

Hab Post

Updates from
UN-Habitat

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Takeaways from the first 2021 Executive Board session



Editor's note

Dear Reader,

The first session of the Executive Board for the year 2021 took place last week, so we're condensing the two-day discussions and presentations into a few highlights for you to digest and stay on top of things. If you're a zealous reader, you can find the full summary of discussions [on our website](#) under "Daily Journal".

We also looked at the HabPost survey results, and we're happy to say we're rolling out success stories as they're in demand. We encourage all of you to reach out to us at unhabitat-habpost@un.org to contribute stories and share best practice and solutions with everyone around the house!

Happy Reading,

The HabPost Team

On the menu

Alert

Feature story

UN-Habitat in motion

Success Stories

Urban Agenda Platform

Insider

Innovation corner

Vacancies

Upcoming events and corporate calendar

Missions

Learning

Did you know?

Alerts

COVID-19

- Want to know at a glance the travel restrictions and entry requirements across the globe? Explore the map and information at <https://infopages.traveldoc.aero/Information/Coronavirus>.
- As of 11 April 2021, there were over 135 million confirmed cases of COVID-19, including close to 3 million deaths, reported to WHO. Close to 670 million vaccine doses have been administered. Monitor the situation [here](#).
- The [Director-General of WHO](#) has again highlighted the imbalance in the global distribution of vaccines.
- A third of COVID-19 survivors suffer neurological or mental disorders, a study published in the [Lancet Psychiatry](#) journal shows.
- US federal health agencies recommended pausing the use of [Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine](#) for at least a few days after six women under age 50 developed rare blood clots after receiving the shot.



Survey

HabPost surveyed



It's been a year! The first issue of HabPost was out on 8 April 2020, and since then we've worked hard to write about the things that matter to you, regularly.

We want to say "Thank You" to all who participated in the latest survey. Your answers have been very encouraging, while at the same time they challenge us to continue to stay relevant and fill the information gaps.

From the look of things, feature stories and events are your favourite treats. But you're also hungry for success stories, so we'll feed you just that – in fact, we're featuring our first in this issue. Check it out.

Rest assured, we've also taken good note of your other remarks and suggestions, and we'll work to bring everything together for an improved experience.

Finally, we'd like to thank all our contributors – regular and impromptu: HabPost wouldn't be the same without you. We can't wait to work again with you and others this year.

And remember: if you want to contribute stories, facts, updates, or have a chat with us, you can reach us at unhabitat-habpost@un.org. We're open for business!



Find all past issues of HabPost at <https://habnet.unhabitat.org/habpost>

The HabPost Team



► Feature Story

Takeaways from the first 2021 Executive Board session

From 7 to 8 April 2021, the Executive Board of UN-Habitat held its first session for the year 2021. As per our modus operandi this past year, this was done online and with interpretation in all six official languages of the UN. We're happy to say that the Board conducted its business smoothly, not least thanks to the support of all UN-Habitat colleagues involved.

The President of the UN-Habitat Assembly labeled UN-Habitat a public good for advancing the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Paris Agreement. She congratulated us on the publication of the Report

on Cities and Pandemics: Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future – if you haven't read it yet, [it's over here](#).

The President also asked Member States to consistently fund UN-Habitat if global goals are to be achieved. A

sentiment echoed by our Executive Director who pointed to the difficult financial position of the Programme limiting implementation of the new organizational structure and the Strategic Plan as approved by Member States.

Who is the new Bureau of the Executive Board in 2021-2022?

- Poland (Chair) for the Group of Eastern European States
- Egypt (Vice-Chair) for the Group of African States
- France (Vice-Chair) for the Group of Western Europe and other States
- Pakistan (Vice-chair) for the Group of Asia-Pacific States
- Chile (Rapporteur) for the Group of Latin and Caribbean States



EXECUTIVE
BOARD MEETING
A better quality of life for all in an urbanizing world

What happened

The Executive Board discussed the annual work programme and budget of UN-Habitat for the year 2022 and tentatively recommended a budget of USD 10 million for Foundation non-earmarked contributions for the year 2022. The Board requested that discussions continue within the Ad-hoc working group on programmatic, budgetary and administrative matters on the Foundation non-earmarked budget for 2022, to be within the range of USD 10 million to USD 12 million. The finalized annual work programme and budget of UN-Habitat for the year 2022 will be presented for decision by the Executive Board at its second session in 2021. But two days of discussions didn't stop here – see for yourself:

1.

