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## Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Housing and Land Management

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Item 7(b) of the provisional agenda

Review of the implementation of the programme of work of 2014-2015

Sustainable urban development

### Proposal for the Preparation of a Policy Brief on Urban Planning

Note by the secretariat

#### *Summary*

To support the implementation of the Strategy for Sustainable Housing and Land Management in the UNECE region for the period 2014-2020 (ECE/HBP/2012/3), the secretariat has elaborated this proposal for the preparation of a policy brief on urban planning.

The Committee is invited to discuss and endorse this proposal.



## I. UNECE activities on sustainable urban development

1. The UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management works to improve the housing, urban and land governance in the UNECE region by strengthening the formulation and implementation of policies, enhancing social cohesion and developing capacities at the national and local levels (ECE/HBP/2013/10).<sup>1</sup> The Committee has produced a number of studies and policy documents on urban development, including:

(a) *Spatial Planning: Key Instrument for Development and Effective Governance* (ECE/HBP/146),<sup>2</sup> which provides guidance on how to improve the functioning of spatial planning systems in UNECE member States, and particularly in countries with transition economies, with a focus on enabling all actors in the public, private and community sectors to work together to promote the sustainable development of human settlements;

(b) *Climate Neutral Cities* (ECE/HBP/168),<sup>3</sup> which discusses the importance of cities for energy reduction, climate protection and climate adaptation and offers a comprehensive list of actions that cities in the UNECE region need to undertake in order to mitigate their energy intensity and carbon footprint, undertake post-carbon energy transition and to reduce their vulnerability to climate change.

(c) Country profiles on housing and land management, which contain analyses of housing, urban development and land management as well as policies at a country level and formulate recommendations to governments for the improvement of these sectors. Seventeen country profiles have been developed by the Committee so far.<sup>4</sup>

2. The Committee promotes an integrated approach to planning and building sustainable cities and urban settlements which are compact, efficient, inclusive, low-carbon and disaster resilient (see more in ECE/HBP/2013/10).

3. The 2014 Ministerial Meeting on Housing and Land Management,<sup>5</sup> adopted the Strategy for Sustainable Housing and Land Management in the ECE Region for the Period 2014-2020 (ECE/HBP/2013/3),<sup>6</sup> which guides the work of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies.<sup>7</sup> The strategy aims at promoting sustainable housing and land management in the ECE region by, “balancing the competing demand for and limited supply of available land, minimising the loss of rural land and increasing the efficient use of urban land”.

4. The strategy establishes, inter alia, the following two targets for urban planning and development to be achieved by member States by the year 2020:

(a) To develop national strategic directions and policies for sustainable spatial development with the participation of all stakeholders;

(b) To develop territorial plans and/or other instruments to enforce existing regulations at least for the following: areas prone to natural and human generated

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/2013/ECE\\_HBP\\_2013\\_10.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/2013/ECE_HBP_2013_10.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/Publications/spatial\\_planning\\_e.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/Publications/spatial_planning_e.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/Publications/climate\\_neutral\\_cities\\_e.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/Publications/climate_neutral_cities_e.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.unece.org/housing-and-land-management/areas-of-work/country-profiles-on-housing-and-land-management.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=32586>

<sup>6</sup> The Strategy is available at <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=35252>

<sup>7</sup> The Working Party on Land Administration and the Real Estate Market Advisory Group.

disasters; attractive areas for private investments; ecologically sensitive areas and heritage sites; inner-city densification, urban regeneration, mixed-use development, re-use or redevelopment of blight areas and brownfield sites.

5. To support implementation of the Strategy and the above targets, a policy brief on urban planning with recommendations to UNECE member States will be developed; this brief will guide the long-term work of the Committee in the area of urban development. The policy brief will also promote the dissemination of ideas and the implementation of policy recommendations from relevant United Nations and UNECE policy documents.

