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### Economic Commission for Europe

#### Committee on Housing and Land Management

##### Seventy-second session

Geneva, 3 - 4 October 2011

##### Item 3 of the provisional agenda

**Work of the Bureau of the Committee and the Housing Urban  
Management Advisory Network**

### **Report of the Bureau Meetings of the Committee on Housing and Land Management for the period 2010-2011**

#### **Note by the secretariat**

##### *Summary*

This note contains the reports of the meetings of the Bureau of the Committee on Housing and Land Management, held in Geneva on 13 April 2011, and on 6 July 2011. It provides information supporting the annotated provisional agenda of the meeting (ECE/HBP/166) as well as the programme of work for 2012–2013 (ECE/HBP/2011/1/), as many of the issues and proposals agreed at the Bureau meetings will be presented and considered at the seventy-second session of the Committee.

## **I. Bureau meeting, 13 April 2011, Geneva**

### **A. Matters arising from the sixty-fourth session of the Economic Commission for Europe and UNECE secretariat restructuring and implications for the Housing and Land Management Unit**

1. The secretariat informed the Bureau about the request of the Secretary-General for a 3% cut in the budget of the Secretariat. The Bureau was informed that, so far, the work of the Committee had not been affected by this decision.

2. The secretariat informed the Bureau about issues of particular interest to the Committee arising from the sixty-fourth session of the Economic Commission for Europe, held in Geneva from 29 to 31 March 2011.

3. In particular, the secretariat informed the Bureau about the two recommendations addressed to the Committee requesting “after its annual session in October 2011, to report to the Executive Committee, first on the possibility of holding a Ministerial meeting in 2012 to assess progress in the implementation of ECE housing instruments and to define future policy directions for the Committee’s work, and second on the outcome of the work of the relevant open-ended Working Group on the pros and cons of a possible legally binding instrument on housing<sup>1</sup>”. As well, the ECE “encourages the Committee on Housing and Land Management to consider land administration and "real estate markets” as key components of its work<sup>2</sup>”.

4. The secretariat informed the Bureau members that, as of 1 January 2011 the Housing and Land Management Unit was moved from the Environment Division to the Trade and Sustainable Land Management Division.

5. Members of the Bureau expressed their concern regarding the current limited human resources of the Unit and the proposed review of UNECE activities, fearing that it may have a negative impact on UNECE work on housing. In this regard, Bureau members indicated the importance of the housing and land management programme and the work of the Committee for many countries in the region. They also asked the Chair of the Committee to send a letter to the UNECE Executive Secretary and to the Chair of the Commission to highlight the relevance for member States of the subprogramme on housing and land management.

### **B. Working Group on a possible legally binding instrument on affordable, healthy and ecological housing**

6. The Chair of the Committee informed the Bureau about the outcomes of the first meeting, which was held on 11-12 April 2011. The meeting developed new ideas to be included in the updated synthesis document compiling the views of member States on a possible legally binding instrument on Affordable, Healthy, and Ecological Housing (AHEH). These include: sustainable urban planning; real estate markets; the linkage between affordable housing and accessibility to housing; cost effectiveness; life-cycle cost analysis; construction safety; data sharing; and, universal design.

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<sup>1</sup> Decision adopted by the sixty-fourth session of the Economic Commission for Europe, paragraph 28, page 5.

<sup>2</sup> Decision adopted by the sixty-fourth session of the Economic Commission for Europe, paragraph 29, page 5.

7. Taking into account the discussions of the first meeting of the Working Group, and in particular the new issues to be included in the synthesis document, members of the Bureau reconsidered the terms “affordable, healthy and ecological housing” and proposed to use the shorter term “sustainable housing” as it could cover a wider spectrum of criteria and is in accordance with the re-affirmed direction taken by the Commission at its sixty-fourth session, namely to concentrate its work on achieving the sustainable development goals for the region<sup>3</sup>. This will be included in the paper on the framework convention to be discussed during the second meeting of the Working Group. The importance of knowledge transfer and capacity building was also highlighted by Bureau members.

