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**Regional preparations for the seventh Ministerial  
Conference on Environment and Development in Asia  
and the Pacific and for the third United Nations  
Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat III)****Regional preparations for Habitat III****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

The third United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat III) will be convened in 2016, as a follow-up to the second (1996) and first (1976) conferences, to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable urban development, assessing accomplishments to date, addressing poverty, and identifying and addressing new and emerging challenges. The focus of the conference will include, but will not be limited to, the theme “Sustainable urban development: the future of urbanization”, which will be discussed and refined during the preparatory process. The Conference will result in a concise, focused, forward-looking and action-oriented outcome document, which will reinvigorate the global commitment to and support for housing and sustainable urban development and the implementation of a “New Urban Agenda”.

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 67/216 and resolution 24/14 of the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the regional commissions are requested to contribute to each stage of the preparatory process, including through the preparation of regional reports, contributions to a global report, the convening of regional meetings and the utilization of their regular sessions to provide inputs. In the present document, the secretariat provides a brief background to the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements and previous outcomes, as well as an overview of the agreed preparatory process at the national, regional and global levels, and reports on actions taken by the secretariat in this regard. The Committee may wish to review the document and provide guidance on substantive and organizational issues.

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\* E/ESCAP/CED(3)/L.1.

## I. History and background of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements

1. In 1976, in Vancouver, Canada, the United Nations held its first conference on the issue of physical and spatial organization of human life on this planet, and on the national and international actions needed to accommodate the growing populations of urban and rural communities. This conference, entitled the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat), established the idea that human settlements consist of several elements that had been previously considered separately from one another — housing, building and planning — and the relationship of these and other activities, such as environmental change and national and international development. The conference also called for the establishment of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, which later became known as the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) in 2002.

2. Habitat II was held in Istanbul in June 1996. Popularly referred to as the “City Summit”, it addressed the two themes of “Adequate shelter for all” and “Sustainable human settlement development in an urbanizing world”, and brought together high-level representatives of national and local governments, the private sector, NGOs, research and training institutions and the media. The conference adopted the Habitat Agenda,<sup>1</sup> a global action plan to realize sustainable human settlements. The Regional Action Plan and the Habitat Agenda have become the principal framework for improving the quality of life and promoting the sustainable development of human settlements in the Asia-Pacific region.

3. In June 2001, five years after Habitat II, the General Assembly held a special session to review and appraise the implementation of the Habitat Agenda worldwide. The event brought together all the member States of the United Nations and culminated in the United Nations Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium,<sup>2</sup> which reaffirmed the will and commitment to implement fully the Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements,<sup>3</sup> in the spirit of the United Nations Millennium Declaration.<sup>4</sup>

## II. Global preparations for Habitat III

4. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 66/207 of 22 December 2011 on the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the third United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat III) will be convened in 2016. Subsequently, in its resolution 67/216 of 21 December 2012, the Assembly decided that:

(a) The objective of the conference will be to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable urban development, assessing accomplishments to date, addressing poverty and identifying and addressing new and emerging challenges, and that the focus of the conference will include, but will not be limited to, the theme “Sustainable urban

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<sup>1</sup> *Report of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), Istanbul, 3-14 June 1996 (A/CONF.165/14)*, chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

<sup>2</sup> General Assembly resolution S-25/2, annex.

<sup>3</sup> *Report of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), Istanbul, 3-14 June 1996 (A/CONF.165/14)*, chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

<sup>4</sup> General Assembly resolution 55/2.

development: the future of urbanization”, to be discussed and refined during the preparatory process;

(b) The conference will result in a concise, focused, forward-looking and action-oriented outcome document, which will reinvigorate the global commitment to and support for housing and sustainable urban development and the implementation of a “New Urban Agenda”;

(c) The conference and its preparatory process should take into account and build upon the principles and gains achieved through implementation of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development,<sup>5</sup> Agenda 21,<sup>6</sup> the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21,<sup>7</sup> the Habitat Agenda, the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium and the relevant internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development<sup>8</sup> and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg Plan of Implementation),<sup>9</sup> as well as the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled “The future we want”.<sup>10</sup>

5. In its resolution 67/216, the General Assembly also decided to establish a preparatory committee, which would be open to all States Members of the United Nations and members of specialized agencies and of the International Atomic Energy Agency and would meet three times before the opening of the conference: (a) the first meeting would be held in New York during the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, in September 2014; (b) the second meeting would be held in Nairobi in 2015 in conjunction with the twenty-fifth session of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat; and (c) the venue and duration of the third meeting would be considered by the General Assembly no later than at its sixty-ninth session, before the end of 2014.

6. Member States will be invited to submit national reports that consider the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and new challenges, emerging trends and a prospective vision for sustainable human settlements and urban development, as well as cross-cutting issues. In its resolution 24/14, the Governing Council of UN-Habitat, requested that the Secretary-General of the Conference suggest guidelines and a format for the preparation of national reports.

### **III. Regional preparations for Habitat III in the Asia-Pacific region**

7. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 67/216 and UN-Habitat Governing Council resolution 24/14, the regional commissions are requested to contribute to each stage of the preparatory process, including through the

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<sup>5</sup> *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex I.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, annex II.

<sup>7</sup> General Assembly resolution S-19/2, annex.

<sup>8</sup> A/CONF.199/20, annex.

<sup>9</sup> *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 2, annex.

<sup>10</sup> General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex.

preparation of regional reports, contributions to a global report, the convening of regional meetings and the utilization of their regular sessions to provide inputs.

8. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 66/207, in which the Assembly emphasized that the preparatory process should take full advantage of planned meetings by aligning with the sixth and seventh sessions of the World Urban Forum, the secretariat and the UN-Habitat Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific jointly organized an informal consultation related to the preparatory process in the Asia-Pacific region during the sixth session of the World Urban Forum, which was held in Naples, Italy, in September 2012. The event allowed discussion of critical and emerging issues for Asian and Pacific countries in relation to sustainable urban development and the gathering from member States of preliminary ideas in relation to regional preparations for Habitat III.

9. The importance of capturing subregional specificities and priorities was emphasized and it was recommended that the process be based on subregional meetings. Key issues that were raised as critical and emerging in relation to sustainable urban development included: climate change and disaster risk reduction; youth participation and engagement; gender and female participation in city planning; resource efficiency; information and communication technologies (ICT); safe cities; new city forms for the twenty-first century; informal settlements; governance; and aid effectiveness. The meeting also highlighted the need to look at rural development, rural-urban migration and linkages.

10. In accordance with General Assembly resolutions 66/207 and 67/216 and UN-Habitat Governing Council resolution 24/14, the secretariat plans, jointly with the UN-Habitat secretariat, to prepare a regional report and to convene subregional consultations in the course of 2014 and 2015 and a regional consultation in 2015.

#### **IV. Issues for consideration**

11. Members and associate members may wish to exchange views, experiences and information on the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and new challenges, emerging trends and a prospective vision for sustainable human settlements and urban development.

12. Members and associate members may also wish to exchange views on regional preparations for Habitat III and consider extending their support to subregional and regional preparatory meetings, by, for example, considering hosting such events.

13. The Committee may wish to advise the secretariat on the future direction of its work in the relevant context.