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Strategy and Targets

Draft Strategy and Targets for sustainable housing and land management in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region for the period from 2014 to 2020

Summary

In its seventy-third session, the Committee was presented with the “Draft strategy and targets for sustainable housing and land management in the ECE region for the period from 2014 to 2020” (ECE/HBP/2012/3). This document had been requested by the Bureau at its meeting in April 2012.

The Committee agreed on the current structure of the draft strategy and considered that the document could serve as the basis for developing the final draft version to be presented at the Ministerial meeting. The Committee decided to entrust the Bureau with developing the vision, objectives and targets of the Strategy, based on the described procedures. The Committee recommended to adopt the strategy at the Ministerial meeting on 8 October 2013.

I. Introduction

1. There is a need for concerted action among ECE member States to improve the housing and living conditions in the ECE region. The proposed Strategy on Sustainable Housing and Land Management presents the vision, objectives, targets and activities for the period until 2020 with the aim of promoting green and inclusive growth and the long-term sustainability of the housing and land management sectors in the UNECE region.
2. The Strategy reflects goals of key related documents from the United Nations system. It builds on the Article 25 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights¹ “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family”. It also supports United Nations key principles, including:
 - Legal security of tenure: Regardless of the type of tenure, all persons should possess a degree of security of tenure which guarantees legal protection against forced eviction, harassment and other threats;
 - Affordability: Personal or household financial costs associated with housing should not threaten or compromise the attainment and satisfaction of other basic needs (for example, food, education, access to health care);
 - Habitability: Adequate housing should provide for elements such as adequate space, protection from cold, damp, heat, rain, wind or other threats to health, structural hazards, and disease vectors;
 - Availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure: Housing is not adequate if its occupants do not have safe drinking water, adequate sanitation, energy for cooking, heating and lighting, sanitation and washing facilities, means of food storage, refuse disposal, etc.;
 - Accessibility: Housing is not adequate if the specific needs of disadvantaged and marginalized groups are not taken into account (such as the poor, people facing discrimination; persons with disabilities, victims of natural disasters);
 - Location: Adequate housing must allow access to employment options, health-care services, schools, child-care centres and other social facilities and should not be built on polluted sites nor in immediate proximity to pollution sources;
 - Cultural adequacy: Adequate housing should respect and take into account the expression of cultural identity and ways of life.

The Strategy also takes into account the objectives of key UN housing related documents, including *Agenda 21*², *Chapter on Promoting Sustainable Human Settlements Development* and the *Habitat Agenda*³.

¹ UN General Assembly resolution 217A (III), 10 December 1948, Article 25(1).

² Please add full references in the footnote.

3. The Strategy uses the accepted understanding of sustainable development as reflected in several United Nations documents, including the report of the Brundtland Commission - *Our Common Future*; the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development, the Rio+20 UN Sustainable Development Conference outcome document *The Future We Want*. The Strategy considers the three main pillars of sustainability (economic, environmental and social) and applies them to housing and land management.
4. *The Future We Want* document recommends that significant attention be given to the sustainable development of human settlements, especially in urban areas. It emphasizes the importance of improving the quality of these settlements through an integrated planning approach. The signatories recognized also the need for policies to support inclusive and affordable housing and the importance of adopting energy-efficiency programmes in building management. The Rio+20 outcome document reinforces the mandate of the Committee in all the areas of its work and in particular in the area of urban development.
5. Moreover, the Strategy aims to contribute to the UN-Habitat Global Housing Strategy, while maintaining its focus on the specific housing challenges of the region. The goals and challenges contained in the ECE Strategy for a Sustainable Quality of Life in Human Settlements in the Twenty-First Century⁴ are considered, while taking into account the progress made by member States and the need to address emerging issues.
6. The Strategy should also contribute to the HABITAT III conference (to be held in 2016), the third UN conference on housing and sustainable urban development, with a focus on the “global commitment to sustainable cities”.
7. In line with the Habitat Agenda⁵, the Strategy recognizes the need for Governments to create an enabling environment allowing the involvement of all actors (public and private), in order to achieve implementation of the targets. It, therefore, recommends effective action at all levels, supported by international cooperation. Thus, the document builds a framework for assisting each member State to implement it through national laws, programmes, strategies and policies, as appropriate to its national situation.
8. The Strategy is envisaged to be a guide for the Committee to structure and continuously adapt its biannual programmes of work until 2020. The Strategy will help the Committee to focus on its areas of specific competence and to address identified housing challenges in an integrated and comprehensive way. At the same time, it attempts to ensure synergies within ECE and other international organizations, while avoiding duplicating activities.

³ Please add full references in the footnote.