8. Members of the Bureau expressed satisfaction with the attendance at the first meeting of the Working Group and encouraged the secretariat to continue to stimulate participation and to involve the permanent missions in Geneva when national experts were not available.

### **C. Programme of work: activities implemented since the seventy-first session of the Committee on Housing and Land Management**

#### **(a) Country profiles on the housing sector**

9. The secretariat reported on the country profile of Tajikistan as well as on the publication of the country profile of Kyrgyzstan and efforts made to contact the Kyrgyz authorities regarding the organization of the launching event.

10. Mr. Khanlarov informed the Bureau about the launching event for the country profile of Azerbaijan, held in Baku on 18 November 2010.

11. The secretariat reported on the preparation of the pre-mission for developing the country profile of Ukraine, which will start as soon as the local team of experts is established by the Government.

12. The Chair of the Committee provided information about the First Europe and Central Asia Housing Forum organized by Habitat for Humanity International, in partnership with UNECE, UNDP and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Budapest from 4 to 6 April 2011. The event was costly for its participants; its preparation was time-consuming and required heavy involvement by the secretariat at a very busy time.

13. The Bureau emphasised the need to select events carefully, based on the Programme of Work priorities and the opportunities they would offer to present and increase the visibility of the Committee’s work. It was also emphasized that the Committee should not be involved in events requiring payment of registration fees.

#### **(b) Improvement of urban environmental performance**

14. The secretariat and Ms. Andoni provided information on the outcome of the joint workshop with the UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents on “Land use planning around high-risk industrial sites” held in the Netherlands on 11 and 12 November 2010.

15. The secretariat also informed the meeting about joint follow-up activities to this workshop proposed by the Bureau of the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents. In view of the relevance of the topic for the region, Bureau members

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<sup>3</sup> Decision adopted by the sixty-fourth session of the Economic Commission for Europe.

suggested that further cooperation on this subject, including the proposed follow-up activities, should be considered by the Working Party on Land Administration.

16. The secretariat informed the Bureau about the ongoing work on a study on “Climate neutral cities: how to make UNECE cities less carbon-intensive and more resilient to climatic changes” based on its extended outline agreed upon by the seventy-first session of the Committee.

**(c) Land registration and land markets**

17. The secretariat reported on the main outcomes of the workshop on “Spatial planning to improve security of tenure in the UNECE region” (Antalya, Turkey, 28-29 October 2010) and the preparation of a study containing policy recommendations and good practice examples for the prevention of fraud in electronic registration and conveyancing to be presented to the Working Party on Land Administration for discussion and endorsement at its seventh session in June 2011.

18. The secretariat also informed the Bureau about a series of meetings and events held in the area of land and real estate markets. The Bureau was briefed on the main outcomes of the workshop on “Greening the Real Estate Market” (Dessau, Germany, 29-30 November 2010) and the events organized by the Real Estate Market Advisory Group (REM): a round table in Lisbon, (26 January 2011) to present the UNECE publication on a Policy Framework for Sustainable Real-Estate Markets (ECE/HBP/147) and to promote its application in Portugal, and a side event at the meeting of “Marché international des professionnels de l’immobilier” in Cannes, France (10 March 2011) to discuss lessons learned from country pilot cases in Portugal and Ukraine.

19. Members of the Bureau stressed the importance of the real-estate markets and the role of the REM advisory group in this area, in particular as regards the implementation of the UNECE Policy Framework for Sustainable Real Estate Markets in the region.

20. Given the importance of the real-estate market for the overall economic stability of the region, especially after the 2008 financial crisis, members of the Bureau emphasised the need to consider this issue in the updated synthesis document compiling the replies of member States to the questionnaire on affordable, healthy and ecological housing. The Bureau further suggested inviting at least one member of the advisory group to participate in the next meeting of the Working Group on a possible legally binding instrument on affordable, healthy and ecological housing.