Finance, restructuring, and staff composition

The Board discussed the financial and staffing status of the Organization and the ongoing restructuring process. The message is clear, current austerity measures offer little flexibility for hiring, and there is significant shortfall in contributions from Member States to support the implementation of core activities.

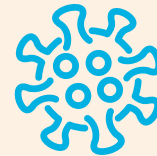


2.

UN Controller briefing

The UN Controller shared with the Executive Board his concerns regarding the status of the Foundation non-earmarked. While stable support to earmarked activities is encouraging, funding is moving towards an unsustainable model. Member States were reminded of the liability of the Organization to staff and the Controller went as far as saying that the financial viability of UN-Habitat could be questioned by the Board of Auditors.

3.



COVID-19 response

UN-Habitat provided an update of the programmatic response to COVID-19 to date, including the different pillars, funding, and beneficiaries, as well as an outlook for a more country and city-adapted support moving forward.

4.



Resolutions and decisions by the UN-Habitat Assembly

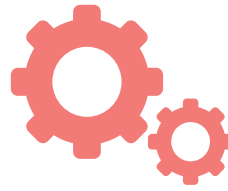
UN-Habitat briefed the Executive Board on progress made on specific resolutions, including the [2020-2023 Strategic Plan](#), the [United Nations System-Wide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements](#), [gender equality](#), [enhancing capacity building for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda](#) and [enhancing urban-rural linkages for sustainable urbanization and human settlements](#). The Board appreciated progress made, acknowledging that the lack of consistent voluntary funding made work challenging, especially in the current global health context.

5.

Normative and operational activities

UN-Habitat presented to the Executive Board three distinct entry points to exploring the normative and operational activities of UN-Habitat:

1. The [UK Prosperity Fund Global Future Cities Programme](#), addressing sustainable urbanization and enhanced prosperity through technical assistance to 30 projects across 19 cities in 10 countries.
2. [Building Urban Economic Resilience during and after COVID-19](#), a multi-agency project focusing on strengthening the capacities of local governments in 16 cities globally to design, implement, and monitor sustainable, resilient and inclusive COVID-19 economic and financial responses, recovery, and rebuilding plans.
3. The Lebanon Country Programme, a longstanding programme which demonstrated various operational activities in combination with policy development, as well as the application and scalability of several tools.



6.

Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and sexual harassment in the workplace

Our Executive Director reaffirmed that we are working hard to ensure adequate safeguards and appropriate actions to prevent and respond to allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), or sexual harassment in the workplace. She used the opportunity to talk about [SpeakUp](#), the phone-based app developed by UN-Habitat which provides information on related policies to personnel and tips on how to report incidents of SEA or sexual harassment. The one allegation of sexual harassment reported since the last meeting of the Executive Board has been referred to the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS).

7.



Reform of the UNDS and alignment with QCPR

Need a refresher on this? [Read our last issue](#)

The Board noted the work done by the Ad-hoc working group on programmatic, budgetary and administrative matters and encouraged the group to continue discussing the scenarios for aligning the UN-Habitat strategic planning process to the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review Process. All Member States are committed to aligning UN-Habitat's strategic planning process, which should determine when the UN-Habitat Assembly meets to review and approve the UN-Habitat's strategic plans. The challenge here is to choose whether to adopt an Interim Strategic Plan or extend the current Strategic Plan to cover a six-year period. Both these options would allow UN-Habitat to align its Strategic Plan with other UN agencies. Our Executive Director will liaise with the President of the UN-Habitat Assembly for guidance. Meanwhile, the Ad-Hoc working group on programmatic, budgetary and administrative matters will continue to review options.

8.

