United Nations Habitat Assembly of the
United Nations Human Settlements Programme
First session
Nairobi, 27–31 May 2019

Draft proceedings of the United Nations Habitat Assembly of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme at its first session

Addendum

Annex [ ]

Summary by the President of the UN-Habitat Assembly of the high-level debate

1.   Ministers and other high-level representatives of countries delivered statements addressing the overarching theme of the first session of the UN-Habitat Assembly, "Innovation for better quality of life in cities and communities", and the sub-theme, "Accelerated implementation of the New Urban Agenda towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals".

2.   General appreciation was expressed to the host country for its hospitality and to the Executive Director and her team for the organization of the session and the choice of the theme and sub-theme, which many representatives said was timely and relevant.

3.   Many representatives welcomed the new, more efficient and transparent governance structure of UN-Habitat, with some stressing the need for a gender focus, and said that their Governments fully supported the launch of a new strategic plan for the period 2020–2025 that could guide Member States in their efforts to implement the New Urban Agenda and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 11. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, described the first session of the UN-Habitat Assembly as an opportunity to exchange ideas and knowledge for the advancement of the New Urban Agenda, with others adding that it was also an opportunity to mobilize international support for innovative projects and institutional capacity-building to address the urgent needs of local populations. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, pointed out that those countries were making good progress in implementing the New Urban Agenda through multiple local partnerships and action plans, the development with UN-Habitat and other intergovernmental organizations of new definitions of human settlements, and efforts to foster city-to-city cooperation for the sharing of sustainable urban solutions.

4.   Most of the representatives who spoke drew attention to the major challenges posed by rapid urbanization, especially in developing countries, including extreme poverty, inequality, social exclusion, climate change, environmental degradation and ill-health, which called for bold, ambitious and creative action. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that those countries' actions focused on areas such as the circular economy, mobility, equal access to opportunities, and socially just and inclusive environmental transition. Many representatives, including some speaking on behalf of groups of countries, stressed the importance of urban development as a means of enabling cities to serve as engines of sustainable and inclusive growth and innovation, with several adding that it was key to maintaining peace and security. Some

representatives, however, pointed out that many countries were struggling to capitalize on that potential for want of the necessary knowledge and means, with one saying that UN-Habitat had a key role to play in capacity-building, providing technical expertise and facilitating the sharing of experience among urban centres. Several representatives of countries in post-conflict situations and confronted with mass movements of internally displaced populations and refugees from other war-torn countries drew attention to the particular challenges that such conditions posed to their social and economic stability and their capacity to provide adequate basic services.

5.   All the representatives who spoke highlighted the steps that Governments were taking to formulate and enact national urban planning policies, strategies and programmes aimed at the development of inclusive, safe and liveable citizen-centred urban environments, with a particular focus on, among other things, affordable housing for all; access to basic services, including clean water, sanitation and waste management systems; efficient mass transit systems; energy efficiency; sustainable consumption and production; enhanced resilience to climate change; and efforts to address environmental degradation. Specific measures cited included the adoption of national urban development policies that were linked to Sustainable Development Goal 11 and the New Urban Agenda; programmes for the construction of new cities; the establishment of frameworks to guide investment in socioeconomic infrastructure; the provision of assistance to local governments to improve living conditions in slums; the development of smart-city strategies and action plans, as well as innovative frameworks, including open data and tools relating to territorial development and new instruments and modelling tools; partnerships with research bodies and academia to promote green urban solutions and the role of regions and cities in achieving a climate neutral economy; sustainable land-use planning; initiatives to promote security of land tenure, with an emphasis on women's rights; studies to identify the linkages between rural and urban areas; and urban regeneration work, humanitarian assistance and other actions to address the specific needs of countries in seismic zones and regions affected by the impacts of climate change, natural disasters and mass migration, including that of post-conflict returnees.

6.   Most of the representatives who spoke expressed a commitment to continuing to participate in and contribute to UN-Habitat activities; many also expressed appreciation to the Programme for its continued support and assistance; and several said that they were ready to share with all interested parties their experience in dealing with the complexities involved in sustainable urban management.

7.   The representative of Kuwait announced that her Government would contribute $100,000 to the costs of ensuring the success of the first session of the UN-Habitat Assembly.

8.   The representative of Kenya said that his Government had contributed $500,000 to support the participation of least developed countries. He urged other Member States and partners to follow suit.

9.   [to be completed]

Annex [ ]

Summaries by the President of the UN-Habitat Assembly of the high-level dialogues

10.   At its 5th and 6th plenary meetings, on the morning and afternoon of Wednesday, 29 May 2019, the UN-Habitat Assembly held four high-level dialogues. The first dialogue, on the special theme for the session, "Innovation for better quality of life in cities and communities", was followed by three interactive dialogue sessions: a high-level policy segment on "Creating an enabling environment for innovation"; a cities and communities segment focused on "Implementation, partnerships and good practices"; and a business segment focused on "Investing in urban innovation".

