cyber and data security

49. The following dissemination tools are used to promote the work on land administration and management: the dedicated ECE website (<https://unece.org/land-administration-and-management>), videos, thematic articles, podcasts, press releases and ECE social media platforms.

I. Country profiles on urban development, housing and land management

50. Following a request from the Government of Armenia in December 2023, and further to the identification of cooperation and co-funding arrangements between ECE and UN-Habitat, a third Country Profile on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management of Armenia was drafted jointly with the support of consultants to the two organizations. The work was based on desk research, online consultations with national and subnational authorities and agencies of Armenia and a fact-finding mission in Armenia (12–18 May 2024), during which preliminary findings were also presented to the Government. Further to its review by the Government and the Committee Bureau in July 2024, the draft profile is to be presented to the Committee at its present session (ECE/HBP/2024/9 and ECE/HBP/2024/Inf.7).

51. Following the request from the Government of Montenegro and the identification of funding from the Council of Europe Development Bank, preparations by the secretariat are ongoing to initiate the development of the Country Profile of Montenegro. The work is expected to start in November 2024 and be completed by the end of 2025. The Profile will integrate the results of the already completed assessment of the country’s housing system (ECE/HBP/2023/Inf. 5).

52. The second Country Profile for Uzbekistan, as requested by the Government, will follow after, subject to the identification of funding.

J. Technical cooperation activities

53. Technical cooperation activities presented in the previous sections were being carried out within the context of the following ongoing projects:

(a) UNDA 14th tranche project “Voluntary local reviews: evidence for greener, resilient, and sustainable urban recovery in Eastern European and Central Asian countries in

²⁶ <https://unece.org/info/Housing-and-Land-Management/events/387444>

²⁷ <https://unece.org/info/Housing-and-Land-Management/events/389613>

²⁸ <https://unece.org/info/Housing-and-Land-Management/events/389785>

²⁹ <https://unece.org/info/events/event/391375>

transition”, led by UN-Habitat and implemented by ECE, DESA and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) (2022–2024);

(b) The project “Enhance capacity of countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia in developing and implementing policies and strategies for sustainable housing and sustainable smart cities (Centres of Excellence on Sustainable Housing and Sustainable Smart Cities for the CIS countries)”, supported by funds from the Russian Federation (2021–2024).

(d) The project “Building capacities of UNECE member States for integrated urban planning and accelerating achieving urban related SDGs through exchange of best practices and developing an online Toolbox” funded by the city of Madrid and implemented by ECE. The project contributes to the development of the Urban Cadastre in Ukraine.

(e) UNDA 16 tranche project “Urban Economic Resilience for inclusive responses and recovery from crises” led by ECE and ESCAP, and implemented jointly with ECA, ECLAC, ESCWA, UN-Habitat, and UNCDF (2024–2025).

54. The UN4UkrainianCities project (“Enhancing urban planning in the cities of Kharkiv and Mykolaiv in Ukraine by supporting the implementation of the new master plans and facilitating investments in sustainable urban infrastructure”) (June 2023–December 2024) funded by Germany (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and the German Development Agency (GIZ)). The project supports the revitalization and modernization of the cities of Kharkiv and Mykolaiv. By addressing immediate recovery needs and fostering long-term sustainable development, the project strives to build resilient, inclusive, and prosperous cities in Ukraine. The deliverables of ECE included the following:

(a) Support to the revision of the national policy framework for housing and urban development and development of an online platform with a toolbox for reconstruction of Ukrainian cities;

(b) Economic and demographic assessment: Analysis of the demographic and economic situation and development of scenarios that reflect the impact of the war on the cities;

(c) Formulation of pilot projects and identification of investors: Support to the implementation of the cities of Kharkiv and Mykolaiv reconstruction master plans, including formulation of concrete projects;

(d) Capacity building and public involvement as well as city-to-city networking activities;

(e) Monitoring of implementation and investments: Development of an investment tracker.

