

Outline concept note

Implementation of UN System-wide Strategy on Sustainable Urban Development (CEB/2019/1/Add.5) in the UN Europe and Central Asia Region

1. Purpose of this Concept note

Following the approval of this System-Wide Strategy, and in line with Section VII, part D., paragraphs 64-66, in May 2019, the Joint Meeting of the R-UNSDG and RCM of the ECA region **agreed to consider Issue-Based Coalition on Sustainable Urban Development**; UN-Habitat has been tasked with developing a concept note on this issue.

For UN-Habitat, the departure point in this endeavor is the repositioning of the UN Development System ([A/RES/72/279](#)). Our considerations and efforts are also guided, in policy terms, by the New Urban Agenda ([A/RES/71/256](#)), and, in operational terms, by the UN System-Wide Strategy on Sustainable Urban Development ([CEB/2019/1/Add.5](#)).

Whether an Issue-Based Coalition is the most effective, efficient, and productive institutional arrangement for delivering the services in question in the ECA region, or other institutional mechanisms can serve the purpose better, remains to be determined and agreed. We suggest first **scoping out the demand for such services with the UN country teams** in the ECA region, and the **supply of expertise of UN entities on all levels** available to be mobilized for satisfying any demand.

This concept note is a derivative of the UN System-wide Strategy on Sustainable Urban Development, and it cannot be considered and/or understood separately from that Strategy.

Its purpose is to guide deliberation of the UN entities who are members of the Regional Collaboration Platform in the Europe and Central Asia Region on the collaborative mechanism of “promoting sustainable urban development” which has been agreed by the Member States in Transformative Agenda 2030, the New Urban Agenda, and other UN frameworks.

2. Guiding Structure of this Concept note

2.1 Conceptual basis in a nutshell

The “promoting” will necessarily include but may not be limited to

- a. Monitoring progress of attaining the urban and territorial dimension of SDGs and the New urban Agenda,
- b. Programming UN cooperation with the Member States,
- c. Development of multi-level urban policy, and
- d. Building capacity of governments at all levels to implement policy

at

1. the global,
2. the regional and sub-regional,
3. the country and the subnational levels

facilitating adequate policy responses to the issues of

- (i) managing sustainable urban and territorial development as a driver for sustainable development,
- (ii) in a broader context of effective multi-level governance;

by the UN System *working collectively on*

- 1) *developing and implementing urban policies at the appropriate level;*
- 2) *strengthening urban governance;*
- 3) *reinvigorating long-term and integrated urban and territorial planning and design; and*
- 4) *supporting effective, innovative and sustainable financing frameworks and instruments.*¹

Following the guidance from DCO, as laid out above, priority should be given to offering policy advice to the governments of the programme countries; where the demand for implementation of the advice justifies it, some technical cooperation and capacity building may also be considered.

In parallel, UN-Habitat will continue supporting the ongoing CCA exercises in the programme countries. Experience of this workstream will also feed into the same document.

2.2 Framework provided by the System-wide Strategy

For a greater detail, this concept note follows its Sections, suggesting a clear framework of a Regional dimension of ECA to be assessed and/or considered when deliberating the collaborative mechanism:

Section II: Potential of Sustainable Urbanization as a Transformative Force

Impacts on: Poverty, Health, Gender, Equality, Crime, Infrastructure, Housing, Resilience to Hazards & Disasters, Migration, Governance;

Section III: Frontier Issues

Digital & Tech; Sharing & Privatisation; Land & Resources; Cities & Climate Change; Nexus of Frontier Issues;

Section IV: Expected Outcomes

Reduced Poverty & Inequality; Enhanced Prosperity; Improved Urban Environment; Prevention of and Response to Urban Crises;

Section V: Implementation of New Urban Agenda at Regional, National and Subnational Level

UN supports: Urban Policies; MultiLevel Governance; urban and territorial planning and design; effective, innovative and sustainable financing frameworks and instruments to finance sustainable urbanization;

Section VI: Collaborative Implementation Framework

Urban Data; Integrated Policy Support; Subnational Implementation and Multi-Stakeholder Engagement; Local Financing;

Section VII: Implementing of System-Wide Strategy through Existing Structures/Processes

UN Reform, UNSDG - DCO; Thematic & Regional Inter-Agency Platforms;

Section VIII: Role of UN-Habitat in the Implementation of the System-Wide Strategy and the Promotion of Sustainable Urban Development.

Laid out in *3.1 Types of support and Anticipated modalities* of facilitation by UN-Habitat *below*.

¹ Section V. Implementation of the New Urban Agenda at the regional, national and subnational levels, §64

2.3 Scoping the demand and supply in ECA

UN-Habitat initiated the survey of demand and supply in the ECA region.