I.   Dialogue on the special theme of the first session of the UN-Habitat Assembly, "Innovation for better quality of life in cities and communities"

11.   The dialogue on the special theme comprised introductory remarks by Ms. Martha Delgado Peralta (Mexico), President of the UN-Habitat Assembly; a presentation by Ms. Maimunah Mohamed Sharif, Executive Director of UN-Habitat, on the report on the dialogue on the special theme for the first session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly" (HSP/HA/1/6); and a high-level panel discussion featuring a panel of four Heads of State and Government, guided by a moderator, Ms. Julie Gichuru. The panellists for the session were Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta, President of Kenya; Mr. Salva Kiir Mayardit, President of South Sudan; Mr. Josaia V. Bainimarama, Prime Minister of Fiji; Mr. Maeen Abdulmalik Saeed, Prime Minister of Yemen; Ms. Marta Delgado Peralta (Mexico), President of the UN-Habitat Assembly; and Ms. Mohamed Sharif.

12.   Ms. Delgado Peralta said that the predominantly urban future forecast more than 30 years earlier by the Bruntland Report had arrived, bringing some of the predicted opportunities, but also challenges that were even greater than anticipated. Ideas, practices, modes of production and consumption, demographics, education and health had all changed for the better. Urban planning and the environment had, however, been neglected, as evidenced by the increasing impacts of climate change and social and economic inequalities. A culture of short-term benefits and unrestrained consumption and production were compromising planetary sustainability.

13.   Although some of the worst-case scenarios would indeed materialize, utopian dreams and aspirations could guide the path to the future as never before. The recent adoption of bold new global agendas had provided a vision for long-term prosperity for people and the planet. The New Urban Agenda had brought hope, guidance and inspiration on how cities should be planned and managed to achieve sustainable development.

14.   Cities were drivers of human and social progress, innovation, creativity and freedoms. Urbanization was increasingly recognized for its potential to improve prosperity and quality of life for all, but for that potential to be realized, many challenges needed to be addressed, including increasing inequality, exclusion and marginalization, inadequate infrastructure, uneven access to social services and public goods, and lack of opportunities for young people, minority groups and the urban poor. Those challenges could be addressed through better governance, including greater accountability and transparency; adherence to the rule of law; leadership through clear vision and planning; effective institutional coordination; the implementation of integrated urban solutions; and adequate monitoring instruments.

15.   In today's globalized world, successful cities were cities that had integrated innovation into their sustainable development initiatives by nurturing a strong culture of creativity. Innovation must be for everyone, and the New Urban Agenda offered a reminder that a transformative revolution was possible in neighbourhoods, communities and cities. Innovation in cutting-edge technology, operations, knowledge and data and in new forms of participation and engagement would unleash unrealized potential, maximize existing opportunities, boost economic growth and improve service delivery and city management, while promoting inclusion and participation.

16.   The United Nations should take advantage of the momentum of its ongoing reform to foster the innovation required to support countries in accelerating the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Agenda. More importantly, greater engagement with local citizens and stakeholders was required to develop innovative ideas and relationships, as creativity and innovation

were often spurred at the local level through everyday experiences and encounters. Thinking local was the first step on the path to the achievement of sustainable societies.

17.   In her opening statement, Ms. Mohamed Sharif drew attention to the report of the Executive Director on the dialogue on the special theme for the first session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly (HSP/HA/1/6), which defined innovation in the context of sustainable urban development as the process by which new knowledge and solutions were created and implemented to improve living conditions. While cities could be incubators of innovation, which was key to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, they could also be breeding grounds for poverty, exclusion and environmental degradation. UN-Habitat was positioning itself as a centre of excellence and innovation through the use of spatial, economic, social and environmental data to generate knowledge that would be used by decision makers to bring about the sustainable transformation of cities. The adoption of state-of-the-art norms for urban development, contextualized to account for local circumstances, would have a lasting impact on the lives of many urban dwellers.

18.   Given that the prosperity of cities required clear vision and leadership, as well as effective coordination, implementation and evaluation of results, she called on participants to reflect on the following five issues during the high-level dialogue: how cities could promote the use of smart technologies to provide basic urban services; how cities could foster innovative solutions to address the dilemmas of spatial inequality, poverty and climate change; what could be done to enable national institutions to better apply new knowledge and solutions within existing systems; how UN-Habitat could ensure that no one was left behind in the development of smart cities; and what role UN-Habitat could play in assessing and providing advice on the innovative capacity of cities.

