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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management

#### **Eighty-second session**

Geneva, 6-8 October 2021

Item 7 of the provisional agenda

#### **Review of the implementation of the programmes of work 2020 and 2021**

## **Activities of the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management since its eighty-first session**

### **Note by the secretariat**

#### *Summary*

This document provides information on the activities of the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management since its eighty-first session and outlines a list of activities for 2022.

The Committee is invited to take note of the information on activities implemented. The Committee is also invited to approve, subject to the availability of funding, the list of activities proposed for 2022 needed to implement the programme of work of the housing and land management component of the Housing, Land Management and Population subprogramme for 2022.



## **I. Implementation of the programmes of work 2020 and 2021**

1. In 2020-2021, the Committee continued supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing, the Geneva Ministerial Declaration on Housing and Urban Development and the Strategy for Sustainable Housing and Land Management in the ECE region for the period 2014-2020. The following activities were implemented:<sup>1</sup>

### **A. Affordable, accessible and healthy housing**

#### **1. Study “#Housing2030 – Improving Housing Affordability in the UNECE Region”**

2. The study “#Housing2030: Effective policies for affordable housing in the UNECE region” was developed by ECE, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and Housing Europe. The study aims to: (a) provide an analysis of housing affordability challenges and existing policy instruments for improving housing affordability in the ECE region; (b) facilitate the exchange and dissemination of good practices in improving housing affordability among countries and cities of the ECE region; and (c) identify the needs of policymakers to further develop and implement policies addressing housing affordability. The study explores the following four topics: (a) housing governance and regulation; (b) access to finance and funding; (c) access and availability of land for housing construction; and (d) climate-neutral housing construction and renovation. It also addresses the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the housing sector and highlights good practices for improving the affordability and long-term sustainability of housing.

#### **2. Survey of ECE member States “Improving Housing Affordability in the ECE region”**

3. Following the request of the Committee at its eighty-first session (ECE/HBP/201, para. 22), the ECE secretariat conducted a survey of ECE member States in 2020-2021. The survey was aimed at collecting information about housing affordability challenges, policies and priorities for the future of the ECE member States.

#### **3. Place and Life in the ECE – A Regional Action Plan 2030**

4. The “Place and Life in the ECE – A Regional Action Plan 2030: Tackling challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic, climate and housing emergencies in region, city, neighbourhood and home” was developed by the secretariat in cooperation with the Committee Bureau.

#### Activity impacts/outputs and dissemination of results

5. The following impacts/outputs were observed as a result of work in affordable housing:

(a) The results and report of the survey on housing affordability challenges, policies and priorities will inform planning of the Committee’s future activities on policy advice and capacity-building in affordable housing;

(b) The #Housing2030 study report will be published and presented at the Committee session in October 2021. It will facilitate the exchange and dissemination of “good practices” in improving housing affordability among countries and cities of the ECE region;

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<sup>1</sup> For detailed information on meetings and publications, please see the web page at <https://unece.org/housing>.

(c) The draft Regional Action Plan is expected to be endorsed by the ECE Ministerial Meeting on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management (Geneva, 6 and 7 October 2021). The Regional Action Plan is expected to support governments in the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis through the sharing of examples and good practices in facilitating investments and promoting the “building back better” approach.

6. The following dissemination tools were used to promote the work in housing:

- (a) Podcast “Your #Housing2030 Making a House a Home”<sup>2</sup> series;
- (b) #Housing2030 website - housing2030.org.

7. The following housing policy-related events took place online:

(a) Panel discussion “Improving Housing Affordability in the UNECE Region”<sup>3</sup>, 7 October 2020;

(b) Workshop “Climate-Neutral Housing Construction and Renovation”<sup>4</sup>, organized in cooperation with the city of Glasgow, 9 November 2020;

(c) Workshop “Housing Governance and Regulation Towards Housing Affordability”<sup>5</sup> focused on housing affordability challenges in South-Eastern Europe, organized in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning of Slovenia, 23 and 24 February 2021;

(d) Sub-regional workshop “Policies for housing affordability in Russia and CIS”<sup>6</sup>, 10 March 2021;

(e) Workshop “Shaping Investment Pathways to Deliver Affordable Housing”<sup>7</sup>, organized in cooperation with the Housing Agency of Ireland, 14 April 2021.

## **B. Recovering back better: building urban economic resilience during and after the COVID-19 pandemic**

8. At its eighty-first session in 2020, the Committee “welcomed the activities of the secretariat regarding supporting the response to COVID-19 at city level and building urban economic resilience, and requested the Bureau to formulate relevant proposals for the continuation of these activities as part of the programme of work for 2021, as appropriate” (ECE/HBP/206, para. 59). In response to the Committee’s request and under the guidance of the Committee Bureau the secretariat launched activities to support cities to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and build resilience.