55. The following main meetings were held as part of the project:

(a) A workshop on “Housing Cooperatives in the UNECE Region: Best Practices and Experience”, which resulted in recommendations that were submitted to the Ministry of Infrastructure for use in drafting new housing legislation (Online, 25 October 2023);

(b) A workshop on “Housing Fund Management Models for Ukraine: The Estonian Experience”, organized by ECE, the Ukrainian Ministry of Infrastructure, the Estonian Union of Cooperative Housing Associations, and Housing Ukraine, in partnership with the Estonian Centre for International Development. At the workshop, Ukraine presented its housing management system and the concept plan for its future draft law on housing management. The experience in managing multi-apartment residential buildings of Estonia was shared. Recommendations from the workshop were submitted to the Ministry of Infrastructure to support the drafting of the new housing legislation. (Online, 1 December 2023);

(c) Meeting on “Ukrainian Urban Cadaster: National Infrastructure and Integration with Local Practices” including representatives from different Ukrainian Ministries involved in the development of the Urban Cadaster (1 November 2023);

(d) Kharkiv's Economic Strategy meeting with Oxford and Harvard University Professors focusing on the city's economic strategy and involving higher education institutions to enhance urban planning and sustainable development initiatives (March 2024);

(e) A series of workshops focused on public participation and urban transformation discussing the role of civic engagement in urban planning and reconstruction. The workshops were coordinated by the technical university of Milan and featured insights from international experts (May 2024);

(f) A webinar on "Reforming Housing Policy of Ukraine: Increasing the Level of Institutional Capacity of Hromadas to Manage Housing Stocks", focused on housing policy reform in Ukraine, aiming to improve the legislation on housing management based on ownership, purpose and form of management. The event identified related problems in Ukraine and explored mechanisms used by European countries for possible solutions (22 May 2024);

(g) A workshop on construction and demolition waste management brought together representatives of Ukraine, Finland, and ECE. It was part of a broader study visit aimed at fostering international collaboration and knowledge exchange in sustainable waste management practices (Helsinki, 29 April 2024);

(h) A side event "Kharkiv's recovery: main goals and plans" at the Ukraine Recovery Conference, ECE and partners convened high-level talks to renew the commitment to supporting Kharkiv, bringing together the Ukrainian Government, United Nations agencies, Mayors from cities, including Nurnberg and Berlin, donors and international partners (Berlin, 10 June 2024).

K. Cooperation with other international organizations

56. The Committee secretariat continued to cooperate with the Regional Commissions of the United Nations and with UN-Habitat within the context of its technical cooperation activities. The secretariat also collaborated with the Geneva Global Cities Hub in organizing the annual meeting of the Forum of Mayors, with UN-Habitat, for the joint development of a Country Profile on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management of Armenia, and with Housing Europe and UN-Habitat within the context of the #Housing2030 initiative.

57. The secretariat was engaged in activities of multi-agency United Nations initiatives on housing, land management and urban development, including; Making Cities Resilient 2030 (MCR2030) initiative led by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR); and U4SSC with the secretariat hosted by ITU, ECE and UN-Habitat.

58. To exchange information on activities and strengthen cooperation with partner organizations, the secretariat contributed to the organization of side events and delivered presentations at the following global and regional meetings:

(a) The Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the ECE Region (Geneva, 13-14 March 2024)³⁰ where the secretariat organized a side event "VNR-VSR-VLR Studio: Unveiling Best Practices for Multilevel Governance in Localizing SDGs";

(b) The World Bank Land Conference 2024 (Washington, D.C., 16 March 2024)³¹ where a member of the Bureau of the Working Party on Land Administration presented relevant ECE work in a joint event on "Enhancing capacities for land reforms through regional land initiatives;"

(c) Regional Development Forum for the CIS Region organized by the ITU (Astana, 26-27 March 2024), where the secretariat presented ECE activities on smart cities in that region;

³⁰ <https://regionalforum.unece.org/events/regional-forum-2023>.