## **II. Key United Nations policy documents on sustainable urban development**

6. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) highlighted the importance of consolidating efforts of national governments and international organizations in order to advance the sustainable urban development. The Rio+20 outcome document<sup>8</sup> outlined the following key issues relevant to sustainable urban development: an integrated approach to planning and building sustainable cities and urban settlements; mixed-use urban planning; urban regeneration; compact urban development; energy- and resource-efficient urban development; affordable, accessible and clean public transport; and the protection and restoration of safe and green urban spaces.

7. The Secretary General's Sustainable Energy for all (SE4ALL) Initiative Global Action Agenda<sup>9</sup> underlined the need to adopt energy-efficiency programmes in building management and develop sustainable, locally-appropriate transport systems in cities.

8. The Open Working Group of the United Nations General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals, which was mandated by the Rio+20 Conference to develop a set of sustainable development goals for the period until 2030, has elaborated draft goals, which includes a goal on inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements. According to the Progress report of the Open Working Group, the governments should enhance "inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacities for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries and ... increase ... the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, [and] resilience to disasters".<sup>10</sup>

## **III. Proposed content of the policy brief**

9. The proposed policy brief will consist of three chapters. The first chapter will provide an overview of the publications and on-going work that is related to urban planning in UN-Habitat, UNECE and other organizations. It will emphasize cross-sectoral linkages, including those related to environmental quality (outdoor and indoor), climate change, natural and human made disaster risks, transport, ageing and other topics. This analysis will take into consideration and examine regional implications of the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning, which are being prepared by UN-Habitat in consultation with other United Nations agencies, member states and other stakeholders. The International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning provide a global framework for

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.uncsd2012.org/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.se4all.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/SEFA-Action-Agenda-Final.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/4518Outcome%20SDGs.pdf>

improving policies, plans, design and implementation processes for more compact, socially inclusive, better integrated and connected cities and territories that foster sustainable urban development and are resilient to climate change.<sup>11</sup>

10. This chapter will also include an analysis of the work of the World Bank on urban planning in market economies,<sup>12</sup> the United Cities and Local Governments policy paper on urban strategic planning,<sup>13</sup> the relevant work of the UNECE divisions of Environment, Statistics, Sustainable Energy, Transport and other relevant documents.

11. The second chapter of the policy brief will include a regional analysis of national urban planning systems, including best practices in the UNECE region. Information on national planning systems is being collected as a part of a Committee study (ECE/HBP/2013/9).<sup>14</sup>

12. The third chapter will formulate conclusions and recommendations for the implementation of the Strategy for Sustainable Housing and Land Management in the ECE Region for the Period 2014-2020 and other relevant United Nations documents.

#### **IV. Proposal for the organization of work on the policy brief**

13. A wide consultation on the content of the policy brief will be organized with UNECE divisions, including Environment, Sustainable Energy, Transport and Economic Cooperation, Trade and Land Management.

14. Representatives of relevant international organizations, including UN-Habitat, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the International Society of City and Regional Planners will be invited to review and contribute to the preparation of the policy brief.

15. A consultation meeting on the draft policy brief will be organized with wide participation of partner organizations and stakeholders at a thematic session during the Europe and Central Asia Housing Forum in April 2015.

16. The Committee is invited to discuss, provide inputs and endorse this proposal.

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<sup>11</sup> UN-Habitat. 2014. International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning. Unpublished draft 2, February 2014

<sup>12</sup> Licciardi, Hamilton. 2012. Urban Planning in Market Economies. Good urban planning is not central planning. The World Bank unpublished paper

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.cities-localgovernments.org/upload/docs/docs\\_en\\_telechargements/UCLG\\_%282010%29\\_Policy\\_paper\\_on\\_urban\\_strategic\\_planning.pdf](http://www.cities-localgovernments.org/upload/docs/docs_en_telechargements/UCLG_%282010%29_Policy_paper_on_urban_strategic_planning.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/2013/ECE\\_HBP\\_2013\\_9.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/2013/ECE_HBP_2013_9.pdf)