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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**

Note by the secretariat

Summary

At its meeting on 2 April 2012, the Bureau of the Committee on Housing and Land Management of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) discussed the need for a Strategy on Sustainable Housing and Land Management containing specific targets to be achieved by member States by 2020. The Bureau stressed the importance of promoting more effective housing policy reforms by setting specific targets and monitoring their implementation.

The Bureau requested the secretariat to prepare a document describing a Strategy for Sustainable Housing and Land Management, including associated targets, to be considered at the seventy-third session of the Committee and adopted at the Ministerial Meeting in 2013.

This document contains some suggested elements for a Strategy. It was developed in consultation with the Bureau of the Working Party on Land Administration and the Real Estate Market Advisory Group. The Bureau of the Committee discussed a first draft at a retreat held on 2 and 3 July 2012. This document also draws on the discussions of the Working Group on a Possible Framework Convention on Sustainable Housing.

The Committee is invited to discuss the document, make additional proposals and define the next steps for completing the Strategy before submitting it to the Ministerial Meeting in 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 a 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.

2. It 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; the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development; and the Rio+20 UN Sustainable Development Conference final 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.

3. It also reflects the principles and goals of some key housing-related documents from the United Nations system. These include the objectives of *Agenda 21, Chapter on Promoting Sustainable Human Settlements Development* and the *Habitat Agenda. The Future We Want* of the Rio+20 UN Sustainable Development Conference 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 recognize 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 document reinforces the mandate of the Committee in all the areas of its work and in particular in the area of urban development.

4. 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 Century*¹ are considered, while taking into account the progress made by member States and the need to address emerging issues.

5. 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”.

6. In line with the *Habitat Agenda*², 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 the *Habitat Agenda* through national laws, programmes, strategies and policies, as appropriate to its national situation.

7. The Strategy is envisaged to be a guide for the Committee to structure and continuously adapt its programme of work until 2020. The Strategy will help the

¹ 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.

² 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.

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.

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

8. Housing is a basic need and a fundamental human right. According to Article 25 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights³ “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family”.

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.

10. Built before the 1960s, a large share of the region’s residential housing stock has deteriorated over time and requires large-scale refurbishment to ensure high levels of energy performance and adequate housing quality. An energy-efficient residential sector reduces greenhouse gas emissions and levels of energy poverty.

11. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, both international and national efforts are required for the rehabilitation of the housing stock in the countries of the region with economies in transition. In these countries, achieving good governance is a priority, including mechanisms for the effective financing of the housing sector and the establishment of functioning and transparent real estate markets.

12. With growing income differences and economic disparities, the need to promote social cohesion in ECE member States has become important. In the wake of the economic crisis, ensuring choice and affordability in housing is a burning issue for many Governments.

13. 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. Real estate market financing and regulations impact on the welfare and livelihoods of citizens everywhere. Therefore, regulatory frameworks need to be established that will allow real estate markets to contribute positively to economic growth.

14. In various parts of the region, ongoing urbanization processes and urban sprawl coexist with declining populations resulting both in “shrinking” cities and diminishing rural populations. 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, 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.

³ UN General Assembly resolution 217A (III), 10 December 1948, Article 25(1).

15. Spatial and compact urban planning need to now become a reality taking into account the spatial and structural implication of these demographic changes, such as the housing needs of ageing populations, including barrier-free housing.

16. Land administration supports the implementation of land-related policies and land management strategies. It provides security of tenure, security for legally acquired real property rights, security in the transfer of real property rights, security and transparency in land and real property valuation, transparency in land use and land use planning, and transparency and sustainability of land development.

17. Natural disasters, such as earthquakes, flood, and 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. Experience from dealing with disasters in recent years has demonstrated the importance of developing long-term strategies for disaster risk reduction in the housing sector and in land use planning, including building resilience to climate change related disasters. Such strategies need to equip member States with the necessary means for disaster prevention, developing their resilience as well as their post-disaster reconstruction capabilities.