19.   In response to a question from the moderator about innovations to achieve the housing component of Kenya's development programme, known as "Vision 2030", Mr. Kenyatta said that his Government was focusing on changing the manner in which housing was provided – including supply chains, the way housing was built, greening the housing sector – and new and innovative ways of financing housing, in order to make it more affordable and available. He underscored the need to find ways of engaging the private sector, since his Government's goal of constructing 500,000 units of affordable housing could not be attained by its own efforts alone.

20.   In response to a question from the moderator about what South Sudan, a post-conflict country, was doing to implement the New Urban Agenda, Mr. Kiir said that his country was having to start from scratch in planning and construction of housing and infrastructure, and greatly needed the help of partners. He highlighted the importance of generating youth employment through housing and infrastructure projects.

21.   Reacting to a question regarding how Fiji was incorporating innovation to move forward, Mr. Bainimarama said that climate change dominated every endeavour undertaken by his country, particularly with regard to adaptation and the resilience of infrastructure, the reduction of Fiji's carbon footprint, and preparation for extreme events such as cyclones. He highlighted innovative steps taken to mobilize finance for adaptation, including a special environment and climate levy and a green bond listed on the London Stock Exchange, as well as UN-Habitat assistance in procuring financing from the Adaptation Fund to support vulnerable urban settlements.

22.   Invited by the moderator to comment, Ms. Delgado stressed the importance of national governments working with local government leaders, and Ms. Sharif said that affordable housing and finance issues were key, as were partnerships with the private sector and other stakeholders, areas targeted under the UN-Habitat draft strategic plan for the period 2020–2025.

23.   Mr. Saeed drew attention to the multiple challenges of implementing the New Urban Agenda in a country in conflict, including the destruction of infrastructure, human capital flight from universities and loss of expertise, significant depletion of the urban population, the need to handle refugee flows and to provide basic services such as water, communications, transport, waste management and electricity.

24.   Asked by the moderator about engagement with the private sector, Mr. Kenyatta said that achieving the goal of affordable and adequate housing was impossible without collaboration with the private sector. He described steps taken by his Government to create an appropriate enabling environment, to promote longer-term mortgage financing, private incentives to developers and guarantees for the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises. Mr. Kiir said that his Government was working on ways to foster the growth of a private sector in South Sudan, starting with attracting more banks, clearing up difficulties in land titles and finding ways to help farmers produce on the land. Mr. Bainimarama concurred with regard to the importance of engaging the private sector, noting that all stakeholders had a part to play in combating climate change.

Governments could take the lead by establishing laws, policies and programmes, but partnership with the private sector was necessary for finance, access to expertise and new technologies. Before the conflict in Yemen had begun, his Government had discussed enabling legislation to mobilize the private sector, especially in urban planning, but that initiative had had to be put on hold. Noting that hundreds of thousands of new housing units were needed in his country, he said that his Government was considering those sectors in which infrastructure improvements were most needed in order to attract investment. Ms. Sharif highlighted UN-Habitat engagement with the private sector on controlling urban air pollution and in normative work, as well as its role as a convener, which could be used to help prepare concepts for bankable projects and to engage the private sector in such projects. Ms. Delgado stressed that in engaging the private sector in city and housing projects, it was important to avoid any negative environmental or social externalities and to address corruption through the adoption of transparent processes.

25.   In response to the moderator's request for panellists to state their political commitments regarding sustainable, safe and inclusive cities, and any relevant calls to action they wished to issue, Mr. Kiir said that South Sudan was contributing $40,000 to UN-Habitat and was committed to fostering sustainable urban development. Mr. Bainimarama reiterated the need for more urgent action on climate change, starting with more ambitious nationally determined contributions. Mr. Saeed pledged that his Government's urban and housing plans would not lead to the growth of carbon emissions, noted that 20 per cent of income from his country's sale of oil and gas was earmarked to local development, and reported that several local Yemeni governments were updating their urban plans to reflect the New Urban Agenda. Ms. Sharif reiterated the commitment of UN-Habitat to the outcomes sought in the New Urban Agenda, and to work with all levels government and other stakeholders, including the private sector, toward a better quality of life for the entire urbanizing world. Ms. Delgado urged renewed support for multilateralism and multilateral institutions, since no nation could achieve the goals of the New Urban Agenda without cooperation. Mr. Kenyatta renewed the commitment of Kenya to the climate change agenda, to working with private sector partners, and to multilateralism and multilateral institutions. Lastly, he called for collective efforts to create sustainable communities for present and future generations of humankind.

II.   Policy segment on creating an enabling environment for innovation

26.   The session was moderated by Ms. Julie Gichuru. The panellists were Ms. Elin Olsson, Secretary of State, Sweden; Ms. Wallis Goelen, Advisor to the Deputy Director-General, European Commission Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (REGIO); Mr. Siraj Sait, Director, University of East London; Irene Campos Gómez, Minister of Housing and Human Settlements, Costa Rica; and Ms. Fatimatou Abdel Malick, Nouakchott Regional Council, Mauritania.