³¹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/events/2023/10/05/land-conference-2024>

(d) United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (New York, 10–19 July 2024), with a joint side event on Voluntary Local Reviews organized by ECE and the other Regional Commissions.

59. The Working Party of Land Administration cooperated with other United Nations agencies and international organizations involved in land administration in the ECE region, including UN-Habitat, United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management, the European Union Infrastructure for Spatial Information in Europe (EU INSPIRE) Directive, International Federation of Surveyors (FIG), EuroGeographics and others.

II. Major activities planned for 2025

60. The Committee will continue to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the housing, urban- and land-related SDGs, especially Goal 11 and its targets: (11.1) “Ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services”; (11.3) “Enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries”; (11.6) “Reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management”; and (11.7) “Provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces”.

61. Due to its cross-cutting nature, the Committee will also contribute to the achievement of other SDGs, particularly Goals 3, 6, 7, 9, 13, 15 and 17. Due consideration will be given to the integration of climate change mitigation and adaptation, and disaster risk reduction and prevention measures into local and national housing, urban development and land management policies, strategies and planning. In attaining its objective, the subprogramme will continue building on cross-sectoral collaboration with other ECE sectoral committees.

A. Affordable, accessible, adequate and sustainable housing

62. The Committee will continue supporting the implementation of the Regional Action Plan 2030. Countries will be invited to report regularly on the implementation of the Regional Action Plan during the annual sessions of the Committee.

63. The Committee will also continue its engagement in the #Housing2030 initiative and its support to the implementation of the Geneva United Nations Charter on Sustainable Housing. It will promote the implementation of the Updated Framework Guidelines for Energy Efficiency Standards in Buildings, in cooperation with the ECE Committee on Sustainable Energy, through the Joint Task Force on Energy Efficiency Standards in Buildings

64. The Committee will continue reviewing housing policies at the national level, including through the preparation of country profiles on housing, urban development and land management. In 2025, it will publish the Country Profile for Armenia and work on the Country Profile for Montenegro, and, subject to availability of extrabudgetary financial resources, start preparations for the development of the Country Profile of Uzbekistan, as of 2026.

65. The Committee will work with the network of Charter Centres of Excellence to implement the Geneva United Nations Charter on Sustainable Housing.

66. If decided by the Committee, a ministerial meeting on housing issues could be organized in 2025 as a follow-up activity to the workshop on housing affordability held at the Committee’s present session.

Activity impacts/outputs and dissemination of results

67. Implementation of the above activities is expected to support building the capacity of national and local authorities for developing and implementing policies for ensuring affordable, adequate and climate-neutral housing.

68. The following dissemination tools will be used to promote the work on housing: the Committee website (<https://unece.org/housing>), the #Housing2030 online platform (www.housing2030.org), the ECE Geneva United Nations Charter Centres of Excellence website (<https://unece.org/housing/charter>), podcasts, videos, thematic articles, press releases and ECE social media platforms.

B. Building urban resilience

69. The ECE secretariat, in cooperation with representatives of the other United Nations Regional Commissions and other partner agencies, will continue to support countries with economies in transition and their cities in building urban resilience through policy advice, capacity-building, and use of innovative financial mechanisms for urban infrastructure projects and nature-based solutions. This will be done through:

(a) The implementation of the United Nations Development Account global project “Supporting Member States in Urban Economic Resilience building for inclusive responses and recovery regarding natural, man-made disasters, internal and external shocks” (2024–2025) to support five pilot cities, including, in the ECE region, Podgorica (Montenegro), in implementing action plans, preparing urban resilience projects and accessing financing for sustainable urban responses, involving capacity-building and knowledge exchange among the pilot cities. Activities to be implemented by ECE in cooperation with the implementing partners will include:

(i) An interregional workshop on "Financing Strategies to Strengthen Urban Economic Resilience for Inclusive Responses and Recovery from Crises," to be held as a side event to the World Urban Forum (Cairo, 4–8 November 2025), with a view to sharing practical experiences and increasing awareness and understanding of financial resources and instruments to bolster local economic resilience;