⁴ The UNECE Strategy for a Sustainable Quality of Life in Human Settlements in the Twenty-First Century was adapted in 2000 at the Ministerial Meeting. In 2006, member State Ministers responsible for housing, spatial planning and land administration met again in Geneva and reconfirmed the goals of the Strategy by adopting a Ministerial Declaration on Social and Economic Challenges in Distressed Urban Areas in the UNECE Region.

⁵ The Habitat Agenda is the main political document of the Habitat II conference in Istanbul, Turkey in June 1996. Adopted by 171 countries, at what was called the City Summit, it contains over 100 commitments and 600 recommendations on human settlements issues.

II. Housing and land management in the twenty-first century - trends and developments

9. The ECE Committee on Housing and Land Management was established in 1947 to provide support to governments in the post-war reconstruction of the housing stock in Europe. In the implementation of reconstruction programmes in European countries, the importance of access to land and security of tenure became apparent. In response, land administration and land management were added to the Committee's mandate and the Working Party on Land Administration was established.
10. After the reconstruction of the housing in Europe many years have passed and by today the large share of the region's residential housing stock has deteriorated and requires large-scale refurbishment. Such a refurbishment when implemented will also ensure high levels of energy performance and adequate housing quality, which will in turn reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as energy poverty.
11. The housing stock in the countries with economies in transition in the ECE region also needs large-scale rehabilitation. The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War was followed by the mass privatization of the housing, which unfortunately was not accompanied by the establishment of effective housing management systems. This resulted in the degradation of the housing stock. In these countries, achieving effective governance, including mechanisms for the effective financing of the housing sector, is a priority.
12. A survey on challenges and priorities in housing and land management in the ECE region was conducted in November 2012 (ECE/HBP/...). The survey was sent to
 - Representatives of the governments responsible for housing and urban planning in their countries and focal points for the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management;
 - Representatives of the governments responsible for land registration and cadastre and focal points for the Working Party on Land Administration; and
 - Representatives of international organizations, private sector, non-governmental organizations and academia – observers to the Committee and the Working Party.
13. According to the survey, the main challenges in the ECE region are related to the housing sector. The survey respondents considered the inefficient use of energy in the housing sector as the main challenge in the region and the highest priority for the governments' actions. This was followed by the challenges related to the housing affordability, including the lack of affordable solutions for young people; the decreased housing affordability as result of the economic crisis and unemployment; limited access to affordable, quality and healthy housing in the market; and reduced access to credit for households due to the financial crisis. Thus, the survey demonstrated the concern in the region about the growing economic disparities and the need to promote social cohesion by making the housing more affordable to the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of the population.
14. Stable and transparent real estate markets are a pre-requisite for the housing being available and affordability. The 2008 crash in asset prices and the subsequent financial and economic crises underscored the vital role that real estate markets play in the world economy. There is a need in more robust regulatory frameworks in the ECE region to ensure stability and transparency of the real estate markets.
15. What concerns spatial and urban planning, ongoing urbanization processes and urban sprawl coexist with declining populations resulting both in "shrinking" cities and diminishing rural settlements. On the one hand, the continuing expansion of urban areas reduces the land available for other uses. On the other hand, the consequences of

demographic change (including ageing populations, low birth rates, changing family structures and migration) have an impact on cities as well as on rural areas across the ECE region. Declining populations in urban and rural areas require less land but they still need basic utility services (e.g. roads, electricity and sanitation). This causes a financial burden on municipalities, as network infrastructure and utility services need to be maintained throughout the same geographic area but with less revenue. Spatial and compact urban planning need to become a reality taking into account the spatial and structural implications of these demographic changes, such as housing needs of ageing and vulnerable groups of the population, including barrier free housing.

16. Without efficient and transparent land administration systems, there is no security of tenure and real property rights. Land administration supports the implementation of land-related policies and land management strategies. Robust land administrations systems need to be established in all countries of the ECE region.
17. Natural disasters, such as earthquakes, floods, landslides, as well as human-generated disasters, including the impacts of a changing climate, have resulted in large-scale damages to housing across the ECE region and present very important challenges to the governments work.
18. Being home to one-fifth of the world population and producing more than half of the world's gross domestic product, the ECE region is uniquely positioned to tackle the listed above challenges. This Strategy builds on the strengths of the Committee and aims to guide it over the coming years in order to develop practical solutions to the issues at stake. It acknowledges the different levels of economic development within the region and that member States are positioned differently to meet the targets included in the Strategy. In this light, the Committee aims at providing support that is tailored to the specific needs of the ECE countries and subregions in the areas of sustainable housing and land management.

