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Report of the Committee on Housing and Land Management on its seventy-third session

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I. Introduction

1. The Committee on Housing and Land Management held its seventy-third session from 24 to 26 September in Geneva.

A. Attendance

2. Representatives of the following countries participated: Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Switzerland, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

3. Representatives of the following United Nations programmes and specialized agencies attended the session: United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and International Labour Organization (ILO).

4. Representatives of the following intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations also attended the session: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), le Comité Européen de Coordination de l'Habitat Social (CECODHAS Housing Europe), International Union of Tenants, Habitat for Humanity, European Federation of Building Societies, International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP), National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO), Norwegian Refugee Council, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre and the World Fire Statistics Centre. Some private-sector representatives, experts and academics from universities and research institutions also participated.

B. Organizational Matters

5. The Chair of the Committee, Mr. Wolfgang Förster (Austria), opened the meeting. The Deputy Executive Secretary of ECE, Mr. Andrey Vasilyev, welcomed the participants and highlighted some of the main issues to be covered during the session, such as the possible development of a Framework Convention on Sustainable Housing, the draft Strategy and Targets for Housing and Land Management 2014-2020 and the preparations for the 2013 Ministerial Meeting.

6. The Chair announced the launch of the exhibition “Building the future we want” to celebrate World Habitat Day, with photos of sustainable buildings from the ECE region available at the Palais des Nations from 24 September to 15 October. As part of the exhibition, a yurt had been provided by the Permanent Mission of Kazakhstan and assembled at the United Nations Office at Geneva as an example of traditional, sustainable housing.

7. The Chair also announced the Green Economy seminar “Compact, smart and climate-neutral? – Cities in a Green Economy” to take place in the afternoon of 26 September back-to-back with the seventy-third session of the Committee.

8. He presented the provisional agenda (ECE/HBP/167), which was adopted with a minor amendment. Discussions on issues related to the Trust Fund were moved from item 2 to item 7 of the agenda.

II. Matters arising from the ECE review

9. The secretariat reported on the status of the on-going review of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and developments that had a bearing on the work of the Committee. In particular, the secretariat informed the session about the outcomes of two meetings where the work of the Committee had been presented to the Executive Committee (EXCOM) of the ECE (18 October 2011 and 5 July 2012). The outcomes of those meetings were positive and the Committee was encouraged to continue its work in a results-oriented and efficient manner.

10. The Committee took note of this information.

III. Work of the Bureau of the Committee on Housing and Land Management

11. The Chair of the Bureau reported on its work and on its main proposals since the seventy-second session of the Committee (ECE/HBP/2012/1). In particular, he presented the main results of the Bureau meeting on 2 April and the Bureau retreat on 2 and 3 July, where participants discussed the mission, added value, scope, structure and functioning of the Committee. Taking into account the upcoming Ministerial meeting, the Chair pointed to the need to have more Bureau meetings to continue coordinating the work of the Committee effectively.

12. The Committee took note of this information and approved the work and the proposals of the Bureau as contained in document "Recommendations of the Bureau on current and future work of the Committee on Housing and Land Management" (ECE/HBP/2012/1). It also acknowledged the need for the Bureau to meet more often.

IV. Possible Framework Convention on Sustainable Housing in the ECE region

13. The Chair of the Committee presented the main outcomes of the April 2012 meeting of the Working Group on a Possible Framework Convention on Sustainable Housing in the ECE region (ECE/HBP/AC.1/2012/2). In particular, the Working Group had "recognized the added value of a framework convention on sustainable housing as a possible instrument to address housing issues in the ECE region and recommended to the Committee on Housing and Land Management to consider its development favourably". The Working Group had also requested the secretariat to summarize the discussions on a possible framework convention on housing in the ECE region and present the summary to the Committee at its current session (ECE/HBP/2012/2).

14. Based on the summary of discussions and the recommendations of the Working Group, member States considered whether or not to start negotiations on a Possible Framework Convention on Sustainable Housing. It was clarified that, if the Committee were to decide to start the negotiation process and that decision were approved by EXCOM, an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee would be established under the auspices of the ECE. For this purpose, member States would have to nominate both representatives to this Committee and their alternates. According to common international practice, such bodies are governed by their own rules and procedures, which are typically adopted at the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee. It was also discussed that, if established, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee would be serviced by the

secretariat of the Committee and funded within existing resources and voluntary extra-budgetary contributions.

15. In the ensuing discussion, the Committee considered whether to agree on the need to initiate negotiations on a possible Framework Convention on Sustainable Housing, as well as on its scope and objectives. It was confirmed that the necessary quorum for taking such a decision had been reached.