(ii) Stakeholder participation workshops in each pilot city, to promote stakeholder and community engagement and identify capacity-building needs for innovative financing mechanisms;

(iii) Study tours to each pilot city to strengthen local governments' knowledge of domestic and international financial institutions, project preparation facilities, and foster partnerships for urban resilience investments;

(iv) Local expert group meetings in each pilot city to facilitate matchmaking with regional financing institutions and support the submission of project concept notes to investors/financiers, as well as provide aid in pre-feasibility financing, investment negotiations, and capacity building;

(v) Workshops in each pilot city to guide the project development process and access funding opportunities, through matchmaking support with and assistance for project preparation facilities, helping project developers connect with potential partners and investors.

(b) Raising awareness and building capacities of cities on innovative and green financial instruments for urban recovery in accordance with principles for Green Financing for Sustainable Infrastructure and Urban Transformation Projects (ECE/HBP/2023/3) endorsed by the Committee at its last session, the ECE Guidelines on tools and mechanisms to finance Smart Sustainable Cities Projects³² (developed between 2020–2022); the Compendium of Practices for Innovative Financing of Smart Sustainable Projects;³³

(c) Promoting the use of nature-based solutions to support building urban resilience, leveraging synergies with the ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry in the fields of greening cities and urban forests, through the engagement in the work led by

³² <https://unece.org/info/Housing-and-Land-Management/pub/368918>.

³³ <https://www.itu.int/en/publications/Documents/tsb/2023-U4SSC-Compendium-Practices-Innovative-Financing-SSC-Projects/index.html#p=1>.

that Committee, including the ECE Trees in Cities Challenge,³⁴ the Informal Network of Experts on Urban Nature (see ECE/HBP/2023/4) and the Forests for Food in Cities;³⁵

(d) Supporting the implementation of the COVID-19 Recovery Action Plan for Informal Settlements in the ECE Region³⁶ including through a workshop on informal settlements to be organized by the Working Party on Land Administration, in Greece, in June 2025.

Activity impacts/outputs and dissemination of results

70. Implementation of the above activities for building urban resilience is expected to increase capacities of national and local authorities for developing and implementing policies for ensuring sustainable post-COVID-19 urban economic recovery and resilience as well as addressing the needs of the most vulnerable population groups living in informal settlements.

71. The following dissemination tools will be used to promote the work on urban resilience and on informal settlements: videos, thematic articles, podcasts, press releases and ECE social media platforms.

C. Implementation of the United for Smart Sustainable Cities initiative

72. ECE will continue its work as a member of the secretariat of the United for Smart Sustainable Cities (U4SSC) initiative. Building on the previously implemented projects,³⁷ it will implement in particular activities related to urban resilience.

D. Voluntary Local Reviews: measuring progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals at the local level

73. The updated Guidelines for the Development of Voluntary Local Reviews in the ECE Region submitted for endorsement of the Committee (ECE/HBP/2024/7) will support local governments in tracking progress towards the achievement of the SDGs and strengthen synergies between local, national and global level policies and initiatives. The ECE e-learning courses will be of help in the implementation of these updated regional Guidelines.

74. The pilot cities supported under the UNDA funded project “Voluntary Local Reviews: Evidence for Greener, Resilient and Sustainable Urban Recovery in Eastern European and Central Asian Countries in Transition”³⁸ - Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan; Dushanbe, Tajikistan; Nis, Serbia; and Tbilisi, Georgia, are expected to publish their Voluntary Local Reviews by the end of 2024. As a follow-up, subject to approval of funding by the Joint SDG Fund, ECE will implement, as a lead organization and in close collaboration with UN-Habitat and UNDP, a project on SDG localization in Bishkek (October 2024–September 2025). The new project will further operationalize the goals identified in the action-oriented Voluntary Local Review of the City of Bishkek, strengthen capacities and awareness of the local government to locally implement the SDGs, and facilitate participation of representatives of the City of Bishkek in international forums such as the World Urban Forum, ECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and the Forum of Mayors.