III. Mandate and Mission

19. The overall mandate of the Committee, as per the outcome of the UNECE Ministerial Conference on Housing held in 2000, and as reconfirmed by the Ministerial Conference held in 2006, is “*to promote the sustainable development of human settlements in the ECE region while fostering economic and social prosperity and supporting democratic governance*”. Its mission is to improve the housing and land management situation throughout the UNECE region in a sustainable manner in particular by providing practical solutions and guidelines. Sustainable development, as used in the mission statement, should be understood to cover all three pillars - economic, environmental and social sustainability.
20. The Committee is the only intergovernmental body dealing with housing and land management matters for the entire ECE region. In order to best address the housing challenges of the work of the Committee is organized along three thematic pillars (a) Sustainable Housing and Real Estate Markets; (b) Sustainable Urban Development; and (c) Land Administration and Land Management. The promotion of green and inclusive economic growth, gender equality and disaster risk reduction are considered to be cross-cutting the themes within all three thematic pillars.

IV. Vision, Objectives and Targets

21. In support of the overall mandate and mission of the Committee, the following vision, objectives and targets have been identified to guide the work of the Committee in assisting member States to achieve sustainable housing and land management:

Vision

By 2020, the ECE region leads in promoting sustainable housing and land management. Green, inclusive, compact and resilient cities are a priority of national policies and of regional cooperation. Investments in the housing sector are encouraged by transparent and functioning land use, property registration and sound financial system. The housing sector offers a range of options, including for those citizens with special needs.

- (i) In the area of **Sustainable Housing and Real Estate Markets**

Environmental dimension of sustainability:

Objectives

- A Energy use in the housing sector is reduced as compared with 2012 baseline.
- B Reduced impact of the residential sector on the environment taking into account life cycle of a building.
- C Improved resilience of residential buildings to natural and human-generated disasters, including the impacts of a changing climate and earthquakes.

Targets

Each ECE member State will, as far as possible and as appropriate, by the year 2020

- A1 Have policies and legal framework in place that support and stimulate retrofitting of the existing residential housing stock to make it environmentally friendly and energy-efficient, making use of local knowledge and building material when possible.
- A2 Have in place energy performance requirements and legislation for energy performance certificates for new and existing residential buildings.
- A3 Have approved policy instruments to support those homeowners who cannot afford to invest in retrofitting projects (*this target is opened for discussion*)^(see 1)
- B1 The life-cycle approach is integrated in the legislation.
- B2 All new housing constructions are designed and built according to the life-cycle approach.
- C1 Building regulations are reviewed and adapted to better respond to seismicity and climate changes.

Social dimension of sustainability:

Objectives

- D Overall improved access of all to decent, affordable, good-quality and healthy housing.
- E Overall improved access to barrier-free housing.

Target

Each ECE member State will, as far as possible and as appropriate, by the year 2020

- D1 Increase, as appropriate, investments in social and/or affordable housing;
- D2 Have established policies for supporting the access to affordable housing, especially for young people;
- D3 Have measures in place which ensure adequate contribution of new residential construction to social and affordable housing
- E1 Have included the Universal Design⁶ criteria into the national standards system;
- E2 All new buildings are applying the Universal Design criteria;
- E3 Existing public housing are adapted, to the extent possible, according to the UDC;

Economic and financial dimension of sustainability:

Objectives

- F Supported and encouraged private investment in the housing sector and ensured an efficient management of the housing stock.
- G Ensure that housing in the market is affordable for at least 70% of the population *(Proposed on 28.11.2012 but there was not a clear decision if accepted with no comments, if accepted with comments or if it is not acceptable at all)*

Target

Each ECE member State will, as far as possible and as appropriate, by the year 2020

- F1 Have legislations in place to establish, regulate and manage condominium ownership of housing, including appropriate aspects of establishing and operating condominiums.
- F2 Promote PPPs and other financial tools in order to increase investments in sustainable housing
- F3 Approve policies that stimulate employment through investments in green economy and innovation in technology

G1 Have established easy, clear and transparent procedures for issuing building permits:

G2 Have approved flexible planning standards that include requirements to provide affordable options for energy efficiency [that include requirements to provide affordable options for energy efficiency] (Israel):

G3 Have established appropriate institutions for fighting corruption and monopolies in the housing markets:

G4 Have invested to develop land for housing purposes, where appropriate and needed:

⁶:"Universal design" means the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. (Article 2 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities)

G5 Have legislation in place to establish/ and have enhanced partnership with the private housing market]

(ii) In the area of **Sustainable Urban Development** (Bureau members decided to send proposals for the objectives and targets by 3 December 2012)

Objectives

I Uncontrolled urban growth has been put on hold as inner-city development, urban renewal promoting mixed-use developments, and a compact urban environment area priorities in spatial and urban planning.