### **1. Project on “Post COVID-19 Recovery in Informal Settlements in the ECE Region”**

9. The project is intended to strengthen the capacity of national and local governments in ECE countries to address the needs of the most vulnerable population groups living in informal settlements. This project was implemented in 2020 and resulted in the development of the COVID-19 Recovery Action Plan for Informal Settlements for countries in the ECE region. It also led to the development of concrete recommendations for the four pilot cities –

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.housing2030.org/podcasts>

<sup>3</sup> <https://unece.org/info/Housing-and-Land-Management/events/348410>

<sup>4</sup> <https://unece.org/housing-and-land-management/events/online-workshop-climate-change-environmental-and-health-impacts>

<sup>5</sup> <https://unece.org/info/Housing-and-Land-Management/events/351470>

<sup>6</sup> <https://unece.org/info/Housing-and-Land-Management/events/353358>

<sup>7</sup> <https://unece.org/info/Housing-and-Land-Management/events/354358>

Tirana (Albania), Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), Podgorica (Montenegro) and Skopje (North Macedonia) - to upgrade informal settlements and support recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Implementation of the project was supported by the funds of the ECE Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation.

**2. “Rapid response” project on building urban economic resilience during and after the COVID-19 pandemic**

10. This project is being implemented in 2020 and 2021 by the five Regional Commissions of the United Nations in cooperation with UN-Habitat and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and with the support of the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) programme. The project focuses on strengthening the capacities of local governments to promote urban resilience in 16 cities globally, including cities in three countries in the ECE region – Tirana (Albania), Bishkek, (Kyrgyzstan) and Kharkiv (Ukraine). In 2020-2021, reports with the assessment of urban economic resilience in the three pilot cities and a “Regional Policy Brief: Building Urban Economic Resilience during and after COVID-19 in the UNECE Region” were prepared; a global and a series of local capacity building workshops were organized.

Activity impacts/outputs and dissemination of results

11. The following impacts/outputs were observed as a result of work on COVID-19 recovery:

(a) Development of the COVID-19 Recovery Action Plan for Informal Settlements for countries in the ECE region;

(b) Increased capacity of national, subnational and local governments and concrete recommendations for the four pilot cities for upgrading the informal settlements and supporting the cities in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in Tirana, Bishkek, Podgorica and Skopje;

(c) Assessment of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economic development of the pilot cities – Bishkek, Kharkiv and Tirana – and development of local strategies to overcome the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic;

(d) Increased capacity of city governments to address the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic through the development of a global urban economic resilience diagnostic and planning tool for cities and an exchange of good practices in developing and implementing their immediate response and recovery plans;

(e) The implemented activities will ultimately contribute to planning for more resilience in cities and local governments to better withstand shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic and urban systems’ stresses that are likely to reoccur in a predominantly urban world. Implementation considers linkages with dimensions of urban resilience that are of specific relevance to the different social, spatial and governance contexts of each region.

12. The following dissemination tools were used to promote the work on urban resilience and COVID-19 recovery:

(a) A dedicated project website at [www.urbaneconomicresilience.org](http://www.urbaneconomicresilience.org);

(b) A video that introduces the project - “Building Urban Economic Resilience during and after COVID-19”<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://youtu.be/326fJBdEaVw>

13. The following publications related to work on urban resilience and COVID-19 recovery were published:

(a) COVID-19 Recovery Action Plan for Informal Settlements in the ECE Region<sup>9</sup>;

(b) Regional Policy Brief: Building Urban Economic Resilience during and after COVID-19 in the UNECE Region.

14. The following events related to urban resilience and COVID-19 recovery were organized online:

(a) Training workshop “Understanding urban economic resilience in the time of COVID-19”, 15 and 17 December 2020;

(b) Workshop “Kharkiv: Urban Economic and Financial Recovery and Resilience in the Time of COVID-19”, 23 December 2020;

(c) Workshop “Tirana: Urban Economic and Financial Recovery and Resilience in the Time of COVID-19”, 15 February 2021;

(d) Workshop “Bishkek: Towards Smart Sustainable City and its post COVID-19 recovery”, 10 March 2021.

### **C. Sustainable Development Goals Voluntary Local Reviews: measuring progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals at the local level**

15. The secretariat, in cooperation with the municipalities in Norway and the Geneva UN Charter Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Development Goal City Transition in Trondheim and other relevant stakeholders, developed Guidelines for the use of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in the preparation of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs). The draft Guidelines are expected to be endorsed by the Committee at its eighty-second session.

#### Activity impacts and dissemination of results

16. Expected impact from the work on VLRs is related to the development of the Guidelines, which will provide cities with a standardized approach to the review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, based on the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Smart Sustainable Cities (SSC).

17. The following events related to VLRs were organized:

(a) Pre-meeting to the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region titled “Local Governments: The Role of SDG Voluntary Local Reviews”<sup>10</sup>, 11 March 2021;

(b) Online side-event to the 2021 High-Level Political Forum titled “Building cities’ resilience for socio-economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and achievement of the SDGs” on addressing the economic and financial consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in cities through recovery planning and Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs), organized in cooperation with the Albanian Ministry of Finance and Economy, the five United Nations Regional Commissions, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat),

<sup>9</sup> <https://unece.org/iu/documents/2021/05/working-documents/draft-covid-19-recovery-action-plan-informal-settlements-ece>

<sup>10</sup> <https://unece.org/info/Housing-and-Land-Management/events/352874>

United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), University of Geneva and Geneva Cities Hub, 8 July 2021;

(c) Online side-event to the 2021 High-Level Political Forum titled “VNR Lab 2021: Enhancing the dialogue between the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) and the Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs)”, organized by UN DESA in cooperation with the five United Nations Regional Commissions, 12 July 2021.