Before a meaningful concept note can be developed, and making sure that the effort is fully commensurate with repositioning of UNDS and reinvigorated RC system, we need to simultaneously:

- A. **Determine demand for the urbanization-related policy advice** in the countries of the ECA region: this will of course first and foremost be informed by the CCA and the knowledge and current experience of the UNCTS, it can also be guided by the **Section V of the System-wide Strategy on Sustainable Urban Development**, which points out *“the four fundamental drivers of change, namely: (a) developing and implementing urban policies at the appropriate level; (b) strengthening urban governance; (c) reinvigorating long-term and integrated urban and territorial planning and design; and (d) supporting effective, innovative and sustainable financing frameworks and instruments.”*;
- B. **Take stock of the expertise available among the UN entities, that they can share in this region** to support the Collaborative Implementation Framework – **Section VI of the System-wide Strategy on Sustainable Urban Development**, which emphasizes *Urban Data, Integrated Policy Support, Subnational Implementation and Multi-Stakeholder Engagement; and Local Financing*; we are aware that the Collaborative Implementation Framework will have several geographical scopes in the region, this of the ECA programme countries being the narrowest one, and the broadest one covering the whole UNECE region;

While we welcome the views of both RCs and RDs on both points A and B above, it seems logical that RCs would focus on A, and RDs – on point B.

This survey serves for determining the Regional coordination mechanism²:

“Emerging regional coordination mechanisms for the Sustainable Development Goals offer the same kinds of collaboration platforms at the regional level as the global collaboration mechanisms for implementation of the Goals. The mechanisms will enable regional representatives of regional economic commissions, the Development Coordination Office and agencies to promote aspects of sustainable urban development. They will vary by region, with some focused on integrated policy and others on data, financing and/or crisis prevention.”

Once we have the responses, we will aggregate and consolidate them and share the results with all of you for comments and adjustments. The next step will be a full concept note and wider discussion is planned in the preparations for the Regional Sustainable Development Forum in March 2020.

3. ECA Regional dimension of the System-wide Strategy

3.1 Types of support and Anticipated modalities of facilitation by UN-Habitat

In 2018, UN Senior Management Group recognized urbanization as a “megatrend” and called upon UN-Habitat to facilitate cooperation among UN agencies in order to advance United Nations system-wide coherence for sustainable urbanization (Section I). UN-Habitat will contribute towards bolstering the coherent and coordinated realization of this system-wide strategy by several types of support (Section VIII).

² Section VII, D. Regional inter-agency platforms, §64

The System-wide strategy spells out the following types of support to be offered by UN-Habitat:

“By making the best use of these capacities and expertise, UN -Habitat will contribute towards bolstering the coherent and coordinated realization of this system-wide strategy. The types of support are as follows:

- **Standardization of urban policy, legislation, planning and financing.** *This will be crucial as agencies seek to further their respective mandates by operating in cities. Rather than reinvent these drivers, the entities can work with UN-Habitat to adopt the standard practices and approaches developed by the organization over the past 40 years.*
- **Provision of advisory support to agencies.** *This can benefit agencies as they develop strategies to fulfil the urban dimensions of their respective mandates. Agencies are encouraged to work with UN -Habitat to design, implement and monitor urban strategies, including on health, children, environment, culture, employment or food.*
- **Application of urban data and diagnostic tools.** *These will be essential to agencies intent on assisting Member States in promoting urban-related policies (including on health, food and human rights). UN -Habitat will make tools available to agencies and spearhead inter-agency efforts to promote the agreed standards of measurement.*
- **Provision of guidance notes on the New Urban Agenda.** *This can assist resident coordinators and United Nations country teams in utilizing the New Urban Agenda in practical ways in order to situate urban data and tools in common country analyses and, where appropriate, to integrate urban development into the design of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, as well as implementation, monitoring and coordination mechanisms.*
- **Harmonized support for Member States to monitor progress in attaining Goal 11.** *Agencies are encouraged to continue to participate actively in monitoring platforms (global and regional) convened by UN -Habitat on the quadrennial review of the New Urban Agenda and on the five - year review of Goal 11 and in supporting cities to prepare local voluntary reviews.*
- **Localization of the Sustainable Development Goals.** *This is of paramount importance for the United Nations system as the attainment of the Goals will be decided at the local level. In their prospective programme partnerships with UN-Habitat, agencies are encouraged to include capacity development initiatives that will assist local governments in strengthening inclusive planning, multi-stakeholder consultation and the mobilization of financing for achieving the Goals.*
- **Coordinated engagement with city networks.** *This will be extremely useful for the United Nations as agencies seek to assist Member States in harnessing the opportunities provided by urbanization. Agencies are encouraged to engage directly with networks in consultation with UN -Habitat in order to improve coordination and align engagements with other city networks.”³*

The anticipated modality of UN-Habitat facilitating the country level activities in ECA is through Human Settlements Advisors. Where the demand exceeds competencies and capacity of Advisors and resources they can draw upon at the pool of expertise at UN-Habitat, multi-agency teams may need to be assembled to adequately respond to the demand at the regional, country, subnational levels. When the issues require prolonged presence, the teams will build of backstopping of a participating UN entity well established in a country.

³ Section VIII: Role of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme in the implementation of the system-wide strategy and the promotion of sustainable urban development, §68

3.2 Subregions

For operational facility the ECA region may be organized in 4 subregions: Western Balkans, Eastern Europe, South Caucasus, and Central Asia. At the initial phase, one Human Settlements Advisor may service two or more subregions.

The structure of this outline is not complete. UN entities active in the ECA region and UN country teams are welcome to propose additional sub-chapters.