Activity impacts and dissemination of results

75. Implementation of the activities on Voluntary Local Reviews is expected to support further localisation of the SDGs and support building urban resilience in cities.

³⁴ <https://treesincities.unece.org/>.

³⁵ <https://unece.org/Forests4FoodCities>.

³⁶ <https://unece.org/info/Housing-and-Land-Management/pub/367518>.

³⁷ UNDA 12th tranche project “Sustainable Smart Cities with Innovative Financing” in six project pilot cities - Grodno (Belarus), Almaty and Nur-Sultan (Kazakhstan), Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), Tbilisi (Georgia) and Podgorica (Montenegro)

³⁸ <https://unece.org/housing/VLRs>.

76. The following dissemination tools will be used to promote the related work: videos, thematic articles, podcasts, press releases and ECE social media platforms.

E. Activities of the Geneva United Nations Charter Centres of Excellence on Sustainable Housing and Smart Sustainable Cities

77. The Centres will continue to be actively engaged in the implementation of the Committee programme of work through capacity-building and technical cooperation activities. This will include the following projects:³⁹

(a) The Centre of Excellence on Sustainable and Resilient Development, hosted by Co-Plan Institute at the Polis University (Tirana, Albania), plans to publish two publications in cooperation with the University of Ferrara, namely: “Re-Inventing Phoeniciae, New Intersections of Tradition, Innovation, Landscapes and Tourism” and “Intersecting Landscapes. Finding New Spatial Visions for the Cross-Border Region of Prespa Lakes and the case of Pustec Municipality – Albania”;

(b) The Centre of Excellence on Youth Homelessness Prevention, hosted by York University (Toronto, Canada), will focus its efforts in 2024–2025 on completing and mobilizing the knowledge from its network of research projects and partners, culminating in an International Conference on the Prevention of Youth Homelessness (Toronto, February 2025), which will bring together policymakers, researchers and practitioners to exchange knowledge on the advancements in evidence for youth homelessness prevention;

(c) The Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Housing, hosted by the Norman Foster Foundation, will continue to implement the projects “Essential Homes – Scaling Up” and “Portugal Modular Construction System – Prototyping”;

(d) The Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Housing, hosted by the Estonian Union of Co-operative Housing Associations (Tallinn, Estonia), will continue implementing the research and development program LIFE IP BuildEST – starter for building renovation marathon and “INSPIRenov – Financial Schemes for Providing Innovation in the EE Renovation”, in close coordination with the Committee secretariat. Additionally, it will launch new projects: “SIRCULAR”, aiming to overcome barriers to circularity in the building industry through integrated digital tools and technological solutions; “PREFIGURE”, a research project identifying, tracing, analysing, and networking emerging and active prototypes of change related to the housing-energy efficiency/energy poverty nexus; and “SOFTAcademy”, which aims to enhance the spaces between buildings and renovate prefab houses, potentially sparking a renovation wave in Estonia;

(e) The Centre of Excellence on Smart Sustainable Cities and Sustainable Urban Development, hosted by University of Geneva (Switzerland), will continue its work on the projects “REDEHOPE: Project aiming at building an online self-diagnosis tool to help housing organization improve their data management practices” and “Voluntary Local Reviews Online Dashboard”. They will be developing a flexible online system to collect, aggregate, analyse and visualize Voluntary Local Reviews. They will also continue developing the online portal “CityResilienceTraining.com”, which already hosts several online training programmes;

(f) The Centre of Excellence on Smart Sustainable Cities, hosted by the City Diplomacy Lab Columbia Global Centers (Paris, France), will organize a series of online and in-person capacity-building workshops in 2025;

(g) The Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Finance for Cities and Infrastructure at the Cattaneo University (Castellanza, Italy) will continue its Observatory on European Infrastructure Funds and manage its proprietary database. It will research financial mechanisms for sustainable infrastructure and smart cities, study the role of artificial

³⁹ This is not an exhaustive list. The detailed list of planned activities is at <https://unece.org/housing/charter-centres>.

intelligence in smart cities, propose a joint webinar with ECE and conduct research on urban regeneration examples.