## **D. Implementation of the United for Smart Sustainable Cities program**

18. The United for Smart Sustainable Cities (U4SSC) initiative is a global platform dedicated to supporting cities worldwide in becoming smarter and more sustainable. It is working to develop strategic guidelines and measurement tools to assist cities in implementing the SDGs. The ECE Forests, Land and Housing Division, in cooperation with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and UN-Habitat, coordinates activities of U4SSC. The U4SSC membership includes 14 United Nations organizations and programmes.

19. In the framework of the U4SSC initiative, the Committee secretariat conducted evaluation of performance of cities using the KPIs for SSC and based on the evaluations, prepared City Profiles and organized capacity-building activities to support the cities to become smart and sustainable. The following activities were implemented to promote smart sustainable cities:

### **1. U4SSC thematic group on Innovative Financing**

20. ECE coordinated the U4SSC thematic group on Innovative Financing within which the “Compendium of Practices on Innovative Financing” was elaborated. The Compendium will be used to support capacity-building activities in cities in the ECE region as part of the training materials.

### **2. UNDA 12th tranche project “Smart Sustainable Cities for the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda in the UNECE Region”**

21. The project is implemented jointly with UN-Habitat in 2020-2023 and supports transition of selected beneficiary cities – Grodno (Belarus), Nur-Sultan (Kazakhstan), Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), Tbilisi (Georgia), and Podgorica (Montenegro) - towards smartness and sustainability with a view to accelerate implementation of SDG 11 and other urban-related SDGs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In 2020-2021, draft Smart Sustainable City Profiles were completed for the cities of Bishkek and Nur-Sultan.

### **3. UNDA 12th tranche project “Inter-regional cooperation for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda”**

22. Through this project, the five Regional Commissions and UN-Habitat support national governments and selected cities in consolidating their role in achieving sustainable development; increasing policy coherence among member States across the regions; and promoting improved capacity of institutions and “human agents of change” in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. This requires a greater integration of various dimensions (regional, national, local) of the programme through a variety of activities, including: (i) building the capacity of national-and local-level decision makers in the implementation, monitoring and reporting of the New Urban Agenda and urban SDGs; (ii) establishing mechanisms for sharing of information and successful practices; and (iii) facilitating an inclusive process of knowledge generation and dissemination through regional

monitoring and reporting on sustainable urbanization. In the ECE region, the city of Almaty (Kazakhstan) was selected as the beneficiary of the project.

#### 4. “Improved sustainable urban development in Norwegian cities” project

23. This project is implemented in 2020-2022. It supported the evaluation of performance of cities in Norway against the KPIs for SSC and the development of Smart Sustainable Cities Profiles as well as the dissemination of the experiences of Norway in the preparation of VLRs, including coordinated approaches in preparation of VLRs, VNRs and SDG budgeting.

##### Activity impacts/outputs and dissemination of results

24. The following impacts/outputs were observed as a result of the work on the implementation of the U4SSC programme:

(a) Smart Sustainable Cities Profiles were prepared between 2020 and 2021 for five cities in Norway – Aalesund, Asker, Baerum, Rana and Trondheim – within the project “Improved sustainable urban development in Norwegian cities” supported by the Government of Norway. In these City Profiles, the Norwegian cities provided information on and best practices in acceleration of SDG implementation and promoting alignment of policy and budgets with SDGs;

(b) Smart Sustainable Cities Profiles were prepared and KPI evaluations were conducted in 2020-2021 for the cities of Nur-Sultan (Kazakhstan), Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), and Podgorica (Montenegro) as part of the UNDA twelfth tranche project “Smart Sustainable Cities for the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda in the UNECE Region”. The KPI evaluation for the city of Almaty was conducted within the project “Inter-regional cooperation for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda”. Improved capacities of local and national government officials in these five countries to develop and implement sustainable urban policies result from: (i) evaluation of cities’ performance and (ii) capacity building activities to promote evidence-based policies and the vertical and horizontal coordination between different government agencies and with participation of cities’ inhabitants.

25. The following dissemination tools were used to promote the work on smart sustainable cities:

(a) Video on the People-Smart Sustainable Cities publication<sup>11</sup>;

(b) Video on Circular Cities at the 69th Session of the Commission<sup>12</sup>;

(c) *URBAN Matters* – a podcast series on sustainable cities.<sup>13</sup> The 10-episode podcast series presents interviews of mayors and urban experts on how cities are rising to challenges, and how they can join forces to share ideas and address pandemic-related challenges.

