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## Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management

### Eighty-fifth session

Geneva, 2–4 October 2024

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

**Forum of Mayors: outcomes of the fourth meeting,  
mandate and terms of reference**

## Draft decision on the mandate and the revised terms of reference of the Forum of Mayors

### Note by the Bureau

#### *Summary*

This document contains the draft decision of the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management on the mandate and the revised terms of reference of the Forum of Mayors, and, in its annex, proposals to revise the Terms of Reference and other elements of the Forum of Mayors ([ECE/EX/2023/L.4](#)). The draft decision has been prepared by the Bureau of the Committee, with support from the secretariat, in consultation with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) member States (representatives of permanent missions to the United Nations and other international organizations). The document is submitted according to A/78/6 (Section 20) and; ECE/EX/2023/L.4 paras 2 and 3.

The recommendation in para. 1 of the draft decision on the continuation of the Forum of Mayors adheres to the *Guidelines for the establishment and functioning of teams of specialists within ECE* (ECE/EX.2/Rev.1). The Guidelines (section 3, para. h), stipulate as follows: “Should the parent body feel that a particular team of specialists has a standing character by nature of its continuing activity, it can on an exceptional basis propose to the Executive Committee to exempt that team of specialists from the sunset clause, giving appropriate justification. In this case, the mandate and standing nature of the concerned team of specialists should be reviewed every five years.”

The Committee is expected to agree on and adopt the draft decision.



## Draft decision on the mandate and revised Terms of Reference of the Forum of Mayors

*The Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management,*

*Recalling* decision ECE/EX/2020/L.16 of the Executive Committee (EXCOM) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) at its 112<sup>th</sup> meeting to undertake an evaluation of the Forum of Mayors in 2022, the results of which were to be considered by the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management (the Committee) at its eighty-third session and by EXCOM during 2022,

*Recalling also* decision ECE/EX/2023/L.4, taken by EXCOM at its 126<sup>th</sup> meeting based on recommendations of the Committee at its eighty-third session, to: continue the Forum after 2022; establish it as a subsidiary body of the Committee in the form of a team of specialists (in accordance with *Guidelines for the establishment and functioning of teams of specialists within UNECE*<sup>1</sup>) to be convened annually, in Geneva, immediately prior to the Committee session,

*Recognizing* the existence of other relevant United Nations and other international processes addressing urban issues and the importance of cooperating with them,

*Having considered* the results of the review of the Forum of Mayors (contained in document ECE/HBP/2024/Inf.1), which the secretariat conducted among representatives of member States and cities through a questionnaire survey and a review meeting (Geneva and online, 21 February 2024),

*Underscoring* that, since its establishment, the Forum of Mayors has successfully allowed mayors to contribute to the intergovernmental work of the Committee and ECE in general, as well as to learn from each other's strategies and actions for addressing local, regional and global challenges such as the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals at the local level,

*Underscoring also* the considerable, and continuously increasing, interest expressed by mayors in the Forum, which has proved to effectively foster the exchange of information and best practices; interaction with fellow city representatives and networks; and active participation of local authorities in the work of ECE,

*Noting* the unique nature of the Forum of Mayors as a United Nations platform for enhancing coherence and complementarity between the local, regional and global levels in the furtherance of a stronger, more networked and inclusive multilateral system,

*Emphasizing* the further potential and benefits of the Forum of Mayors for advancing the effective implementation of the mandate of the Committee and Sustainable Development Goals and multilevel governance on a longer-term basis.

1. *Recommends* the continuation of the Forum of Mayors beyond 2024 as a team of specialists [of a standing nature,] to be reviewed every five years (see ECE/EX/2/rev.1, item 3 (h))<sup>2</sup>;
2. *Approves* the mandate and revised terms of reference of the Forum of Mayors, as contained in the annex to the present decision, for the period 2025–2029;
3. *Notes* that the continuation of the Forum of the Mayors beyond 2024 will require additional secretariat resources and that the Regular Budget resources for the ECE

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<sup>1</sup> ECE/EX/2/Rev.1.

<sup>2</sup> It is understood that it is the prerogative of the parent body or the ECE Executive Committee to discontinue Teams of Specialists when they deem it appropriate (for instance if the team is no longer considered relevant for the work of the organization or the team does not receive sufficient resources in support of its work).

housing unit (subprogramme 8), including staffing, has remained minimal (two Professional category staff members) and unchanged for the past decades;

4. *Requests* the Secretary-General to strengthen the secretariat resources and establish dedicated new additional capacity to support the Forum of Mayors;

5. *Calls upon* parties and other interested stakeholders to provide voluntary cash and in-kind contributions for travel support to mayors, in particular from countries with economies in transition to the meetings of the Forum of Mayors;

6. *Decides* to transmit to the Economic Commission for Europe a draft decision on this issue for consideration and possible adoption;

7. *Encourages* the Forum of Mayors to continue to seek cooperation with and coherence among other similar relevant international processes.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> These include, but are not limited to, processes and initiatives by the following partner organizations: the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), C40, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, Committee of the Regions of the European Union, Eurocities, Global Parliament of Mayors, Global Cities Hub, OECD Champion Mayor, and United for Smart Sustainable Cities (U4SSC).