78. The Committee secretariat will continue organizing regular network meetings and foster the exchange of best practices between the Centres.

Activity impacts/outputs and dissemination of results

79. By strengthening the network of the Centres, new proposals for innovative joint activities will be developed to support the implementation of the Geneva United Nations Charter on Sustainable Housing as well as the Regional Action Plan.

80. The following dissemination tools will be used to promote the work of the Centres of Excellence: the dedicated ECE website (<https://unece.org/housing/charter>), videos, thematic articles, podcasts, press releases and ECE social media platforms.

F. Promoting multilevel governance through the Forum of Mayors

81. The fourth Forum of Mayors' meeting, the Cities Summit of the Future, will be held in Geneva on 30 September and 1 October 2024. The Forum is expected to inform the Committee, at its present session, on its outcomes and present a statement on the Future of Cities, to be included in the report of the Committee session, and reflected in the implementation of the Committee's programme of work. In the last quarter of 2024, the Committee secretariat will start coordinating the preparations for the fifth meeting of the Forum of Mayors, scheduled to be held in Geneva, on 6–7 October 2025, subject to approval by EXCOM.

G. Activities of the Real Estate Market Advisory Group

82. The Real Estate Market Advisory Group will continue to support the Committee and the Working Party on Land Administration in the implementation of their work programmes according to its draft programme of work for the period 2025–2026 (ECE/HBP/2024/8). It will contribute to the meetings and activities of the Committee and the Working Party and their Bureaux. It will also promote the sharing of experience and good practice among local and national governments in the areas of its experience. The planned activities for 2025, include:

- (a) Support to the International Fire Safety Standards Coalition in promoting the implementation of the International Fire Safety Standards, with a possible side event during the Committee's eighty-sixth session;
- (b) Three online seminars to be organized on topics related to the Regional Action Plan;
- (c) The preparation of a study, possibly regarding rental markets or housing affordability.

H. Land administration and management

83. To continue to assist member States in improving land administration and land management, promoting security of tenure and improving cadastres and land registries, including institutional arrangements for land administration, the Working Party on Land Administration will focus its 2025 activities on ecosystems and security in land administration. In accordance with its Programme of Work (ECE/HBP/2023/6), the Working Party will organize webinars and workshops on key topics such as tenure security, green financing and combating environmental fraud. It will also address social and environmental trends in land administration.

84. A study on "Ecosystems and security for future land administration arrangements" (ECE/HBP/2023/Inf.3 and ECE/HBP/2024/Inf.6) will be completed and published to address related challenges in the region and provide recommendations for helping governments

strengthen the role of land administration in implementing the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda.

85. As a follow-up activity to the above study, a workshop "Build Back Better the Self-made Cities: Improving Geospatial Data Ecosystems and Formalizing Informal Settlements" will be held in Athens, Greece, on 18–20 June 2025, to be organized jointly by the Working Party, International Federation of Surveyors, European Group for Organizational Studies and the World Bank. The workshop will cover formalizing land rights, improving legislation and registration, implementing the ECE Recovery Action Plan, and enhancing geospatial data systems. It will also focus on community engagement, preparing recovery action plans, and boosting resilience against disasters and future pandemics.

86. The Working Party will hold its fourteenth session in Geneva, on 28–29 April 2025. It will review the implementation of its programmes of work 2022–2023 and 2024–2025, including the findings from the webinars and other activities undertaken on the topic of ecosystems and security in land administration. The Working Party will also agree on its draft programme of work for 2026–2027 to be submitted for endorsement by the Committee at its eighty-sixth session in October 2025, and which is initially proposed to cover the key topics of tenure security, green financing and combating environmental fraud.

Activity impacts/outputs and dissemination of results

87. The planned activities of the Working Party will further support strengthening technical capacity of land administration authorities in the ECE region.