26. The following publications related to smart sustainable cities were published:

(a) The *Guide to Circular Cities* contains a circular city implementation framework that is designed to improve circularity in cities and support stakeholders in implementing circular actions. Seventeen case studies illustrate the implementation of the Guide which was published by ITU in May 2020;

(b) The *Guidelines on tools and mechanisms to finance smart sustainable cities projects* provide practical recommendations for city governments on how to develop projects

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOISYo2GfQA>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9k2umHL8KU>

<sup>13</sup> <https://unece.org/housing/urban-matters-podcast>

that are easily understood by and attractive to potential investors. They also explain what types of investors exist and how to make a sustainable city development plan attractive to them;

(c) The *Compendium of Innovative Financing for Smart Cities Projects* uses the People-first Public-Private Partnerships (People-first PPPs) evaluation methodology to ascertain that projects are SDG-compliant and inspires other urban projects in ECE member States;

(d) *Smart Sustainable Cities Profile: Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan*, presents the outcomes of the evaluation of Nur-Sultan against the KPIs for SSC, and proposes actions for the city to make progress towards achieving the SDGs;

(e) *People-Smart Sustainable Cities* highlights the capacities of different cities to cope with crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. Both the pandemic and the economic crises caused by lockdown measures have disproportionately affected different cities as well as different groups of the population.

27. The following events related to smart sustainable cities were organized:

(a) Online workshop “Toolbox for formulating investment proposals for sustainable smart city projects” to support the implementation of the project “Smart Sustainable Cities for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda in the UNECE Region”, 12 April 2021, Tbilisi;

(b) Online panel discussion “Circular Cities: Local action towards a circular economy” organized as part of the 69<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on promoting circular economy and sustainable use of natural resources in the UNECE region, 21 April 2021;

(c) Online side event to the Fifth International PPP Forum “Building Back Better through People-first Public-Private Partnerships” – “Innovative Financing Instruments for Smart Sustainable Cities” - 26 April 2021;

(d) Online meetings of the U4SSC Thematic Group “Economic recovery in cities and urban resilience building in the time of COVID-19”

(e) Online local and subregional capacity building events and expert group meetings were organized within the UNDA projects.

## **E. Promoting multilevel governance through the United Nations Forum of Mayors**

28. Building on the experiences of the 2019 Day of Cities which gathered Mayors from the European region to share best practices and define a new vision for urban sustainability, ECE convened in October 2020 the first ever United Nations Forum of Mayors. Its overall theme was “City Action for a Resilient Future: Strengthening Local Government Preparedness and Response to Emergencies and the Impact of Disasters and Climate Change”. The Forum offered a multilateral platform for cities to engage with States and international organizations and to present their creative solutions and specific actions to make cities resilient, focusing particularly on COVID-19 and climate change.

### Activity impacts and dissemination of results

29. The following impacts were observed as a result of the work on the Forum of Mayors:

(a) Outcome document: The Forum culminated in the adoption of the Geneva Declaration of Mayors, wherein mayors in the UNECE region undertook to, inter alia,



strengthen the resilience of their cities, make them greener, guarantee sustainable urban transport and affordable housing for all, and make their cities more equitable and inclusive;

(b) Effective mobilization of city representatives: The Forum had 36 speakers, including 27 mayors and six deputy mayors;

(c) Wide participation: The Forum had over 1,000 viewers from 65 countries on UN WebTV;

(d) New stakeholders: The Forum created a wide network of mayors and city contacts who are now actively participating in the work of ECE;

(e) Broad media coverage: 40 articles in nine languages had an approximate total reach of 12.5 million, with around 479,000 reach via Twitter alone.

30. The following dissemination tools were used to promote the Forum of Mayors:

(a) Video on the 2020 Forum of Mayors<sup>14</sup>;

(b) Video on the upcoming 2022 Forum of Mayors<sup>15</sup>.

31. The *Geneva Declaration of Mayors*<sup>16</sup> was published.

## F. Carbon-neutral and energy-efficient housing

32. The Joint Task Force joins two ECE committees – Committee on Sustainable Energy and Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management - to conduct activities related to energy efficiency in buildings. A workshop was organized and a publication was produced.

### Activity impacts/outputs and dissemination of results

33. The following impacts/outputs are observed from the work on carbon-neutral and energy-efficient housing:

(a) An online workshop "Climate change, environmental and health impacts on housing affordability", 10 November 2020<sup>17</sup>;

(b) A publication related to carbon-neutral and energy-efficient housing was published. The report *Promoting Energy Efficiency Standards and Technologies to Enhance Energy Efficiency in Buildings* includes a gap analysis of the status of energy efficiency standards, an assessment of available technologies in relation to the existing standards, mapping of existing technologies in buildings in relation to the existing standards, and a compendium of best practices of standards and technologies for energy efficiency in buildings.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=seNw5ZHQRBw>

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKh-zp\\_J9PA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKh-zp_J9PA)

<sup>16</sup> <https://unece.org/housing/publications/geneva-declaration-mayors-2020>

<sup>17</sup> <https://unece.org/info/Housing-and-Land-Management/events/348328>

## J. Geneva UN Charter Centres for Sustainable Housing and Smart Sustainable Cities

34. To support the implementation of the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing, endorsed by all member States in 2015, eight Centres of Excellence have been established<sup>18</sup>. At national and local level, the Centres provide capacity-building and training, analyse housing and urban development policies, and conduct outreach activities to promote the Charter. They further engage in a range of activities on the ground within their specialization and expertise.