## Annex

### **Terms of Reference and other elements of the Forum of Mayors**

#### **I. Objectives and scope**

1. As a Team of Specialists, the Forum of Mayors has the following objectives and scope:

(a) To allow for mayors<sup>4</sup> in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region to participate and to share their cities' strategic plans, actions and joint initiatives for addressing regional and global challenges, including implementing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and in particular SDG 11, at the local level;

(b) To support the implementation of the work of the ECE Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management (the Committee) and ECE subprogramme 8 (on Housing, land management and population);

(c) To promote human-centred solutions for supporting the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(d) To facilitate the sharing of experiences from cities, including success stories and challenges, in line with the thematic topic of the Forum and within the mandate of the Committee;

(e) To contribute to achieving coherence and complementarity between the local, regional and global levels in furtherance of a stronger, more networked and inclusive multilateral system.

#### **II. Mandate and outcomes**

2. The Forum of Mayors has the following mandate:

(a) To provide advice and submit recommendations to the Committee on matters within its scope;

(b) To agree on and adopt declarations in its own capacity in line with point (a) under "Other elements" in section VII of the present document.

3. The outcomes delivered by the Forum of Mayors will be the following:

(a) Advice and recommendations are developed for submission to the Committee;

(b) Declarations are drafted and adopted;

(c) Experiences are shared.

#### **III. Frequency and location**

4. The meeting of the Forum of Mayors will be convened annually in Geneva immediately prior to the session of the Committee.

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<sup>4</sup> For the purpose of the Forum of Mayors, a mayor is an official elected or appointed to act as chief executive of a city or town. Deputy mayors will also be allowed to participate in the Forum.

## IV. Participation and attendance

5. The participation and attendance rules of the Forum of Mayors' meetings are the following:

(a) No more than one mayor from any ECE member State will participate in the Forum<sup>5</sup> – while seeking to ensure gender diversity and diversity of experience based on the criteria and selection process in paragraph 8 below;

(b) Additional mayors from ECE member States are welcome to attend the Forum, for example, those who participated in previous meetings, to ensure continuity, subject to the availability of funding and capacity constraints;

(c) Other United Nations Regional Commissions are invited to organize participation of mayors from cities outside the ECE region in the Forum's meetings (2–3 cities per region).

## V. Membership and officers

6. In accordance with ECE/EX/2/Rev.1 ("*Guidelines for the establishment and functioning of teams of specialists within UNECE*"), the Forum of Mayors, as a Team of Specialists, will be composed of mayors selected to participate at the Forum's meetings. Intersessional and preparatory meetings of the Team of Specialists can be attended by their representatives. Relevant international organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector will be invited to attend the Forum's meetings upon request of the secretariat and in agreement with the Forum of Mayors Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons.

7. The Forum of Mayors will elect its Chairperson and two Vice-Chairpersons at the end of its meeting from among the ECE member States mayors participating at the meeting for the preparation and the chairing of the following meeting.

## VI. Criteria and selection process

8. The following objective criteria shall be applicable to the selection of cities:

(a) [As an overriding criterion], having [a demonstrated] commitment to the United Nations Charter, to the objectives of the Forum and to the principles of the Geneva Declaration of Mayors;<sup>6</sup>

(b) Having achieved advances in other areas of interest to the Committee and ECE, related to local implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as relevant;

(c) Having preferably a minimum population of 50,000, as applicable;

(d) Having policies or initiatives of relevance to and impact on the objectives of the Committee including sustainable urban development, housing and land management;

(e) Having a particular interest in and/or contribution to the theme chosen for the corresponding annual meeting of the Forum.

9. The following process shall apply to the selection of cities:

(a) The secretariat will invite all ECE member States to identify at least one and maximum three cities in their respective countries that can demonstrate their eligibility and commitment to provide a substantive contribution to the Forum based on the objective criteria

<sup>5</sup> Except where a member State has a mayor as a member of the Bureau, serving as a Chair or a Vice-Chair of a given meeting of the Forum of Mayors, in which case another city from that member State can be selected to participate at that meeting.

<sup>6</sup> (ECE/HBP/2020/1). This will be explicitly requested in the invitation letters. By accepting the invitation, mayors will express their commitment.

outlined in the para. 8 (a)–(e) above and any other criteria as decided by the Committee and/or the Executive Committee of ECE (EXCOM), and send the nominations to the secretariat;

(b) Member States will have 60 days for submitting the list of cities to the secretariat. The deadline will be clearly indicated in the communication;

(c) In consultation with the secretariat, [and with the Committee and the EXCOM Bureaux, when necessary], the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons shall select a city from the list recommended by the member State;

(d) In the absence of any submission by the set deadline by the member State, the secretariat will identify potential cities from that country for the consideration of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons, for their decision.

(e) Once all the cities are selected, the secretariat will send official invitation letters to the mayors of the selected cities. Permanent Missions of ECE member States to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva will be copied on the relevant correspondence.

## **VII. Other elements**

10. Other elements related to the Forum, include the following:

(a) The Forum may adopt declarations on matters of shared interest to local authorities provided they are related to the mandate of the Forum and of the Committee. Such declarations should only be deemed to be official outcomes of the Forum if they are adopted by consensus;

(b) With a view to promoting awareness and harnessing support for the Forum of Mayors, the Chairperson and the two Vice-Chairpersons, in consultation with the secretariat, can designate an “Advocate of the Forum” for each meeting of the Forum. Such person shall not be a mayor and shall have a distinguished record of exemplary support for the objectives of the Forum of Mayors and the Committee. Gender and geographic diversity in the designation of advocates of the Forum should be ensured. The designated “Advocate of the Forum” should be invited to give a statement during the Forum’s meeting.

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