16. There was a consensus on the added value of and need for developing a framework convention. Some delegations pointed out that, although the framework convention would have an added value for all countries in the region, it would be particularly relevant for the countries with economies in transition. Overall, it was highlighted that such a convention would benefit the countries in the region through:

- Addressing the housing challenges and improving the housing situation in the region and within the different member States.
- Raising the awareness on housing issues and making housing a priority in national policies.
- Increasing the efficiency of the work of the Committee itself.

17. The Committee endorsed the conclusions of the third Working Group meeting and therefore supported the proposal to open negotiations on a Framework Convention on Sustainable Housing.

18. In this regard, the Committee recommended to the Executive Committee of ECE to approve the establishment of an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee in charge of the preparation of the framework convention.

19. It also recommended that the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee should take place in March 2013 and that the negotiations should be concluded by 2015.

20. The Committee requested the secretariat to prepare draft rules of procedure for the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to be presented at its first meeting for adoption.

21. Based on the recommendations of the Working Group, the Committee agreed that a possible framework convention on housing could have the following scope: “to improve the sustainability of housing in the ECE region through effective policies and actions at all levels supported by international cooperation and with a view to contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in the region”.

22. The Committee also agreed that the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee should agree on the objectives of the convention, as a starting point of its substantive work, taking into account, as appropriate, a list of possible objectives as contained in annex II of the Summary of discussions (ECE/HBP/2012/2).

V. Strategy and targets 2014 - 2020

23. 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 and is to be adopted at the Ministerial meeting in 2013.

24. Overall, 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 procedures as described below:

- The secretariat would prepare a questionnaire to be sent by electronic mail to all member States.
- The secretariat would prepare a summary report based on replies to the questionnaire. The summary report should be ready for the first Bureau meeting (planned for 28 November 2012).
- After the first Bureau meeting, the secretariat would reflect the discussions in an updated version of the draft Strategy (ECE/HBP/2012/3) and organize a stakeholder's consultation.
- The secretariat would prepare a report with the outcome of the stakeholder meeting and a revised version of the draft Strategy for the second Bureau meeting (planned for February 2013).
- The secretariat should reflect the discussions of the second Bureau meeting in the draft Strategy and then send the text to Committee members for comment.
- The secretariat should reflect comments from the Committee in an updated version of the Strategy and present this to the third Bureau meeting (planned for April 2013).
- The updated draft Strategy document would be presented at the seventy-fourth session.
- Relevant decisions of the seventy-fourth session, together with the Strategy, would be presented for adoption by the Ministerial meeting on 8 October 2013.

VI. Ministerial meeting 2013

25. The Chair presented the draft annotated agenda for the Ministerial meeting (ECE/HBP/2012/4). This document had been requested by the Committee at its seventy-second session (ECE/HBP/167) and prepared in consultation with the Bureau.

26. The secretariat pointed out that the Bureau had proposed additional changes in the structure of this document. In particular, it had suggested that item 2 "Review of the progress made in housing and land management in ECE countries" and item 3 "Framework Convention on Sustainable Housing" of the draft provisional agenda (ECE/HBP/2012/4) be merged under one item on the review of the progress made and future challenges in housing and land management in ECE countries.

27. This item would include statements delivered by the Ministers about the progress made in housing and land management since 2000 and information on the status of the discussions on a Framework Convention on Sustainable Housing. Furthermore, the Bureau had suggested that the secretariat, should in advance of the Ministerial meeting, send guidelines for the statements of the Ministers, as well as collect from member States national reports on the housing and land-management sectors. After the meeting, the reports and the statements could be compiled into publications.

28. The Chair also presented to the Committee for endorsement a proposal for the Ministerial meeting to take place on 8 October 2013 in Geneva and the seventy-fourth session of the Committee to take place on 7 and 9 October.

29. The Committee:

- Agreed to the dates of the Ministerial meeting and the seventy-fourth session.

- Approved the provisional agenda for the Ministerial meeting (ECE/HBP/2012/4) together with the suggestions of the Bureau to merge items 2 and 3 and requested the secretariat to update this document.
- Requested the secretariat to send guidelines for the statements to be delivered by the respective Ministers and to collect national reports on the housing and land management situations in member States to be compiled in publications after the Ministerial meeting.

VII. Implementation of the programme of work for 2012-2013

30. The secretariat presented a short overview of the progress made in the implementation of the programme of work for the period 2012-2013 that had been agreed upon at the seventy-second session (ECE/HBP/2011/1). Implementation was reviewed in detail under items 7 (a), (b), (c) and (d).