### Activity impacts/outputs and dissemination of results

35. The following impacts/outputs were observed as a result of the activities of the Geneva UN Charter Centres for Sustainable Housing and Smart Sustainable Cities:

(a) The Centre of Excellence in Estonia developed a training curricula on the management of multiapartment buildings for housing managers in countries with economies in transition and on facility services for condominium management, and organized trainings for housing managers in Estonia as well as online workshops with the participation of housing managers from Bulgaria, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine;

(b) The Centre of Excellence in Norway supported the application of the KPIs for SSC to evaluate the performance of 17 Norwegian municipalities and supported the secretariat in the development of draft regional Guidelines on the development of VLRs;

(c) The Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Finance for Cities and Infrastructure in Italy created a multi-lingual portal serving as a reference point and a service for government officials, researchers and young students of all countries containing information material and case studies useful for the realisation of new “smart cities”;

(d) The Centres of Excellence in Spain and the United Kingdom played a crucial role in the elaboration of the text (the centre in Glasgow, United Kingdom) and of the visuals (the Norman Foster Foundation in Spain) of the Regional Action Plan to be endorsed by the ECE Ministerial Meeting in October 2021.

36. The following activities related to the Geneva UN Charter Centres were organized:

(a) Supported organization of the “Climate change, environmental and health impacts on housing affordability” workshop within the initiative “Housing2030 – Improving Housing Affordability in the UNECE region”, 9 November 2020;

(b) Conference “Financing the city of the future: UNECE and LIUC launch the new Centre ExSUF”, 24 June 2021;

(c) Launch events for the Centre of Excellence on Sustainable and Resilient Settlements in Albania and the Centre of Excellence on Youth Homelessness Prevention in Canada, June 2021;

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<sup>18</sup> The following Centres of Excellence have been established: (i) Centre of Excellence on Sustainable and Resilient Settlements in Tirana, Albania; (ii) Centre of Excellence on Smart Sustainable Cities in Glasgow, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; (iii) Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Housing in Tallinn, Estonia; (iv) Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Development Goal City Transition in Trondheim, Norway; (v) Centre of Excellence on Smart Sustainable Cities and Sustainable Urban Development at the University of Geneva, Switzerland; (vi) Toronto Centre of Excellence on Youth Homelessness Prevention at York University, Canada; (vii) Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Finance for Infrastructure and Smart Cities at LIUC – Cattaneo University, Italy; (viii) Centre of Excellence on the Forum of Mayors and Sustainable Urban Development at the Norman Foster Foundation, Spain.

(d) A meeting of the network of the Geneva UN Charter Centres of Excellence was held in June 2021 to welcome the new centres and discuss progress updates and activities for the coming year.

(e) A follow-up meeting of the network was held in September 2021 to further discuss possible synergies between the centres and to prepare for the presentation to the Committee on 8 October 2021.

## H. Activities of the Real Estate Market Advisory Group

37. The Real Estate Market (REM) Advisory Group continued to contribute to the work of the Committee on affordable and energy-efficient housing, smart sustainable cities and land administration. Following the endorsement of the high-level international standards on fire safety: “International Fire Safety Standards: Common Principles” by the Committee as ECE standard, the REM Advisory Group supported the International Fire Safety Standards (IFSS) Coalition in the implementation of these standards.

38. The report *Sharing Economy in the Housing Sector in the UNECE Region* was finalized.

### Activity impacts/outputs and dissemination of results

39. The following impacts/outputs were observed as a result of work of the REM Advisory Group:

- (a) REM provided inputs into the # Housing2030 Initiative study;
- (b) REM supported the implementation of the IFSS standards;
- (c) A publication related to the activities of the REM Advisory Group was published - the *Sharing Economy in the Housing Sector in the UNECE Region* report.

40. The following events related to activities of the REM Advisory Group were organized:

- (a) Group Annual meeting of the UNECE REM Advisory Group, 5 November 2020;
- (b) Online workshop “Safety at Home” in fire safety in buildings and safety at home for the elderly, 23 June 2021.

## I. Land administration and management

41. To assist member States in improving land administration and land management, the Working Party’s activities promote security of tenure and improvement of cadastres and land registries, including institutional arrangements for land administration. This cluster addressed land registration, e-governance, land tenure, spatial information and cadastres. An emphasis was placed on issues of innovation, accelerated digitalization and capacity building in land administration. Possible impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the land administration sector were also assessed.

### 1. Twelfth Session of the Working Party on Land Administration (WPLA)

42. The 12<sup>th</sup> Session of the Working Party on Land Administration held on 3 May to 1 June 2021 provided an international platform for exchange on issues related to land administration and management. Moreover, the Working Party considered the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on recovery opportunities, and the challenges that emerged in land administration. It discussed how the pandemic accelerated digitalization and the use of new technologies, processes and business models in land administration. The Working Party also

discussed the intermediate results of the *Scenario Study on Future Land Administration* and endorsed the updated studies *Public-private partnerships in land administration* and the *Study on Fraud in Land Administration Systems*.

43. The Working Party reviewed and endorsed its programme of work for 2022-2023 and elected its Bureau for the period 2021-2023.

#### Activity impacts/outputs and dissemination of results

44. The following impacts/outputs were observed as a result of the work on land administration and management:

(a) The “Scenario Study on Future Land Administration” serves as an instrument to initiate a continuous dialogue among and within national land administration authorities and to guide them in the development of long-term strategies for the sustainability of their work and services;

(b) The Working Party formulated a list of key effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on recovery opportunities, and of the challenges that emerged in land administration.

