

The Quadrennial Report -- UN-Habitat Strategy to report on the progress of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda

Towards a System-based approach to the collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative information through a consultative open process

Introduction

The adoption of the New Urban Agenda (NUA) and the Sustainable Development Goals, which includes the urban goal— (SDG 11) to *make cities safe, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable*, firmly places urbanization at the forefront of international development policy. It recognizes that cities because of densities and economies of scales and agglomeration are critical for the realization of other goals.

The NUA puts emphasis on the universality of the agenda and the need to be participatory, transparent and people centred.¹ It further stresses that the process and follow-up and review should ‘take into account contributions of national, subnational and local levels of government, and be supplemented by contributions from the United Nations system, regional and subregional organizations, major groups and relevant stakeholders, and should be a continuous process aimed at creating and reinforcing partnerships among all relevant stakeholders and fostering exchanges of urban solutions and mutual learning’.²

The NUA also reaffirms ‘the role and expertise of UN-Habitat as a focal point for sustainable urbanization and human settlements’³, working in collaboration with other United Nations system entities.

Reporting on the Progress of the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda

The New Urban Agenda emphasizes the need to improve the United Nations system-wide coordination and coherence in the area of sustainable urban development, within the framework of a system-wide strategic planning, implementation and reporting in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development⁴

As part of the Follow-Up and Review of this Agenda, the outcome document of Quito invites the “General Assembly to request the Secretary-General, with voluntary inputs from countries and relevant regional and international organizations, to report on the progress of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda every four years”, with the first report to be submitted to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council in 2018.⁵

The New Urban Agenda further indicates that this report will provide a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the progress made in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and internationally agreed goals and targets relevant to sustainable urbanization and human settlements. The analysis

¹ Paragraphs 16 and 162, Habitat III, New Urban Agenda, 2016.

² Paragraph 162.

³ Paragraph 165.

⁴ Paragraph 83..

⁵ Paragraph 166.

will be based on the activities of national, subnational and local governments, incorporating inputs of multilateral organisations, civil society, the private sector and academia.⁶

The report on the progress of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda will also feed into the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development under the auspices of the General Assembly, with a view to ensuring coherence, coordination and collaborative linkages with the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Annual Report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on human settlement activities

After the adoption of the Habitat Agenda in 1996, the General Assembly decided that UN-Habitat will provide inputs for the preparation of the Secretary-General report on human settlement activities on an annual basis.

In light of the adoption of the New Urban Agenda at Habitat III, the annual report that the Secretary-General submits to the GA on human settlement activities will continue to be produced on the “Implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations Conferences on Human Settlements and on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development and strengthening of the United Nations Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)”. This Report will still be submitted every year in July/August and discussed in the Second Committee in October.

The Quadrennial Report

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has prepared on a yearly basis a report on the “Coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda” since 1996 for the consideration of the General Assembly. This Parliamentary Report will be replaced by a quadrennial report on the “Implementation of the New Urban Agenda”, starting in 2018. It is therefore expected to have quadrennial reports for the years 2022, 2026, 2030 and 2034 as indicated in Table 1 Reporting Cycle of the New Urban Agenda).

The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) stipulates in its Section Follow-up and Review of the New Urban Agenda that a periodic review will be done to ensure coherence at the national, regional and global levels.⁷ This follow-up and review will be voluntary, country-led, inclusive, multilevel, participatory and transparent.⁸ It aims to track progress, assess impact, ensure the Agenda’s effective and timely implementation⁹, as well as creating and reinforcing partnerships and fostering exchanges of urban solutions and mutual learning.¹⁰ It should be quantitative and qualitative and incorporate contributions from the United Nations system, regional and subregional organizations and relevant stakeholders.¹¹ **The Quadrennial Report will take stock of the progress made and challenges faced in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, identifying further steps to address.**¹²

⁶ Par. 167.

⁷ Paragraph 161

⁸ Paragraph 162

⁹ Paragraph 161

¹⁰ Paragraph 162

¹¹ Paragraphs 162 and 167, Habitat III, New Urban Agenda, 2016

¹² Paragraph 175

Table 1: Reporting cycle of the New Urban Agenda

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036
Implementation of the outcomes of the UN Conferences on Human Settlements and on Housing and SUD.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Quadrennial report on the “Implementation of the New Urban Agenda”	X				X				X				X				X		

World Urban Forum, UN-Habitat flagship publications and other regional reports

The Quadrennial Report will provide a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the progress made both in the NUA and the internationally agreed goals and targets relevant to sustainable urbanization and human settlements. As indicated, the analysis will include activities of different levels of Governments, UN-Habitat, other relevant stakeholders and entities of the United Nations system.