**(d) Housing modernization and management**

21. At its seventieth session, the Committee highlighted the importance of building and construction safety in the context of disaster preparedness. To address those issues, a UNECE International Forum on “Natural disasters and building and construction safety” was hosted by Azerbaijan on 16 and 17 November 2010 in collaboration with the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. Mr. Khanlarov reported on the main outcomes of the Forum.

22. Ms. Szolgayova informed the meeting about the progress in the organization of the workshop on multifamily housing stock management (Slovakia, 2011), including on its possible merging with a workshop on a similar topic to be organized by the Polish EU Presidency in cooperation with the European Liaison Committee for Social Housing (CECODHAS) in the third quarter of 2011. The Bureau suggested that the secretariat contact Polish authorities to follow-up on their participation in organizing this event.

23. The secretariat reported on the outcome of a joint UNDP-UNECE training workshop on the legal aspects of housing privatization and management held in Tbilisi, on 22 and 23 November 2010 as a follow-up to the country profile on the housing sector of Georgia.

24. The secretariat informed the Bureau about the training workshop on affordable housing provision in countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, held in cooperation with the Government of Belarus and UN-Habitat in Minsk, on 14-17 March 2011 as a follow-up to the country profile on the housing sector of Belarus. Information was also provided on the possibility of organizing other joint training activities in cooperation with UNDP-Georgia.

25. Ms. Andoni offered the possibility of organizing a similar event in Albania in 2012 for countries of South-East Europe focused on energy efficiency in housing and housing refurbishment. Bureau members welcomed this proposal and highlighted the importance of training activities for strengthening the capacity of member States with economies in transition to address challenges in their housing sector.

26. The secretariat also informed the Bureau that "The Action Plan for Energy-efficient Housing in the UNECE Region" had recently been published.

#### **D. Preparations for the seventy-second session of the Committee on Housing and Land Management**

27. The Chair of the Committee presented the draft agenda for the seventy-second session, to be held in Geneva on 3-4 October 2011 and the Bureau endorsed the preliminary agenda.

#### **E. Establishment of a Task Force on Green Building**

28. The secretariat informed the Bureau about the initiative taken by the UNECE Timber Committee to establish a joint Task Force composed by experts from four UNECE committees, namely: the Timber Committee, the Committee on Housing and Land Management, the Committee on Environmental Policy and the Committee on Sustainable Energy.

29. The main purpose of the Task Force will be to address the issue of green buildings in a neutral way so as develop a study on the different materials used in buildings and their carbon efficiency. It will also participate in and contribute to the UNEP Sustainable Building Climate initiative.

30. The Bureau welcomed this joint activity and expressed its willingness to participate in the Task Force.

#### **F. Work of the Committee's Housing and Urban Management Advisory Network (HUMAN)**

31. The secretariat reported on the outcome of its meeting with the Chair of HUMAN to discuss the need to review the terms of reference and membership of HUMAN. During this meeting, the Chair of HUMAN highlighted difficulties in adjusting to the requirements set out in the guidelines for UNECE teams of specialists.

32. Bureau members took note of this information and conveyed their gratitude for the excellent work done by HUMAN since the network was established in 1997. They further

recognized the valuable contribution and support provided by the advisory network to the programme of work of the Committee.

33. Bureau members further added that since the activities of HUMAN and those of the REM advisory group were interrelated, discontinuing HUMAN and offering a possibility for its members to join the REM could facilitate the future contribution of the advisory network to the work of the Committee. Furthermore, taking into account the important role of the private actors in the real estate market, the Bureau suggested that this step could further strengthen cooperation with the business community.

34. Having this in mind, the Bureau also commented on the status of REM. Taking into account the abovementioned recommendation of the sixty-fourth session of UNECE regarding the work on the real-estate market, and bearing in mind the relevance and importance of this topic to the work of CHLM, the Bureau suggested further strengthening REM and its future activities, as well as changing its reporting lines.