31. The Committee was presented with a document containing a proposal from the Bureau for amending the titles of some elements of the programme of work (ECE/HBP/2012/5) and was informed that, if this proposal was approved by the Committee, the amendments would be taken into account by the secretariat when preparing the documents for the seventy-fourth session.

32. The Committee took note of the information provided and approved the proposal for the amendment of some elements of the programme of work is found in document ECE/HBP/2012/5.

33. The secretariat presented information on the status of the Trust Fund on Human Settlements. Owing to the current, unsustainable situation of the Trust Fund and the lack of financial contributions since the last Committee session, not all activities endorsed by the Committee at the seventy-second session could be implemented. The Committee, therefore, requested the secretariat to prepare and send a letter to member States requesting financial contributions to the Trust Fund. This letter should be accompanied by brief outlines of the planned activities so that member States could choose to make earmarked contributions.

A. Country profiles on the housing sector ¹

34. The Committee was provided with information on the status of the country profiles on housing and land management.

35. **Azerbaijan.** The delegation of Azerbaijan informed the meeting about the progress made in implementing the recommendations contained in its country profile. In particular, this study had been critical for the review of the housing and land management system of the country and contributed to the development of the Construction Code of Azerbaijan, as well as a project for improving the land, real estate and cadastre register system and a strategy for tackling challenges related to illegal construction.

36. **Kyrgyzstan.** The representative of Kyrgyzstan informed the Committee about the progress made in implementing the recommendations contained in its country profile. For instance, since the study was published in 2010, an automated information cadastre system had been put in place. The National Dialogue on Housing and Land Management, which

¹ The new title approved for this area of work by the Committee on Housing and Land Management is "Country profiles on housing and land management".

took place in Bishkek on 21 February 2012, had been a good opportunity to discuss how to further implement the recommendations contained in the Country Profile.

37. **Tajikistan.** The delegation of Tajikistan provided information about progress made in implementing the recommendations contained in its country profile since the study was published in 2011. In particular, a new Urban Code had been developed and a programme on energy efficiency in housing was under preparation. The launch event for the study was expected to take place in October 2012.

38. **Ukraine.** The delegation of Ukraine reported on the fact-finding mission held from 17 to 25 March 2012 to develop Ukraine's country profile and that the study was in progress. The delegation also reported on some improvements that had already been implemented. For instance, a law regulating the housing industry had been adopted and a Presidential Initiative for housing finance loans with 3% interest would now be implemented.

39. **Republic of Moldova.** The delegation of the Republic of Moldova reported on steps undertaken for developing a Country Profile and, in particular, a pre-mission that was to take place in December 2012.

40. **Russian Federation.** The secretariat reported that work on the Country Profile of the Russian Federation would be initiated once funds to support the exercise had been identified.

41. The Committee took note of this information. It was then presented with a draft outline of a study to review the methodology for the country profiles. It took note of the information provided and approved the development of a study on the methodology need for the country profiles and asked the secretariat to present this study at the seventy-fourth session.

B. Improvement of urban environmental performance²

42. The Chair informed the Committee that the study *Climate Neutral Cities: How to make cities less energy and carbon intensive and more resilient to climatic challenges* (ECE/HBP/168) had been published in English and that the Russian version was being prepared. The study had been presented at the Green Economy Seminar, which had taken place the afternoon of 26 September p.m., back-to-back with the seventy-third session.

43. The Committee was informed about a workshop on *Compact City Policies*, which had taken place on 14 June. The workshop was organized by OECD, in partnership with ECE, the World Bank and the Institut d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme de la Région d'Île-de-France (IAU-ÎDF). Possible future cooperation with OECD in areas related to sustainable urban development and the Country Profile studies was discussed.

44. The Director of the World Fire Statistics Centre presented the annual report on fire statistics and a proposal for future cooperation and organization of joint meetings. The Chair invited the World Fire Statistics Centre to send this proposal to the secretariat for the Bureau to consider it.

45. The Committee was informed about the Conference of the International Association of Capitals and Megacities, which took place in Moscow on 20 and 21 December 2011. The Committee took note of the information provided and encouraged any proposals for further

² The new title approved for this area of work by the Committee on Housing and Land Management is "Sustainable urban development".

cooperation under this programme element to be sent to the secretariat and presented for consideration to the Bureau.

C. Land registration and land markets³

46. The Chair of the Working Party on Land Administration reported on the activities carried out since the latest session of the Committee (ECE/HBP/2012/6) and on the programme of work for 2012–2013, including upcoming workshops. In particular, he summarized the Bureau meetings and events that took place since the seventy-second session of the Committee. He announced the following workshops for 2012-2013:

- "Supporting global economic recovery: the role of land registration authorities" United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (11-13 October 2012).
- "Informal Development, Property, and Housing", Greece (10-14 December 2012).
- A workshop on land registration, Kyrgyzstan (April 2013).
- "E-governance and land administration", Sweden (May 2013).