45. The following publications related to land administration and management were approved to be published as official publications:

(a) Scenario Study on Future Land Administration;

(b) COVID-19 Recovery Action Plan for Informal Settlements in the ECE Region.

46. The following videos were produced to disseminate information on the Working Party activities:

(a) Video on the 12th Session of the Working Party on Land Administration<sup>19</sup>;

(b) Video on the COVID-19 Recovery Action Plan for Informal Settlements in the ECE Region<sup>20</sup>;

(c) Video on the Scenario Study on Future Land Administration<sup>21</sup>;

(d) Video on Public-Private Partnership in Land Administration<sup>22</sup>.

47. The following events related to land administration and management were organized:

(a) Online workshop “Formalizing the Informal to Protect Residents in Informal Settlements”, in cooperation with the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG), 17 June 2020;

(b) Joint WPLA-Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) webinar “Accelerated Digitalisation: The impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Land Administration sector”, 22 March 2021;

(c) Joint WPLA-FAO webinar “COVID-19 and Property Markets: How is the pandemic affecting property markets in the UNECE region?”, 15 April 2021;

(d) Joint WPLA-FAO webinar “NSDI, geospatial data and technology: The role of geospatial and cadastre agencies in the COVID-19 pandemic response”, 11 May 2021.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://youtu.be/0FkYtUR1Rb0>

<sup>20</sup> <https://youtu.be/oStnc8FE334>

<sup>21</sup> [https://youtu.be/nsfD3mO\\_y1U](https://youtu.be/nsfD3mO_y1U)

<sup>22</sup> <https://youtu.be/3eoYNwflfQ4>

## **J. Technical cooperation activities**

48. Regular cooperation of the five United Nations Regional Commissions and UN-Habitat is organized within two projects: “Inter-regional cooperation for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda” supported by the UNDA 12th tranche and “Building urban economic resilience during and after COVID-19” supported by the “rapid response” funds of the UNDA. UNCDF is also a partner in the UNDA 13th tranche project. The UNDA 12th tranche project “Smart Sustainable Cities for the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda in the UNECE Region” was implemented by ECE in cooperation with UN-Habitat.

## **K. Cooperation with other international organizations**

49. The 2020 roundtable “In focus: SDG 11” took place on 5 October 2020 in cooperation with the Geneva Cities Hub back-to-back with the first Forum of Mayors and the eighty-first Committee session. This roundtable discussion provides a platform for dialogue of multiple United Nations agencies and city networks on the successes and challenges in the implementation of SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and other urban-related SDGs.

50. Under the Memorandum of Understanding on Land Administration and Management with FAO, the Working Party is collaborating under a bi-annual cooperation plan not only with FAO but also with the World Bank and the European Commission Joint Research Centre. The Working Party regularly cooperates on the organization of joint events and studies with other international organizations involved in land administration in the ECE region, including UN-Habitat, United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM), the European Union Infrastructure for Spatial Information in Europe (EU INSPIRE) Directive, the European Land Information Service, EuroGeographics, and others.

## **II. Major activities planned for 2022**

51. The Committee will continue to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the achievement of the housing, urban and land-related Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 11 “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” and its targets: “(11.1.) Ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services”; “(11.3) Enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanisation and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries”; “(11.6) Reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management”; and “(11.7) Provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces”.

52. The Committee will support the implementation of the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing and the Geneva Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Housing and Urban Development (2017).

53. Due to its cross-cutting nature, the Committee will also contribute to the achievement of other SDGs, particularly Goals 3, 6, 7, 9, 13, 15 and 17. Due consideration will be given to the integration of climate change mitigation and adaptation and disaster risk reduction and prevention measures into national policies, strategies and planning in housing, urban development and land management. In attaining its objective, the subprogramme will continue building on the cross-sectoral collaboration with other ECE sectoral Committees engaged in the ECE nexus areas.

54. Following the expected endorsement of the “Place and Life in the ECE – A Regional Action Plan 2030: Tackling challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic, climate and housing emergencies in region, city, neighbourhood and home” at the ECE Ministerial Meeting “Affordable, adequate, and resilient housing in liveable cities, including cities which face extreme weather conditions” (Geneva, 6-7 October 2021), the Committee will support implementation of the Regional Action Plan.

### **A. Affordable, accessible, adequate and healthy housing**

55. The Committee will continue its engagement in the #Housing2030 initiative. As part of the Initiative and in cooperation with its partners, Housing Europe and UN-Habitat, it will develop thematic studies, organize regional and subregional policy workshops and capacity building events on one or more of the four #Housing2030 topics: (a) housing governance and regulation; (b) access to finance and funding; (c) access and availability of land for housing construction; and (d) climate-neutral housing construction and renovation.

56. The Committee will also collect experiences and best practices at national and local levels and disseminate those through the #Housing2030 online platform of best practices at [www.housing2030.org](http://www.housing2030.org).

57. The Committee will continue reviewing housing policies at national level, including through the preparation of country profiles on housing, urban development and land management. In 2022, subject to availability of extrabudgetary financial resources, the Committee will work on a Country Profile for Albania.