35. The Bureau requested the secretariat to inform and consult with the Working Party on Land Administration and the REM regarding this restructuring possibility which could be presented for consideration during the seventy-second session of the CHLM.

## **G. Any other business**

36. The secretariat informed the Bureau about a request received from Montenegro to assist in promoting energy efficiency measures in the residential sector of this country. The Bureau suggested that the Committee should be involved in this activity subject to availability of extrabudgetary resources.

## **II. Bureau meeting, 6 July 2011, Geneva**

### **A. Meeting with the Chair and Vice-chairs of UNECE**

37. At the sixty-fourth session of UNECE (March 2011), member States agreed on the need for a review of the future work priorities of the Commission. The Executive Committee was requested to decide on the modalities of the review and conduct it during 2011-2012 with a view to proposing decisions on the matters to be taken by the next UNECE session.

38. In this regard, the Chair and Vice-chairs of the Executive Committee attended the meeting to inform the Bureau about the objectives and modalities of the review process.

39. Bureau members took note of the information provided and shared their views on how the work accomplished by the Committee on Housing and Land Management (CHLM) helped their respective countries in addressing the challenges in the housing sector. Bureau members also briefly highlighted the impact of the Committee's work in their countries and the relevance of the Committee as a unique intergovernmental platform in the region for cooperation on housing issues.

40. As a follow-up to the meeting with the Chair of the Executive Committee, and to prepare for the review of CHLM that will take place in the second half of October 2011, the secretariat was asked to seek inputs from the Chair and Bureau members, in particular with regard to the impact that the work and guidance of CHLM had in their countries (housing reforms, new legislation, etc.).

## **B. Working Group on a possible legally binding instrument on affordable, healthy and ecological housing**

41. The Chair of the Working Group summarized the main outcomes of its second meeting (5-6 July 2011), including a proposal to change the name of this body to "Working Group on a possible Framework Convention on sustainable housing". Bureau members took note of the information presented, and provided advice on how to organize the discussion of this agenda item at the seventy-second session of the Committee. In particular, Bureau members:

- Suggested inviting two or three speakers from among the Working Group members to deliver presentations, providing different views on the added value of a possible framework convention both for the region and particular countries, as well as on the scope of such a convention. It was also suggested to develop a template for a presentation for the purpose of providing guidance to the speakers;
- Requested the secretariat to prepare a brief note for the Committee session clarifying what are countries' obligations vis-à-vis a Framework Convention as well as addressing the issue of subsidiarity in the context of national legislation;
- Agreed with the proposal coming from the Working Group to invite legal experts to the next Working Group meeting to support its deliberations; however, they also agreed that there was no need, at this stage of the process, to receive official nominations of legal experts to the Working Group.

## **C. Progress in the implementation of the programme of work: activities implemented since the meeting of the Bureau held in April 2011**

42. The secretariat reported on the following activities implemented under the programme of work of the Committee:

- A workshop on "Cadastral and real estate registration systems: Economic information for real estate markets in the UNECE region" held in Rome on 5 and 6 May 2011;
- A roundtable on the "UNECE Policy Framework for Sustainable Real Estate Markets: Sound rules to improve the real estate sector and promote economic growth" held in Rome, Italy, on 13 May 2011;
- A pre-mission to Kiev in preparation for the Country Profile on the Housing Sector of Ukraine in June 2011;
- A project proposal to assist Montenegro to develop a National Action Plan for energy efficiency measures in the residential sector.

43. The Bureau took note of the information provided.

44. The Bureau member from Slovakia provided information on the conference being organized by CECODHAS in Warsaw on 20 October 2011 to discuss the issues of housing management and affordability policies. Although the Committee was invited by CECODHAS to support this conference, the Bureau decided that CHLM would not be officially involved because of insufficient time for preparation and unclarified issues on hosting the conference. However, a member of the Bureau would attend the conference. The Chair was requested to inform CECODHAS about the Bureau's decision.