As specified in the New Urban Agenda document, the Quadrennial Report should build on existing platforms and processes such as the recently concluded **World Urban Forum** that took place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from the 7 to the 13 February 2018, convened by UN-Habitat. This Forum provided numerous inputs and best practices from various participants on what they are doing towards the implementation of the NUA and urban SDGs. As indicated in the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Cities 2030, these inputs will feed into annual and quadrennial reporting on progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda”.¹³

Additionally, it is expected that the **on-line Quito Platform** will be further developed, including the preparation of **Guidelines** that can serve as template or a course of action for countries and partners to streamline the structure and process of the NUA reporting based on an indicative routine mechanism. In this manner, Member States and other relevant stakeholders, including multilateral organisations, civil society, the private sector and academia, will be able to organize in a similar framework their specific contributions.¹⁴

Furthermore, UN-Habitat will pursue the publication of its flagship publication the **World Cities Report** (WCR). This publication resulted from the merging of the Global Report on Human Settlements¹⁵ and the State of the World’s Cities Report¹⁶, as proposed by an external review in 2014. The first edition of the WCR (2016) took stock of urban developments over the last two decades (i.e. since the Habitat II Conference in 1996) and formulated key components of what can constitute an urban agenda for the 21st century in support of the Habitat III process. The subsequent edition of the WCR will complement specific thematic areas of the New Urban Agenda and the urban components of the Sustainable Development Goals.¹⁷ This flagship publication represents in some ways an Agency’s complement to the Quadrennial Reports.

¹³ WUF 9 (2018) *Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Cities 2030*, <http://wuf9.org/kuala-lumpur-declaration/>.

¹⁴ Paragraph 167

¹⁵ The Global Report on Human Settlements (GRHS) was mandated in 1997 by the General Assembly to UN-Habitat to be prepared in a biannual basis (resolution 34/114).

¹⁶ The State of the World’s Cities Report (SWCR) was also mandated in 1999 by the General Assembly to UN-Habitat to be prepared in a biannual basis.

¹⁷ First concept paper of the WCR prepared in March 2017 by UN-Habitat.

In line with the Secretary-General Reform, UN-Habitat will continue to publish Regional State of Cities Reports in close collaboration with the Regional Commissions and other relevant regional stakeholders adopting a more programmatic approach. These reports will provide an in-depth overview on urban development in the various regions, with latest data on urban trends and developments. They will also take stock on the progress made and challenges faced in the implementation of NUA and SDGs in the respective regions, and the responses that are implemented by governments at different levels.

UN-Habitat via the Global Urban Observatory and the Research Unit, in collaboration with the Agency's Sub-Programmes and Regions, as well as the participation of various strategic partners, will collect data and analyse urban trends and conditions on a regular basis that will serve the purpose of these Reports. For this purpose, GUO will develop a system-based approach to data collection and analysis and for the systematization of best practices that will serve all reporting and monitoring functions.

The Annual Report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the Outcome of Habitat III.

As already mentioned, the annual report was previously produced for the reporting of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda (annually through ECOSOC) and will now be replaced with Secretary-General's report to the General Assembly on the outcome of Habitat III.

This annual report will provide an overview of the implementation of the NUA based on secondary data and anecdotal evidence. It will use information produced by countries and cities that will be collected by UN-Habitat through literature review and mainstream data collection systems, such as census information, household surveys and National Statistics Abstracts. It will be complemented by UN-Habitat publications, reports on field operations, and other information available from United Nations Agencies that are supporting member states in advocacy and capacity development for the implementation of the NUA and the urban SDGs.

The report will highlight the implementation of the various components of the NUA with respect to National Urban Policy; Urban Legislation, Rules and Regulations; Urban Planning and Design; Urban Economy and Finance; and Local Implementation.¹⁸ The report will also examine the policies that have facilitated the implementation of these aspects of the NUA, as well as possible constraints to implementing this global agenda.

The country, city or regional specificities will not be covered in this report. It will not be based on primary data collection or spatial analysis. New topics of the urban agenda that demand specific research such as public space, land consumption or sustainable mobility will not be covered either. In this sense, this annual Report is limited in scope and only partially addresses new themes and indicators of the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs urban targets and indicators. It does not contemplate consultations with Member States, local authorities and relevant stakeholders.