58. The Committee will continue its communication activities: podcasts, videos and thematic articles and the social media.

59. The Committee will work with the network of Charter Centres of Excellence to implement the Regional Action Plan.

#### Activity impacts/outputs and dissemination of results

60. The #Housing2030 thematic studies, regional and subregional policy workshops and dissemination of the best practices through the #Housing2030 online platform are expected to support building capacity of national and local authorities, and other stakeholders for the development and implementation of housing affordability policies.

### **B. Carbon-neutral and energy-efficient housing**

61. The Committee will support efforts of national and local governments to promote decarbonisation of the housing stock.

62. The Committee will work together with the Committee on Sustainable Energy on activities included in the work plan of the Joint Task Force on Energy Efficiency Standards in Buildings.

63. The Committee will organize national, subregional and regional capacity building workshops jointly with the REM and partner organizations, including UN Environment Programme (UNEP), UN-Habitat, Housing Europe and Habitat for Humanity, based on the ECE Guidelines on the Management and Ownership of Condominium Housing (2019)<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> <https://unece.org/info/Housing-and-Land-Management/pub/2920>

Activity impacts/outputs and dissemination of results

64. Organization of the workshops is expected to support building capacity of local and national authorities and stakeholders to promote energy efficiency in buildings and decarbonisation of the housing stock.

## **C. Recovering back better: building urban economic resilience during and after COVID-19**

### **1. Implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Informal Settlements**

65. The COVID-19 Recovery Action Plan for Informal Settlements in the ECE Region (ECE/HBP/2021/3) targets national and local governments in the ECE region. It provides a comprehensive list of goals, targets and actions to help mitigate and/or prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is also designed to help the ECE region to recover better, and to achieve greater resilience against future pandemic risks.

66. The Recovery Action Plan will be disseminated to relevant stakeholders through the organization of at least two subregional workshops and local online trainings with the pilot cities. In addition, subject to availability of financial resources, at least one pilot project on addressing challenges of informal settlements will start in the City of Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

### **2. Support efforts of local governments across the Economic Commission for Europe region in developing and implementing their immediate response and elaborating recovery plans for the COVID-19 pandemic**

67. The UNDA Rapid Response project “Building Urban Economic Resilience during and after COVID-19” will be finalized at the end of 2021. The Regional Policy Brief “Building Urban Economic Resilience during and after COVID-19 in the UNECE Region” (ECE/HBP/2021/Inf. 5) and the three local action plans to address economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic” for the project pilot cities will be finalized and widely disseminated through events and social media. An online capacity building programme will be developed for local government officials as well as university students.

68. ECE will look for opportunities to engage more cities and countries in similar activities and will look for more funds for the implementation of this important project which will contribute to planning for more resilience in cities and for local governments to better withstand shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Activity impacts/outputs and dissemination of results

69. The following impacts are expected to be observed from the work on urban resilience and recovery after COVID-19:

- (a) Creation of an online training programme that will enable participants to understand the concepts of urban economic resilience and learn how to diagnose and plan for resilience in their cities, with a focus on recovery and rebuilding from the COVID-19 pandemic;
- (b) Development of economic recovery and resilience strategies for three cities;
- (c) Advice on possible funding sources and financial support for economic development and infrastructure projects supporting urban economic recovery;
- (d) Publishing of regional policy brief on urban economic recovery and resilience in the respective geographic areas of each Regional Commission.

70. The following dissemination tools will be used to promote the work on urban resilience and recovery after COVID-19: Recorded interviews with officials from the municipalities on the impacts of COVID-19 and implementation of the diagnostic and planning tool.

71. The following publications related to urban resilience and recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic will be published: City Reports for Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), Kharkiv (Ukraine) and Tirana (Albania) including the economic recovery and resilience local action plans for each city.

## **D. Sustainable Development Goals Voluntary Local Reviews: measuring progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals at the local level**

### **1. Testing ECE regional guidelines work in implementing Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs)**

72. VLRs provide an assessment of the progress towards achieving the SDGs at the local level. They increase the local ownership of SDGs and improve the engagement of local governments in the preparation of the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) and other national processes for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

73. Following the expected endorsement by the Committee at its eighty-second session of the ECE Guidelines for the development of Voluntary Local Reviews in the ECE Region (ECE/HBP/2021/4), subject to availability of funding, the Committee will be testing guidelines in the interested cities. It will also work in cooperation with the Centres of Excellence in Geneva, Switzerland and Trondheim, Norway to further develop a detailed guide for the implementation of the VLR Regional Guidelines.

### **2. Promoting evidence-based policies to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at city level and implementation of the U4SSC programme**

74. The Committee will continue its activities to promote evidence-based housing and urban development policies at city level through the evaluation of cities' performance using the KPIs for SSC, preparation of City Profiles based on the evaluation, and capacity-building activities to support the cities to become smart and sustainable. Under the UNDA 12th tranche project "Sustainable Smart Cities with Innovative Financing", Smart Sustainable Cities Profiles in the project's six pilot cities - Grodno (Belarus), Almaty and Nur-Sultan (Kazakhstan), Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), Tbilisi (Georgia) and Podgorica (Montenegro) will be prepared.