45. The Bureau also discussed the possibility of organizing a workshop/conference on housing management in the second quarter of 2012 either in Brussels (in conjunction with

the annual conference of CECODHAS) or in Denmark, back-to-back with the meeting of the EU focal points on housing. The Chair will contact the Danish delegation to explore the possibility of organizing such a joint workshop.

#### **D. Preparations for the seventy-second session of the Committee on Housing and Land Management**

46. The Bureau agreed that the seventy-second session of the Committee should discuss the possibility of organizing a high-level Ministerial meeting in conjunction with the seventy-fourth session of CHLM in September 2013. In particular, the meeting could be focused on defining future policy directions of Committee's work, including in the area of affordable, healthy and ecological housing, as well as on assessing progress in the implementation of UNECE housing instruments. This would also follow the Commission session reviewing the UNECE programme of work. The Bureau thus requested the secretariat to reflect this proposal in the provisional agenda for the seventy-second session of CHLM.

47. The secretariat presented the draft 2012-2013 biennial evaluation plan for Subprogramme 8, "Housing, Land Management and Population".

48. The Bureau took note of the information provided and endorsed this document.

#### **E. Seventh session of the Working Party on Land Administration**

49. The secretariat informed the Bureau about the outcomes of the seventh session of the Working Party on Land Administration held on 30 June - 1 July 2011. More than 50 experts from 25 member States and a number of international organizations (Eurogeographics, International Federation of Surveyors, etc.) attended the event. The following main outcomes of the session were highlighted:

- The launching of a study on the challenges of fraud to land administration institutions. A proposal by Sweden to organize a workshop in 2013 on the topic of identification rules for registration purposes was approved as a follow-up to the discussion;
- The undertaking of a study to establish benchmarks for land-administration systems in the UNECE region was approved;
- A proposal by the delegation of the United Kingdom to organize a workshop on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Her Majesty's Land Registry was approved. The following topics were suggested for discussion: 1) land and land use disputes and 2) the role of land management policies in promoting sustainable real estate markets. The Working Party also approved a proposal by the delegation of Greece to organize a workshop on the issue of informal settlements and security in land tenure;
- A special session on international cooperation with other international organizations dealing with land administration was held at this session. As a follow-up to the discussion the Working Party requested the secretariat to develop a resource guide of agencies and organizations dealing with land administration and management issues;
- The Republic of Moldova requested to have a Country Profile of its Housing Sector undertaken. The Country Profile study will include also a land administration review.

50. The Working Party also reviewed its draft revised terms of reference for 2011-2015 as well as the draft revised terms of reference (ToR) of the REM Advisory Group for 2011-2012. The draft ToR of the WPLA and REM Advisory Group were presented to the Bureau for consideration.

51. The Bureau took note of the information provided.

#### **F. Harmonization of the format of the Sectoral Committees' document on the programme of work**

52. The secretariat presented a new template for the Sectoral Committees' document on the programme of work. The Executive Committee approved this template in 2010 and requested all Committees to apply it in the future, including for the biennium 2012-2013.

53. Bureau members took note of the information provided.

#### **G. Election of the Bureau**

54. On its future composition, the Bureau sought greater geographical balance so that its membership could cover all UNECE sub-regions. In this regard, The Chair and the secretariat were requested to contact delegations of underrepresented sub-regions to explore their interest in becoming new members of the Bureau. The secretariat was also requested to prepare a brief informal note providing information on the working modalities of the CHLM Bureau.

#### **H. Any other business**

55. The Chair informed the Bureau about the interest expressed by the Director of the European Federation of National Organizations working on homelessness and housing exclusion (FEANTSA), to work in cooperation with the Committee on the issue of homelessness in the UNECE region. The Bureau took note of the information provided and requested the Chair to contact FEANTSA to seek information on the proposed modalities for such cooperation.

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