This Report will be produced with existing resources. With the exception of staff cost, it will not have any additional cost implications.

¹⁸ These components constitute the Action Framework for the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda (AFINUA).

The Quadrennial Report: options

The Quadrennial Report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda will require a more systematic mechanism to capture both qualitative and quantitative information, adopting an analytical approach including inputs at the regional, national and subnational levels, as well as relevant stakeholders' information.

This Report will incorporate data and information from other internationally agreed goals and targets relevant to sustainable urbanization and human settlements, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly the urban indicators.

The idea of a **Basic Quadrennial Report** to be produced using only secondary data and anecdotal information, as it was proposed by UN-Habitat in the document 'Budget Implications of the NUA Reporting', needs to be considered only as a second option. Although this proposal included some form of formal and periodic consultations with Member States, Local Governments, relevant UN agencies such as the Regional Economic Commissions and the Regional Development Banks, as well as Expert Group Meetings as a means of providing peer-review mechanism for the report, it was considered as a basic option that does not meet the standards required and expected for the NUA reporting. A Basic Report would miss fundamental components such as robust empirical information, primary analysis of data, spatial studies and disaggregation of information, performance assessments of country and cities responses, impact studies, best practices and lessons learned. In short, a Basic Report Option would not have the possibility of validating information and bringing the knowledge, expertise and perspective that various partners have.

The Quadrennial Comprehensive Report option for the year 2022 and beyond is more adequate and the ideal form for reporting the progress on the implementation of the NUA and the urban SDGs in a long-term incremental process. This option follows the conditions laid out in the NUA Quito Declaration; it integrates in a more systematic manner country led responses and inputs from various stakeholders through the Quito On-line Platform. It also works with a system-based approach to data and information for the overall cycle of the quadrennial reports, including spatial analysis and disaggregation of information. The Report establishes a more integrated approach to normative and operational work, articulating best practices, policies and knowledge with field work, and develops a global monitoring framework for higher consistency and institutional coherence.

The **Quadrennial Comprehensive Report** will be based on an extensive data collection and analysis framework, which covers, primary, secondary and geospatial data including different means of disaggregating information. Indeed, the SDGs and the new thematic areas for the implementation of the NUA require geospatial analysis and a stronger involvement and coordination of local and national actors. For instance, indicators such as public transport; land consumption; air quality/pollution; public space, poverty and inequality; urban sprawl, etc., require advanced forms of geospatial analysis and mapping and better institutional coordination; thus additional human and financial resources.

The comprehensive report will also make use of secondary data to be obtained from documented sources from Member States such as National Statistical Abstracts, UN-Habitat publications and from other United Nations Agencies and relevant partners. It will combine conventional forms of data collection with community-based and expert opinion surveys. It will also adopt a more innovative way of integrating information and inputs from different partners and stakeholders.

With the intention of creating a system-based approach to data collection and analysis, the Quadrennial Report will use and expand the Global Sample of Cities¹⁹ and promote the adoption of

¹⁹ The Global Sample of Cities consists of 200 cities that scientifically represents the universe of cities (4,231 cities that in 2010 had populations of over 100,000 inhabitants, comprising around 70% of the world's urban

national sample of cities by Member States to ensure a more coordinated and systematic way of reporting progress at national aggregated level. The Report will also promote and be supported by the City Prosperity Initiative and its global monitoring framework to ensure coherence and avoid duplication of the NUA and SDGs in the reporting mechanism.

These system-based information mechanisms will provide data and information to track progress, measure changes at the outcome level, and assess impact of the NUA implementation. They will be combined with mechanisms to capture qualitative information on best practices and policies to understand which are the key aspects and enabling factors that contribute to transformative change.

The comprehensive report recognizes the active participation and stakeholder consultation of a wide range of actors at different levels and regions, and as such will rely on the On-line Quito Platform. It will also include extensive consultations, expert meetings and peer review mechanisms.

In addition to discussing the implementation of the various components of the NUA and SDGs, the Comprehensive Quadrennial Report will examine persistent and emerging urban challenges and how national, subnational and local governments have responded to them in implementing these global agendas.