27.   In her remarks, Ms. Olsson said that, in order to succeed in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda, it was important to take into account four frontier issues which presented both risks and opportunities for sustainable urban development and were identified in the United Nations System-wide Strategy on Sustainable Urban Development. The four issues were the digital transformation and new technologies; privatization and anti-multilateralism; land use and resource scarcity; and adaptation, de-carbonization and migration. In order to achieve sustainable and resilient urban development, action by both public and private sector actors was needed on those four issues at the global, national, regional and local levels. Such action, she said, should focus on avoiding past mistakes, in particular by ending the current reliance on fossil fuels and by making a genuine shift towards green growth; sharing information to accelerate the upscaling and mainstreaming of good practices and lessons learned; ensuring that innovation was based on local conditions and participatory planning; and devising multi-functional solutions that tackled multiple challenges in an integrated manner. For instance, solutions to mitigate climate change should also boost social justice and biodiversity. Another example was the current focus by Sweden on innovative solutions to build cities with wood while ensuring sustainable forestry.

28.   In her presentation, Ms. Goelen said that innovation for sustainable urbanization was not spontaneous and required adequate policies and interventions. In the context of the European Union, one such intervention had been the establishment of an innovative institutional platform that brought together, on an equal footing, cities, Member States and the European Commission to make proposals for improved urban development regulation, funding and knowledge, in the framework of the European Union urban agenda. Under the agenda, partnerships had been created in fields such as urban poverty, digital transition, climate adaptation, public procurement, sustainable use of land, and circular economy. The European Union had also adopted a territorial cohesion policy to support innovation through territorial development strategies, which had an initial budget of 370 billion euros

over seven years and encompassed investments in information and communication technologies. The policy embraced a smart specialization approach, under which each region could identify and develop its own competitive advantages and engage in bottom-up planning in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, including from the private sector. Lastly, at the city level, the European Union had launched a project to select and co-finance 55 innovations in areas such as digital transition, the circular economy and climate adaptation, in order to identify, test and scale up prototypes for innovation, with a view to transferring positive results to locations across Europe and beyond.

29.   In his remarks, Mr. Sait drew attention to the role of stakeholders in creating innovative solutions for human settlements and cities, stressing that, during the first Global Stakeholders Forum, held immediately prior to the current session, stakeholders had discussed the issue of innovation to realize the vision of inclusive, prosperous, vibrant and sustainable human settlements and cities and had demonstrated their willingness to proactively engage with governments and other partners at all levels to make that vision a reality through the provision of information, evidence-based solutions, technology and finance. He suggested that, as the primary creators of solutions and practices that could be shared and upscaled, local communities were the greatest innovators, and that in order to achieve sustainable urban development Member States must engage with stakeholders in all phases of the sustainable urban development agenda, including in the design, implementation and monitoring of urban development policies. Similarly, it was important to strengthen the capacities of stakeholders to develop evidence-based and practical guidance for sustainable cities and human settlements.

30.   In her presentation, Ms. Gómez highlighted several measures taken by the Government of Costa Rica to promote innovation for sustainable urban development. Such measures included the establishment of a special fund to support small businesses involved in developing technological innovations; the provision of technical assistance and other kinds of support to innovators; the development, in collaboration with a non-governmental organization, of a virtual currency platform through which citizens could exchange valuable solid waste for goods and services; the creation of a prize to reward organizations and territories that had improved their environmental, social and working conditions; and the adoption of a plan to decarbonize the economy by the year 2050, which was in line with the objectives of the New Urban Agenda. In addition, the Government had started to develop new schemes for the financing of social housing and other urbanization projects, and was working closely with the government of the city of San José to develop a "technological city" that would bring together innovative companies and academia. In closing, she said that innovation was not only about products or science and technology, but also about doing things in innovative ways and enhancing the capacities of innovators.

31.   In her remarks, Ms. Malick emphasized the critical role of regional and local governments in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, given that they were close to their populations and had first-hand knowledge of their needs and the challenges they faced and were constantly reflecting on how to develop innovative solutions to meet such needs and address such challenges. She suggested that the implementation of the New Urban Agenda required close engagement by UN-Habitat and other partners with regional and local governments and their networks and populations, as well as civil society and the private sector, and effectively localizing the New Urban Agenda. Given that the marginalization of local and regional governments led to instability and stability was necessary for development, it was also critical to build and strengthen the capacities and improve the revenues of those governments. She went on to describe two examples of innovative applications developed in Mauritania. The first was a geo-localized application to increase fiscal revenue, which had made it possible to double revenue and to improve equality, including through increased fund allocations to female heads of households. The second was an application to create employment opportunities for young people, which would also help to prevent their involvement in terrorism and crime.