47. He also noted that, to coordinate the work of the Working Party, Bureau meetings would be held in parallel with the workshops, as well as at other times and places to be determined.

48. He announced that the seventh session of the Working Party would take place in April 2013.

49. He presented the Status of the Survey on Benchmarking of Land Administration Systems and noted that a publication would be produced to present the results of the study, as well as the analysis.

50. The Chair of the Committee thanked the Working Party for its important contributions to the Committee's programme of work, including contributions to the Country Profiles. He stressed the importance of the Working Party's future contributions to the draft Strategy and to preparations for the Ministerial Conference in 2013.

51. The Committee took note of the information provided and approved the progress of the Working Party in completing its programme of work.

52. The Chair of the Real Estate Market Advisory Group (REM) informed the Committee about the work undertaken since the seventy-second session, as well as about activities planned for 2012-2013.

53. He presented the following to the Committee:

- The publication Policy Framework for Sustainable Real Estate Markets (ECE/HBP/147), and summarized recent events to promote this work, including roundtable discussions organized within and outside the ECE region (see document ECE/HBP/2012/7). He added that in 2012 and 2013 roundtable discussions were planned in Greece and the United States and, tentatively, in Cyprus and in Kyrgyzstan.
- The contributions of the Advisory Group to the Working Party study on the Benchmarking of Land Administration Systems.

³ The new title approved for this area of work by the Committee on Housing and Land Management is "Land administration and management".

- The proposal to develop, in cooperation with real estate experts, a study on measures to green the real estate market.
- For endorsement, a draft study on real estate property and market risk evaluation for real estate backed financial products. He noted that revisions could be made in line with comments from the Committee and other relevant stakeholders.
- For endorsement, the draft revised terms of reference for the Advisory Group.

54. He informed the Committee that the Advisory Group met regularly both online and physically to coordinate its work. A physical meeting had been held in February 2012, another would be held in October 2012, and at least two such meetings were planned for 2013.

55. The Committee:

- Took note of the activities undertaken by the Advisory Group.
- Asked the Bureau of the Committee to discuss the proposed terms of reference at its next Bureau meeting.
- Endorsed the draft study on real estate property and market risk evaluation for real estate backed financial products to be presented at the seventy-fourth session.
- Approved the proposal for a study on greening the real estate market and requested that its outline to be presented at the seventy-fourth session.

D. Housing modernization and management⁴

56. The publication *Green Homes* (ECE/HBP/159/Rev.1), which had first been issued in 2009, had been reprinted in English due to the continuing widespread interest in this study. The Russian version was in the process of being printed.

57. Based on the recommendations in the Action Plan for Energy-efficient Housing in the ECE region (ECE/HBP/164), a National Action Plan of Montenegro for Energy Efficiency Measures in the Residential Sector had been prepared at the request of the Government and in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The document was considered to be a good analysis of the energy-efficiency levels in the residential sector and would be used for preparing the chapter on energy-efficiency measures in the household sector of the second National Action Plan for Energy Efficiency 2013-2015, being developed by the Government.

58. The representative of the Government of Georgia expressed interest in the preparation of a National Action Plan for Energy-efficiency measures in the residential sector of Georgia.

59. The Committee:

- Took note of the information provided.
- Welcomed the proposal by Georgia and agreed to undertake a “National Action Plan for Energy-efficiency measures in the residential sector of Georgia”.
- Invited the secretariat and the delegation of Georgia to agree on the dates and other issues related to the development of this National Action Plan.

⁴ The new title approved for this area of work by the Committee on Housing and Land Management is “Sustainable housing and real estate markets”.

60. The secretariat presented a concept note for the preparation of a Casebook on “Good practices for Energy-efficient housing in the ECE region”. This publication will build on ECE work in the field of energy efficiency in the housing sector and, in particular, support the implementation of the “Action Plan for energy-efficient housing in the ECE region” (ECE/HBP/164) by providing concrete examples and cases from the region that illustrate how actions outlined in the Plan could be implemented. The preparation of this publication would be a joint endeavour between the ECE, UN-Habitat and the City of Vienna, Austria.

61. The Committee:

- Approved the concept note for the proposed study on “Good practices for Energy-efficient housing in the ECE region”.
- Invited the secretariat to prepare the study, to present it at the seventy-fourth session of the Committee and to issue it as a ECE publication.