The reporting framework will include not only quantitative and qualitative indicators, but also spatial data and elements of big data. It will include data from multiple sources including national governments, local authorities, research and academia, civil society, professional bodies, the private sector etc. The framework is foreseen to grow incrementally. Capacity building for various actors and stakeholders providing data will be a critical element of the process. In addition, UN-Habitat's project and programmatic indicators will be adjusted to feed information on processes, outcomes and impacts into the framework.

Depending on the availability of resources, specific thematic entry points will be developed in depth to deepen the overall reporting framework. For instance, "Planning and managing urban spatial development" is highlighted as one of the three pillars of effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda and central to realizing its transformative commitments. The urban planning and design subprogramme will provide specialized expertise to feed into the overall reporting framework. It is expected that similar initiatives will be developed to cover other thematic and regional perspectives.

The Quadrennial Report for 2018

The first Quadrennial Report for 2018 will be different. With only 1.5 years after the adoption of the New Urban Agenda, countries, cities and partners are still creating conditions to implement this agenda. Institutional frameworks are being revised and coordination spaces for participation and engagement are also being created. The mechanisms that are needed to permit an effective contribution from all stakeholders, aligned to the 2030 Agenda, are also being established. The platforms for dialogue at different levels of government with other stakeholders are being formalized, as well as the necessary collaborative mechanisms.

Based on preliminary informal consultations, it is proposed that the first Quadrennial Report for 2018 will set the stage on how subsequent reports will be prepared. It will propose a **strategy and a system-based approach** to the Quadrennial Reports. It will define a narrative perspective on how the NUA is being implemented, including a possible **framework for report preparation**. The 2018 Report will set

population). This Global Sample was drawn using statistical techniques and a stratified sample based on three strata: different regions of the world similar to the UN classification (8 regions); city-size grouping using 4 categories (small, intermediate, big and large cities); and countries with different number of cities (3 groups). To increase regional representation of the different regions of the world (developed and developing) and to include cities with populations below 50,000 inhabitants, it is planned to expand the Global Sample of Cities.

a timeframe and propose a **preliminary structure with some illustrative examples and best practices** that do not aim to be representative from geographic or thematic perspectives.

A first initial informal meeting on the Quadrennial Report was organized at the margins of WUF9. This meeting was attended by nearly 40 people representing national and local governments, UN Agencies, multilateral organizations, associations of cities, NGOs, civil society and the academia. There was a general agreement that the preparation of this Report should be based on a consultative process through collaborative multi-scale arrangements. Participants agreed that this first report should provide a general structure and indications on how subsequent reports are to be prepared. The Report should help to keep the political momentum, raise awareness and provide illustrative examples. Participants appreciated UN-Habitat proposal to produce guidelines for future reports, integrating the NUA and the urban SDGs indicators at the methodological level. The need to articulate these two agendas was recognized by all participants, stressing that this first edition of the Report should propose a better articulation to the HLPF report and provide indications on how data and indicators will be collected and analysed in the future to ensure that no-one and no place is left behind.

UN-Habitat informed that a **first EGM for the preparation of the Quadrennial Report** will be organized in Spain, with tentative dates from 20-23 March 2018. This EGM will adopt a “Write Shop” methodology to advance in a collective manner in the preparation of this Report. The EGM will gather experts from different regions, disciplines, levels of government, private sector, civil society and academia as well as representatives from the United Nations system. The purpose of this EGM strives to revise the first draft that will be prepared prior to the EGM, and write an integral, advanced version of the Quadrennial Report 2018.

Budget for the Quadrennial Report for the Biennium 2018/2019

The Regular Budget allocation available for the biennium 2018/2019 is approximately **US\$ 500,000**. This does not include core resources of UN-Habitat core staff that will be involved in the preparation of the Report. The cost related to the organization of two EGMs – one for the NUA and the other for the HLPF – are also not included. These funds that amount around US\$ 150,000 are to be provided by the Comunidad Autonoma de Andalucia.

UN-Habitat estimated that budgetary needs for the preparation of the Quadrennial Reports in its comprehensive version amount to **\$USD 1,750,000 over a two year period (US\$ 875,000 per year)**.

An important mobilization of resources is therefore needed to cover for the following items: a) overall coordination mechanism; b) regional focal points; c) adaptation and use of the Quito Platform; d) data collection and analysis process, including spatial analysis; e) best practices and policies gathering; f) consultations and EGMs; g) localization of the NUA with dedicated teams; h) report team and consultants; i) report finalizations, including peer reviews; j) editorial work, layout and publication.