### **3. Innovative financing for urban infrastructure, including housing**

75. Following the publishing of the "Guidelines on tools and mechanisms to finance smart sustainable cities", the "U4SSC Compendium of Practices on Innovative Financing" will be finalized. These two publications will be adapted for use as training materials to provide support to city governments in the ECE region in finding investments for their urban development projects.

#### Activity impacts and dissemination of results

76. Implementation of the listed activities is expected to support further localisation of the SDGs and building urban resilience in cities.



## **E. Promoting multilevel governance through the second United Nations Forum of Mayors**

77. The Second Forum of Mayors will be held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland on 4-5 April 2022. The Forum will be held back-to-back with the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, to link local and national action in support of the achievement of the SDGs.

### Activity impacts/outputs and dissemination of results

78. The event will provide a platform for Mayors from the UNECE region to exchange information on experiences and best practices on city level policies and practices. Organization of the Forum of Mayors will support a regional exchange of experiences and best practices in the localisation of the SDGs, recovery from the COVID-19 pandemics and strengthening urban resilience.

79. The following dissemination tools will be used to promote the second Forum of Mayors:

- (a) Dedicated website at <https://forumofmayors.unece.org> to provide information on previous meetings – Day of Cities (2019) and the first Forum of Mayors (2020) – and the upcoming 2022 Forum of Mayors, and to inform on relevant projects, good practices, events, guidance documents and publications;
- (b) ECE and its partners' social media platforms;
- (c) Video on the 2022 Forum of Mayors<sup>24</sup>.

## **F. Activities of the Geneva UN Charter Centres for Sustainable Housing and Smart Sustainable Cities**

80. Concerning the network of Centres of Excellence, the secretariat will continue implementing the recommendations of the evaluation conducted in 2019 to increase overall effectiveness and efficiency of operations of the Centres. This will include strengthening the networking between the Centres by setting up a shared online space for exchange of information and organizing biannual meetings (online or in-person) and fostering the exchange of best practices between the Centres. In addition, it is planned to identify opportunities for joint fundraising.

### Activity impacts/outputs and dissemination of results

81. Through strengthening the network of the Centres, proposals for new innovative joint activities to support the implementation of the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing and the Regional Action Plan, will be developed.

## **G. Activities of the Real Estate Market Advisory Group**

82. The REM Advisory Group will continue to support the Committee in its activities on affordable housing; decarbonisation of the housing stock, including energy efficiency in buildings and energy poverty; use of land in urban contexts; innovative financing of urban infrastructure; bringing brownfield land into use; revitalization of neighbourhoods; finding new uses for old buildings and infrastructure; and other topics within the Committee's mandate.

<sup>24</sup> [https://youtu.be/aKh-zp\\_J9PA](https://youtu.be/aKh-zp_J9PA)

Activity impacts/outputs and dissemination of results

83. The REM Advisory Group webinars on affordable housing; decarbonisation of the housing stock; use of land in urban contexts; innovative financing of urban infrastructure; and other topics; are expected to support strengthening capacity of national and local governments, and other stakeholders for the implementation of the Geneva Charter on Sustainable Housing and the Regional Action Plan.

**H. Land administration and management**

84. In order to continue to assist member States in improving land administration and land management and promote security of tenure and improvement of cadastres and land registries, including institutional arrangements for land administration, activities for 2022 will be focused on accelerated digitalization, legal barriers to data, security of tenure and capacity building in land administration and notwithstanding monitoring and assessing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the land administration sector.

85. Dissemination tools will be developed in order to train and assist in the implementation of the COVID-19 Recovery Action Plan for Informal Settlements in the ECE region.

86. The COVID-19 Recovery Action Plan for Informal Settlements in the ECE Region will be printed in 2022.

87. The following events related to land administration and management will be organized:

(a) Sub-regional workshop on land-use planning and industrial safety for South-Eastern Europe, 27 to 29 October 2021;

(b) Workshop on education in land administration and geospatial management is to be held on 13 October 2021;

(c) A webinar series in 2021 and in 2022 focusing on accelerated digitalization, data interoperability and privacy and other topics identified by the Working Party.

Activity impacts/outputs and dissemination of results

88. The Working Party planned activities will further support strengthening technical capacity of the land administration authorities in the ECE region.

**III. Resources for the implementation of the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management activities in 2021-2022**

89. Many of the activities mentioned, especially those providing technical assistance to countries, are not covered by funds of the ECE Regular Budget. Some of the planned and listed activities will be implemented with the support of the ECE Regular Budget, budget of the UNDA projects, the Regional Programme for Technical Cooperation (RPTC) and extrabudgetary projects funded in 2021-2022 by the Governments of Czechia, Norway, Slovenia, Switzerland and the Russian Federation.

90. Additional extrabudgetary funds will be required for the implementation of activities under the 2022 Programme of Work of the Committee.

91. The Housing and Land Management Unit is comprised of four regular budget staff. This includes two professional staff: one P4 Environmental Affairs Officer (Secretary to the Committee) and one P2 Associate Economic Affairs Officer (Secretary to the Working Party) and two general service staff: one G6 Programme Assistant and one G6 Statistical Assistant.

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