32.   In the ensuing discussion, responding to comments from the floor, Ms. Wallis said that in order to better understand urbanization, develop evidence-based urban policies and prevent problems such as urban sprawl, it was necessary to innovate in the fields of measuring, monitoring and reporting. In particular, it was necessary to go beyond traditional statistical data, and obtain the data that made long-term projections possible, such as spatial data, big data and open data, and data obtained through stakeholder engagement. With regard to the rural-urban continuum, she said that the European model of urbanization was polycentric and encompassed networks of cities and towns of different sizes which were connected to one another, and recognized that no city operated in isolation from the territory in which it was embedded. Lastly, she emphasized that cities often faced social challenges, so the European Union supported the development of social innovations, in particular by local governments and enterprises, by giving them incentives to experiment and thereby contribute to sustainable local development.

33.   Reacting to a comment from the floor regarding the difficulty of engaging in urban planning when faced with acute crises or instability, Ms. Olsson said that such situations highlighted the importance of the work of UN-Habitat in supporting governments facing urban crises, as reflected in the draft strategic plan for the period 2020–2025. She suggested that, once a degree of stability was achieved, governments should focus on multi-functional, long-term solutions and consider the rural-urban continuum to ensure that everyone shared in the prosperity of urbanization.

34.   In response to a question from the moderator, Ms. Gómez said that, in order to ensure that the search for innovation did not become an end in itself, it was important to determine the specific objectives that were being pursued, such as improved waste management and higher rates of recycling. She reiterated that innovation was not only about science, technology or data, but also about how to approach specific issues, such as how to build and how to finance infrastructure.

35.   Responding to a final question from the moderator, Ms. Malick said that while urbanization presented new opportunities for people to meet and exchange ideas, it also presented increased risks, given that cities could accommodate terrorism, hate and discrimination. Thus, it was important that national and subnational governments consider the makeup of their populations, and that local governments be given the mandate and power, through effective decentralization processes, to translate into local policies the experiences of their populations.

III.   Cities and communities segment on implementation, partnerships and good practices

36.   The session was moderated by Ms. Julie Gichuru. The panellists were Mr. Basim bin Yacoub Al-Hamer, Minister of Housing, Bahrain; Mr. Ridwan Kamil, Governor of West Java, Indonesia; Ms. Noraini Binti Roslan, Mayor of Subang Jaya, Malaysia; Ms. Joyce Msuya, acting Executive Director of UNEP and Assistant Secretary-General; Mr. Alex Awiti, Vice Provost East Africa, The Aga Khan University, Kenya; and Mr. Cezanne Maherali, Head of Policy for Uber East Africa.

37.   Asked how change could be implemented properly and how to be more innovative, Ms. Msuya said that UNEP matched its solutions to specific demands from authorities and partners in Member States, since local communities could better diagnose environmental and urban planning issues. The challenges were so great that its own solutions were insufficient and, in order to make a difference for the people and the environment, innovative partnerships were needed.

38.   In response to a question about engaging with citizens, Mr. bin Yacoub Al-Hamer said that doing so would lead to the best and most innovative solutions. Innovation of the present day was closely tied to smart technologies, so government needed to provide the necessary infrastructure for the private sector to contribute and create a proper monitoring system to acquire constant feedback that it could use to take proactive decisions to serve the public.

39.   Mr. Kamil, for his part, said that leaders needed to bring about change. In his culture, everyone wanted to be subjects, not objects, of development. His administration had moved from a triple helix approach, involving academia, business and government, to a penta helix approach, which involved those three as well as the community and the media. It was also moving from rule-based governance to "Government 3.0", in which all stakeholders were subjects of development. Lastly, people in his city did not feel represented by Parliament and wanted a direct voice, so he now had 19 community leaders advising him directly and 150 leaders advising 40 departments.

40.   In response to a question from the moderator, Ms. Roslan said that the Sustainable Development Goals created common targets on matters of global importance. The challenge was to move from regional to local achievements. The Malaysian Government had established a rating system for local authorities based on 70 indicators, driving them to innovate in order to compete with other authorities or to maintain their five-star status. In many low-cost housing schemes in her area, she had started a programme to empower the community, asking citizens what issues they had and matching those issues with the relevant agencies, non-governmental organizations and companies that could offer a solution.