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 challenges to achieving sustainable housing and land management. 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.

19. Recent guidelines and reports issued by the Committee give an idea of the thematic direction of its work:

Sustainable Housing and Real Estate Markets

- Country Profiles on the Housing Sector for Azerbaijan (2010), Belarus (2008), Georgia (2007), Kyrgyzstan (2010), Serbia and Montenegro (2006), Tajikistan (2011)
- Policy Framework for Sustainable Real Estate Markets (2010)
- Green Homes: Towards Energy-efficient Housing in the UNECE region (2009, reprint 2012)
- Action Plan for Energy-efficient Housing in the UNECE region (2010)
- National Action Plan of Montenegro for Energy Efficiency Measures in the Residential Sector (2012)

Sustainable Urban Development

- Spatial Planning: Key Instruments for Development of Effective Governance (2008)
- Climate-Neutral Cities: How to make cities less energy and carbon intensive and more resilient to climatic challenges (2011)

Land Administration and Management

- Land Administration in the UNECE Region: Development of Trends and Main Principles (2005)
- Guidance and Good Practices for the Application of Fees and Charges (2009)

- Self-made cities. In search of sustainable solutions for informal settlements in the UNECE region (2009)
- Study on the Challenges of Fraud to Land Administration Institutions (2011).

III. Mandate and Mission

20. 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.

21. 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

22. 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 will have green, inclusive and compact cities as inner city regeneration and low-carbon growth take priority over urban expansion. Citizens will live in and have access to affordable, energy-efficient and healthy housing. Through refurbishment, the quality of their homes is gradually being improved to increase accessibility, environmental performance and resilience against natural and human-generated disasters. Investments in the housing sector are encouraged by transparent and functioning land use and property registration systems. The housing sector will offer 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 Overall improved quality of housing stock, in particular in terms of environmental and energy performance and health aspects.
- B The life-cycle approach is integrated in housing design, construction, operation, refurbishment and demolition.
- C Residential buildings are resilient 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 a legal framework in place for retrofitting 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 policies to achieve energy-efficient housing through an annual refurbishment rate of 2 per cent for residential buildings.
- A3 Have in place energy performance requirements and a scheme for energy performance certificates for new and existing residential buildings.
- B1 Objective B targets still to be developed.
- C1 Objective C targets still to be developed.

Social dimension of sustainability:

Objectives

- D All citizens have access to decent, affordable, good-quality and healthy housing.
- E Universal design criteria are integrated in the building design phase to ensure barrier-free access to buildings and thus acknowledge changes in needs created by ageing societies.

Target

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

- D1 Have measures in place which ensure that 10 per cent of the annual new residential construction is dedicated to low-income and social housing in order to provide people in need with decent and affordable homes.
- E1 Objective E targets still to be developed.

Economic and financial dimension of sustainability:

Objectives

Good legislative and political frameworks are in place

- F To ensure an efficient management of the housing stock, good legislative and political frameworks is in place.
- G To support and encourage private investment in the housing sector, good legislative and political frameworks are in place.
- H To promote PPPs good legislative and political frameworks are in place.

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 through homeowner associations. Well-functioning management of the housing stock is a prerequisite for investments in the housing sector.
- G1 Objective G targets on private investment in the housing sector still to be developed.
- H1 Objective H targets on PPPs still to be developed.

(ii) In the area of **Sustainable Urban Development**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.

(iii) In the area of **Sustainable Land Administration and Land Management**Objectives

- J An efficient and transparent land administration system is in place, which provides citizens with security of tenure, security for legally acquired real property rights, security in the transfer of real property rights, transparency in real property valuation, effective and transparent land use planning and sustainable land development.
- K Universal cadaster and land registration, 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.

Target

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

- J1 Objective J targets still to be developed.
- K1 Have efficient and transparent land registration systems, based on property ownership and type of land use, that cover the whole national territory.

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.
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