62. The Committee was informed about the main outcomes of the regional training workshop on sustainable buildings and energy-efficient housing for Central Asia, which took place in Kyrgyzstan from 12 to 14 September as part of the Third International Sustainable Energy Forum.

63. The Committee was also informed by the secretariat that due to lack of funding the national training workshop on affordable and energy-efficient housing in Armenia, approved at the seventy-second session of the Committee, was postponed to 2013-2014. The planned workshops in Albania and Kyrgyzstan were postponed due to the changes in the respective Ministries or Government.

64. The Committee took note of the information provided.

VIII. Biennial Performance Assessment for 2010-2011 and draft Strategic Framework for 2014-2015

65. The Biennial Performance Assessment for 2010-2011 (ECE/HBP/2012/8) was presented to the Committee for endorsement.

66. The secretariat also presented to the Committee, for information, an extract of the revised draft ECE Strategic Framework 2014-2015, containing the elements for the Housing and Land Management component of Sub-programme 8: Housing, Land Management and Population (ECE/HBP/2012/9).

67. The Committee was also informed about the implementation of the Secretary-General’s Policy Committee decision on goals to reduce the number of publications.

68. The Committee:

- Approved the Biennial Performance Assessment for 2010-2011 (ECE/HBP/2012/8).
- Took note of the draft ECE Strategic Framework 2014-2015 (ECE/HBP/2012/9).
- Requested the secretariat to prepare three non-recurrent publications (two Country Profiles and one benchmarking study of land administration systems) and expressed its wish to also have a fourth non-recurrent publication prepared on sustainable housing and land management, if possible, and to prepare all other information material as proposed.

IX. Information on outcomes of global meetings and inter-divisional and inter-agency activities

69. The secretariat reported on the outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference and Sixth World Urban Forum, where the work of the Committee was presented. The importance of inter-sectoral and interagency cooperation was stressed at both events. In this regard, the Committee was informed of a proposal for creating an internal ECE interdivisional working group to coordinate activities in the area of sustainable urban development through regular meetings and joint events.

70. This ECE interdivisional working group's priorities would be in line with those outlined by the Rio+20 Conference, the Secretary-General's five-year action agenda and the Secretary-General's Sustainable Energy for all Initiative. The group would include representatives from the following ECE sub-programmes: Sustainable Energy, Transport, Trade, Forestry and Timber, Environment and Statistics. Its work would be coordinated by the secretariat of the Committee on Housing and Land Management.

71. The Committee took note of the information provided and encouraged the different secretariat divisions to cooperate on sustainable urban development.

72. The Committee was informed that, in line with the request of the Economic Commission for Europe and with general United Nations recommendations on cooperation between agencies, the secretariat had carried out various activities in cooperation with other ECE programmes and other United Nations agencies, as well as with other international organizations.

73. The Committee was informed about cooperation on different projects, publications and events with partners in areas including: energy efficiency; green economy; disaster preparedness; land management; and real estate markets. The Committee was also presented with several opportunities for future cooperation possibilities with the following partner organizations and other secretariat Divisions: ECE Sustainable Energy Division; UN-Habitat Geneva office; Habitat for Humanity International; and the International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP).

74. The Committee took note of the information provided and requested interested partners to send information about possible cooperation projects to the secretariat and that these proposals be considered by the Bureau.

X. Other business

75. Four member countries—Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Montenegro—provided information on their housing and land-management systems, including on the development and adoption of new laws, strategies and programmes.

76. The Chair of the Committee invited these and other delegations to send the information on current improvements in their housing and land-management systems as contributions for the Committee's newsletter Vital Spaces.

77. The Committee took note of the information provided.

XI. Election of the Bureau

78. The Committee elected the Bureau for its seventy-fourth session, as follows:

- Mr. Wolfgang Förster (Austria), Chair

- Mr. Azer Khanlarov (Azerbaijan)
- Mr. Damir Pahic (Croatia)
- Ms. Daniela Grabmüllerová (Czech Republic)
- Ms. Lise Nielsen (Denmark)
- Ms. Tamar Ruhkadze (Georgia)
- Ms. Shulamith Gertel (Israel)
- Ms. Elena Bejenaru (Republic of Moldova)
- Mr. Ilya Ponomariov (Russian Federation)
- Ms. Svetlana Ristic (Serbia)
- Ms. Elena Szolgayova (Slovakia)
- Ms. Maria Ulfvarson Östlund (Sweden).

XII. Closing of the session

79. Closing the session, the Chair summarized the major decisions taken by the Committee and announced that, with the assistance of the secretariat and the Bureau, he would prepare the report of the session and circulate it among the participants.