41.   Asked about the role of the private sector in driving innovation, Ms. Maherali said that, when people thought about future mobility, they imagined a world with fewer cars, which would be more efficient and used to their optimum capacity. Technology was an excellent way to reduce the number of private cars, since smartphones could be used to make a journey safely, reliably and affordably. Uber had introduced innovations to make mobility affordable, including services like uberCHAPCHAP, which used smaller, more affordable cars, and uberBODA, which used motorbikes. The company had also become greener, with 6 per cent of Uber journeys in the United States now

taking place in hybrid electric vehicles and a small portion of each fare in London being used to finance the purchase of electric vehicles by drivers, with the full fleet becoming electric by 2025.

42.   Referring to scalability in response to a question from the moderator, Mr. Awiti said that Kenya was grappling with traffic gridlock and had not worked out how to create a scalable, affordable, realistic and efficient mass transit system, but Tanzania already had a rapid transit programme and Rwanda had a public metropolitan transport authority. Noting that there needed to be a space to work together and share international best practices, she said that UN-Habitat played a critical role in implementing partnerships and could draw on thousands of urban-innovation case studies conducted around the world.

43.   In response to the moderator's comment about a disconnect between academia and society, he said that researchers believed they should not cater to society's vocational needs. Lamenting the fact that none of the plethora of universities in Nairobi worked with the Governor to solve the county's problems and that East African Governments often used outside consultancies that did not understand the local context, he asked how academia could be brought around the table, as had happened in New York and Chicago.

44.   Asked about the disconnect with the youth, Ms. Msuya said that UNEP had embraced communication through social media in response to youth activism on climate change in Kenya and the rest of the world. It had also brought the youth in to test ideas from different cultures, and as a result the East Africans had suggested using Kiswahili to reach the local population.

45.   Mr. bin Yacoub Al-Hamer said that communicating with people had to be an ongoing process with continuous feedback to shape policy and improve results.

46.   Asked about his thoughts on the importance of knowing to whom one was speaking, Mr. Kamil said that, since Indonesia now had more mobile phones than people, all his heads of departments used social media, compared with only 70 per cent when he had taken office. That increase in uptake had raised levels of trust and contributed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

47.   In response to question from the moderator about the role of UN-Habitat in supporting sustainability, Ms. Roslan said that the Sustainable Development Goals had created targets and the New Urban Agenda provided approaches, adding that such platforms could be used by all local governments to share knowledge and find resources.

48.   Mr. bin Yacoub Al-Hamer acknowledged that government officials normally received negative feedback through social media and often overreacted, but said that it was time to create a unit that would receive questions and comments and use them to create a knowledge base to serve citizens.

49.   Asked about how UN-Habitat could work with the private sector, Ms. Maherali said that, although much of her daily work involved contacting government at all levels and creating awareness about Uber's business model and how it could make an impact, there was a gap between holding those conversations and making things happen, adding that UN-Habitat was an interlocutor that could bring government and the private sector together to achieve shared objectives.

50.   The moderator asked all the panellists to explain their vision of what was possible and what steps were needed to bring about innovative solutions. Mr. Awiti said there were huge gaps in urban governance; the relationships between cities and government were unclear; and urban government was in a state of flux in Kenya and Uganda, resulting in inefficient planning. Social media could help urban reporting to create accessible conversations between citizens and providers of urban services.

51.   Mr. bin Yacoub Al-Hamer said that innovations were a continuous learning process and that government should act gradually, rather than radically, based on local capabilities.

52.   Ms. Roslan said that all countries and communities had resources, but communities had to work together and help themselves. She stressed the importance of empowering low-income households by giving them resources. She had started urban gardening projects, for instance, which had created food resources.

53.   Mr. Kamil suggested changing the notion of a housing project to that of a housing community, as the notion of community involved multiple dimensions, such as respecting nature and involving everyone.

54.   Ms. Maherali said that people-centric, rather than car-centric cities, were needed, and that all stakeholders had to work together to that end. The private sector wanted a sandbox environment in which it could work with government to test ideas and learn from any mistakes.

55.   Mr. Awiti said that the future was bright, urban and young, especially in Africa, where the median age was 19, as well as in the global South in general. Africa would learn from others' mistakes and build bigger and better cities, based around communities. While 4G had been about how much could be done; 5G would revolutionize almost everything, such as managing water, sewerage and leaks, resulting in cities that were safer, especially for women, more efficient, and with smart infrastructure. Low-tech solutions, meanwhile, could solve water, sanitation, security and housing problems, among others. Strengthening communities and viewing the urban space as the new village of connectivity would change how people thought about the future.

56.   Ms. Msuya said that the world was much better off than before World War II. Technology was giving young people many learning possibilities and a voice to influence the political landscape. It was important to consider how platforms like UN-Habitat could be used to share experiences that had worked in another part of the world. Innovation involved taking risks, and leaders, communities and the private sector needed to ask whether they were challenging their own biases and making themselves vulnerable in order to bring about change.