Target

Each ECE member State will, as far as possible and as appropriate, by year 2020

- II Have developed Master Plans or strategic development plans for all human settlements of more than 100,000 inhabitants. These plans should:
- Promote an integrated approach to sustainable and low-carbon urban development,
 - Prioritize inner city regeneration, compact urban growth and mixed-use planning,
 - Promote energy and resource efficient urban development,
 - Promote public transport and non-motorized mobility,
 - Support inclusive urban development,
 - Include measures for disaster risk reduction, resilience and mitigating climate risks.

[Proposed Objectives and Targets (presented at the bureau meeting of 28.11.2012)]

H To balance the competing demand for/ and limited supply of available land, minimize the loss of rural land and increase efficiency of urban land;

[I Focus on ecological energy and resource efficient urban development to improve quality of life in a sustainable environment] (*Israel*)

Targets:

H1 Develop strategic directions/policies for sustainable urban development for the whole territory of the country;

H2 Have developed planning and control instruments for:

- Areas prone to disaster and measures to avoid, protect, or evict affected population in risk of flooding, landslides, deforestation, etc.;
- Attractive areas for private investments such as coastal areas;
- Protection areas such as mountains, lakes, river basins, forests, etc.;

H3 Have approved urban studies for [urban renewal, mixed-use development, inclusion of affordable housing in inner city areas] (*Israel*), inner city densification [- increased building rights] (*Israel*), re-use/redevelopment of blight areas and brownfields.]

[I1 Encourage low carbon development

I2 Eradicate energy poverty and enhance quality of life

I3 Develop urban planning models for the achievement of sustainable user-friendly, inclusive and cost-efficient cities

I4 Have approved urban studies to test the notion of “compact cities” vis a vis the need to provide affordable housing

I5 Develop non-motorized inter-urban accessibility and efficient mass-transport systems] (Israel)

(iii) In the area of **Sustainable Land Administration and Land Management (Bureau requested input from WPLA Bureau)**

Objectives

J An efficient and transparent land administration system is in place, which provides all with security of tenure, security for legally acquired real property rights, security in the transfer of real property rights, transparency in [obligations (including mortgages, restrictions and servitudes)] (WPLA), real property valuation, effective and transparent land use planning and sustainable land development

K Well-performing organizations (including land registries, cadaster agencies, surveyors, courts, notaries, and other relevant agencies) (WPLA), as essential components of a well-functioning land administration system, have been set up and provide a sound basis for continuing to meet economic and social goals.

Targets:

Each ECE member State will, as far as possible and as appropriate, by year 2020

J1 Have reduced [the number of court cases related to] (WPLA) conflicts raised [by both individual and common property titles] (WPLA) and insecurity in the transfer of property rights by 50%, by modernizing the land registry system

J2 Have reduced [problems related to] (WPLA) corruption related with real estate property registration

K1 Have efficient and transparent land registration systems based on [a parcel concept with clearly defined tenure rights and land use type] (WPLA) that cover all national territory

K2 Have developed a georeferenced large scale map representing the individual parcels indicating the boundaries, building footprints and the parcel identifier that cover all national territory] (WPLA)

(iv) Cross cutting Issues

Objectives

L Have increased investments in innovation and research, with particular attention to **energy savings, social innovation, green, [compact] (Israel) and smart cities;**

M Have raised and/or improved capacities of central and local administration as well as other key stakeholders in the field of sustainable housing, **[inclusive] (Israel) urban development and land administration, through investing in human capital,**

Targets

Each ECE member State will, as far as possible and as appropriate, by year 2020

L1 Achieve a rate of (at least 0,5% of GDP) investments in research and/or innovation specifically in the areas of energy saving, social innovation and green economy in the housing sector;

L2 Have applied at least 2 innovative projects in the above areas;

M1 Have ensured training programs in the field of energy audit, energy certification, and other areas as needed and as appropriate;

V. Activities

23. To assist member States in achieving these targets, the Committee will implement this Strategy through activities defined by the biennial programme of work, which builds on its own strengths by:

- Providing member States with country-specific policy guidance and recommendations on challenges related to housing and land management in the ECE region.
 - Issuing in-depth assessments and flagship reports, including a series of Country Profiles on the housing and land administration sectors.
 - Providing a platform for dialogue between Governments to facilitate the exchange of experience and sharing good practices by creating regional networks of experts, organizing workshops, and managing study trips.
 - Promoting capacity development through high quality training courses, advisory services and publications.
 - Harmonizing the methodologies and definitions in the area of housing and land management at the regional and international level and supporting the development of some common terms, language definitions and standards.
 - Organizing pilot projects to help member States speed up policy reform processes.
-