88. The following dissemination tools will be used to promote the work of the Working Party: the dedicated ECE website (<https://unece.org/land-administration-and-management>), videos, thematic articles, podcasts, press releases and ECE social media platforms.

I. Country profiles on urban development, housing and land management

89. Following the request from the government of Montenegro and with funding from the Council of Europe Development Bank, the Country Profile of Montenegro will be developed in the course of 2025. The Profile will integrate the results of the completed assessment of the country's housing system (ECE/HBP/2023/Inf. 5). The second Country Profile for Uzbekistan, as requested by the Government, would follow after, subject to the identification of funding.

J. Update on technical cooperation activities

90. Subject to the confirmation of further project funding from Germany for 2025–2026, the following activities will be implemented, to follow-up and build on the first phase of the UN4UkrainianCities project (2023–2024):

- (a) Continuing and scaling the critical work on long-term reconstruction planning in Kharkiv and Mykolaiv;
- (b) Extending support for updating housing and urban development policies of Ukraine;
- (c) Implement additional pilot projects in Mykolaiv and Kharkiv with a focus on transforming industrial sectors, reimagining river corridors, retrofitting Soviet-era housing, and designing new residential districts;
- (d) Economic studies to identify post-conflict recovery opportunities;
- (e) Capacity building for national and local representatives to enhance skills in sustainable urban development and project implementation.

91. With funding from the Joint SDG Fund, ECE, as a lead organization will implement in close collaboration with UN-Habitat and UNDP, a project on SDG localization in Bishkek, (October 2024–September 2025). Leveraging upon the outcomes of the recent UN Development Account funded project "Voluntary Local Reviews: Evidence for Greener,

Resilient, and Sustainable Urban Recovery in Eastern European and Central Asian Countries in Transition", the project will further operationalize the goals identified in the action-oriented Voluntary Local Review of the City of Bishkek, strengthen capacities and awareness of the local government to implement the SDGs, and facilitate participation of representatives of the City of Bishkek in international forums such as the World Urban Forum, ECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and the Forum of Mayors.

III. Resources for the implementation of the activities of Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management in 2025

92. Most Committee's activities, including technical assistance and capacity building activities to countries, are not financed by the ECE regular budget funds that cover: the costs of secretariat staff and official meeting, documentation and publication related costs. For the implementation of the Committee's programmes of work in 2025, some additional resources will be available from the United Nations Development Account; ECE regular programme of technical cooperation (RPTC) and the Council of Europe Development Bank. In addition, voluntary contributions of extrabudgetary funding is expected to be provided by some member States, including Czechia, Germany (earmarked for the UN4UkrainianCities follow-up project) and Switzerland (earmarked for the Forum of Mayors). In 2025, two member States will sponsor Junior Professional Officers for the secretariat for servicing the Forum of Mayors: Hungary (2024–2026) and Italy (2024–2025 on a 50% basis).

93. Additional extrabudgetary funds will be required for the implementation of activities under the Committee's Programmes of Work in October-December 2024 and for financial support for the participation of countries, in particular those with economies in transition, in the meetings.

94. Additional funding, both regular budget and extrabudgetary, will also be required for strengthening the secretariat resources for preparing and servicing the meetings of the Committee, its subsidiary bodies, in particular the Forum of Mayors and their Bureaux. The regular budget staffing of the Housing and Land Management Unit has remained unchanged for the past decades, consisting of only two professional staff members: one P-4 Environmental Affairs Officer (Secretary to the Committee) and one P-2 Associate Economic Affairs Officer (Secretary to the Working Party), supported by two general service staff members: one G6 Programme Assistant and one G6 Statistical Assistant.

95. To address the resource constraints, in particular as regards the Forum of Mayors, the Committee Bureau prepared a draft Committee decision tabled for the present session (ECE/HBP/2024/5) requesting additional United Nations regular budget staffing resources as well as voluntary contributions from member States to financially support participation in meetings of delegates from countries with economies in transition.