57.   Asked by the moderator about how young people could be included in innovative partnerships and solutions, one participant said that the youth had solutions and needed to reach the private sector. Highlighting the small number of young people in the room, the participant said that the youth needed opportunities to air their views.

IV.   Business segment on investing in urban innovation

58.   The session was moderated by Ms. Julie Gichuru. The panellists for the session were Ms. Shamoy Hajare, social entrepreneur and member of the UN-Habitat Youth Advisory Board; Ms. Marina Klemensiewicz, Secretary of Urban Infrastructure, Ministry of the Interior, Public Works and Housing of Argentina; Mr. Ullrich Sierau, Mayor of Dortmund, Germany; Mr. James Hanna, Director, Datacenter Community Development, Microsoft; Mr. François Pitti, Group Director, Strategic Marketing, Bouygues; and Mr. Marc Collins Chen, Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer, Oceanix.

59.   Ms. Hajare, in her remarks, said that all stakeholders, including governments, multilateral organizations and non-governmental organizations, should be involved in working to develop an enabling environment for youth innovation, and that investment in innovation must be based on needs. Measures to promote entrepreneurship in the blue and green economies, for example, stemmed from the need for drastic action to tackle climate change, without which it would be impossible to safeguard the future not only of business but also of humankind.

60.   In her remarks, Ms. Klemensiewicz said that national governments played a key role in the creation of an enabling environment for private sector investment. For its part, the Argentine Government had recognized the need to improve basic infrastructure as a prerequisite to innovation and private sector investment. It had thus worked with UN-Habitat to develop the country's first-ever national urban policy, which was now being implemented with great success. A law on public-private partnerships had also recently been enacted with a view to creating an appropriate long-term framework for private sector investment in Argentina.

61.   In his remarks, Mr. Sierau said that the sustainable growth of Dortmund as a technology hub with a vibrant ecosystem had been achieved through the development of a public framework for private investment. In that process, the local government had engaged with the private sector to identify its investment needs and worked in cooperation with stakeholders for economic growth as part of the Dortmund project, a local initiative launched in 2000. Responding positively to the consultation about their needs, private investors had been attracted to the city's numerous technology start-ups, which had accordingly grown and expanded to create many thousands of jobs.

62.   Mr. Hanna emphasized in his remarks that enlightened self-interest was a key part of engagement with the private sector. While profit remained its goal, the private sector had learned that it made business sense to invest in areas critical to the mission of such organizations as UN-Habitat and of governments, an example of which was the use of Minecraft as a community participation tool in the design of public spaces. Indeed, the private sector could achieve success on its own terms while also contributing to that mission insofar as interests were now shared, albeit that the measures of success differed. To be different without being divergent was not an issue, however, provided that it translated into common success metrics for both the private sector and its new partners.

63.   In his remarks, Mr. Pitti said that the combination of local, national and private actors in the present dialogue was an indication of the changes under way. The journey towards innovation first of all required an ecosystem that was open to the outside world, symmetrical, reciprocal and, importantly,

built on trust strengthened by a regulatory framework that also promoted, among others, investment and research and development. Secondly, dreams must be turned into reality by co-designing the future with stakeholders, which was the aim of City Play, a Bouygues resource developed for that purpose. Thirdly, a systemic approach towards innovation and investment was vital to tackling the complex and challenging aspects of city management.

64.   Mr. Collins Chen, in his remarks, said that the partnership between his company Oceanix and UN-Habitat was rooted in the notion that the current growth of coastal cities was unsustainable, especially in the face of such inescapable factors as sea-level rise. Oceanix was therefore developing its concept of floating cities and consulting with leaders to determine their needs on that score. The process of breaking down barriers and building the openness and trust essential in public-private partnerships must be accelerated, however, in order to attain fluidity in innovation and move beyond business as usual, which was commonly agreed as key to securing a better future through the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. UN-Habitat could play an interesting role to that end by swiftly connecting small innovative start-ups with small and medium-sized cities so that their ideas could be put into practice at the earliest opportunity as opposed to undergoing a lengthy decision-making process.

65.   In the ensuing discussion, Ms. Klemensiewicz said that investment in Argentina was concentrated in Buenos Aires, where one half of the country's population lived. It was therefore the job of the Government to spread investment into the country's innumerable small and medium-sized towns. Thanks to the national urban policy and the recent law on public-private partnerships, the Government was newly engaged with the private sector and had adopted a cross-cutting approach to investment in sustainable housing, airports, telecommunications and solar parks, among other things. Working within that framework to build local capacities and all-important trust with the private sector was the means to ensuring that the benefits of private investment would extend throughout the country.

66.   Mr. Sierau, in response to a question from the moderator, said that the start-ups in Dortmund had obtained their initial funding from local, federal or European Union sources, in accordance with their line of business, followed by grants to promote their entry to the market. In addition to funding and trust, speed was of the essence in innovation, especially in view of the competition in that area. Innovation was much faster achieved in medium-sized cities such as his, which therefore appealed to investors, as successes accomplished at that level could also be more swiftly replicated worldwide.

67.   One representative agreed that effective investment in urban innovation depended on the accuracy of the strategic focus and the responsiveness to local needs. His country's national authorities had in the past made the mistake of assuming that development focused on a number of cities would spread over time to the rest of the country. By contrast, they had achieved positive results by placing the necessary strategic focus on measures to combat urban pollution in response to public demand.

68.   Ms. Hajare wondered whether any of the impressive initiatives currently under way included youth-friendly components and indeed whether suggestions of the young on how to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals were ever taken into account. Her Jamaica School for Social Entrepreneurship was engaged in youth training and capacity-building aimed at teaching bankable skills, yet on entering the labour market its young graduates were regarded as a less worthwhile investment than adults. In such a predominantly youthful world, it was paradoxical that innovation and investment were generally non-youth-friendly. Investment should instead be channelled towards the needs of the young as expressed by them, which must be acted upon if innovation and technology were to be effectively harnessed to promote resilience.

69.   Mr. Sierau said that he had launched a youth forum in Dortmund after hearing complaints from young persons that their ideas went unheard. He had come to realize the importance of listening to and learning from the younger generation, a case in point being the young climate activists currently making headlines.

70.   Ms. Klemensiewicz said that the young were instrumental in helping government officials to think outside the box and had a substantial contribution to make in addressing urban youth issues, which were cross-cutting and called for a multidimensional approach. Argentina had instituted legal and other measures to promote youth entrepreneurship and innovation, including with public funding.

71.   Mr. Pitti agreed that listening to the world's youth in particular was vitally important, saying that young persons were now involved in all Bouygues projects, including City Play. Bouygues had furthermore conducted an ambitious experiment involving students in the co-design of smart cities and had also sought their views on how to reconcile digital technology with humanity. The multitude of responses had been truly inspiring and had surprisingly revealed that the younger generation enjoyed

breaks from technology and the sense of calm experienced as a result. Listening to that generation was now a standard process for Bouygues.

72.   Mr. Hanna agreed that listening was critical but stressed that the young generation must also be equipped with the tools for success in a process started from a very young age. On that score, the investment made in introducing technology into classrooms and helping to generate excitement about careers in technology as a valid pathway to success, especially for young women, was indeed worthwhile. The young already dominated the technology industry. In addition to being highly innovative, they were the generation most able to connect with the future and develop products, solutions and partnerships accordingly, thereby positioning the industry for success. Focus must also be placed, however, on the human side of the equation and the potential opened up by acquired skills sets. Technology was in fact merely a tool for enabling humans to understand the pathways to success. Unless hope and vision were provided, technology did not matter.

73.   In that regard, Ms. Hajare underlined the important role of apprenticeships in closing skills gaps and noted that young persons were valuable assets in the area of skills transfer.

74.   Mr. Collins Chen said that there was undoubtedly a need to listen more but noted that the same was true for the older generation, which frequently experienced ageism. The current era was the time for the younger generation, which was best equipped for the rapid rate of change and some of whose members had achieved international recognition previously unthinkable for persons of their age. Concerning his company's supply chain, Oceanix was registered in Hong Kong, but its teams of architects, engineers and others were fully international. It needed local knowledge and local suppliers to fulfil its ambition of providing affordable housing for coastal cities worldwide.

75.   The moderator asked the panellists to highlight one key change that would drive progress towards a future of safe, inclusive and sustainable cities.

76.   Ms. Hajare said that inclusive cities must provide space for all generations, but that the views of young people must be taken seriously and acted upon, with investment directed towards the young generation.

77.   Mr. Collins Chen said that all urban-related activities must be scalable in the interest of a fairer world for all and take into account nature and the environment for the sake of long-term sustainability.

78.   Ms. Klemensiewicz said that collective processes relying on more than one outlook were key to sustainability, and that national governments were responsible for taking into account the views of all stakeholders in their decision-making.

79.   Mr. Sierau, agreeing with that view, said that more spontaneous and hands-on processes were needed to close the innovation gaps sometimes created by national legislation and to speed up moves to action.

80.   Mr. Hanna emphasized the need to focus on speed in scaling up best practices, facilitated by strong centralized entities such as UN-Habitat, and on cooperation in developing common sets of standards for innovation.

81.   Mr. Pitti said that the social, economic and environmental dimensions of inclusiveness were the cornerstones of sustainable development and must each receive equal focus. The desired speed and efficiency factors would also be promoted if UN-Habitat were to serve as a central brainstorming platform or living lab for a global network of stakeholders.

———————