Action to update and improve the internal management, policies and procedures of UN-Habitat

We informed our Executive Board of the consultative nature of the process put in place to implement reforms, and about the new organizational structure being developed to strengthen the organization. Standard operating procedures have been developed to that end, as well as a performance monitoring dashboard with Key Performance Indicators linked to the various reforms. Our Executive Director assured of a change in work culture with the shift towards a "whole of house" approach, notably reflected in the co-creation of projects with the establishment of the Programme Review Committee (PRC). Other key reforms for implementation include diversifying our resources, securing donor support for data collection and analysis, and supporting Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States.

9.



Decisions

The Board adopted five decisions by the end of the session. They're a bit wordy, so you can read them [here](#).



What's next?

The end of a session of the Board means the start of another. The next session of the Executive Board will be held for two or three days between 16 and 18 November 2021. Member States will among others be expected to adopt the Work Programme and Budget for the year 2022.

In the meantime, the team at the Secretariat of the Governing Bodies has asked us to convey its thanks to all of you who provided support in holding successful sessions of the Board, and counts on similar support for the high-level midterm review meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, to be held in June. Excited?

For very excited colleagues:

[First Daily Journal](#)

[Second Daily Journal](#)

Click [here](#) to access all presentations by the Secretariat.



SUCCESS STORY



In 2013, Maceió, Brazil was ranked the sixth most violent city in the world. Much of that reputation came from the city's informal settlements, known as *grotas* (caves) for their topography tucked into valleys and hidden out of sight. Poverty and narco-trafficking flourish in the *grotas*, which lack basic infrastructure like paved footpaths and staircases to reach city streets.

On rainy days, mud makes it difficult to walk in the *grotas*, with the most vulnerable residents like the elderly, disabled, and mothers with small children essentially trapped in their homes. When the Alagoas state government sought to pave the footpaths and staircases in Maceió's *grotas*, they called on UN-Habitat's Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean.

While Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo are well known for their sprawling hillside *favelas*, recent data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) show that informal settlements are disproportionately found in secondary cities in northeastern Brazil like Maceió, the capital of Alagoas state. Were it not for UN-Habitat's methodology for participatory mapping of slums and informal settlements, public officials in Brazil would not have known about this demographic trend — much less be able to act on it.

“When IBGE mapped Maceió, they would not enter the *grotas*, “UN-Habitat brought a methodology that even IBGE didn't have. The state and IBGE learned from UN-Habitat and can apply it in the future.”

Andreia Estevem,
Architect, Alagoas Transportation Secretariat.

UN-Habitat deployed its participatory mapping, socio-economy diagnostic, digital communal design, and international study tour tools. These innovative instruments have been tested over the years through on-the-ground projects in cities like Addis Ababa, Maputo, Mexico City, Praia (Cabo Verde), and Rio de Janeiro, then honed by core staff who specialize in slums and informal settlements.

These tools, developed as part of UN-Habitat's normative mandate, were fundamental to convince the Alagoas government to tackle a more ambitious slum upgrading agenda than just paving footpaths and staircases.

Mapping the *grotas* revealed that the size and scale of informal settlements in Maceió was much bigger than initially thought. Conducting a socio-economic diagnostic determined which households lacked basic municipal services, like trash collection. Running “Block by Block” workshops, where residents used Minecraft to sketch out what a park could look like, invested youth in the future of their neighbourhoods. Embarking on a study tour to Medellín, Colombia — which famously integrated its slums into the formal city through a method known as “social urbanism”, a method closely studied and championed by UN-Habitat — opened the Brazilian delegation's eyes to a vision beyond simply providing hard infrastructure and instead treating the *grotas* as part of the city, no different from formal middle-class neighborhoods.

“With UN-Habitat's involvement, we went from a tiny sectoral project to a big transversal programme that really brings together all the different sectors.”

Renata Santos,
Alagoas Treasurer.

The UN's positive reputation also helped overcome local suspicion of elected officials who historically have only made overtures to the *grotas* at election time. “As soon as the UN showed up, everyone wanted to be the next *grota* to be urbanized,” said Estevem, who also praised the cost-benefit of working with UN-Habitat. “It was relatively low cost for immense benefit in social returns.”

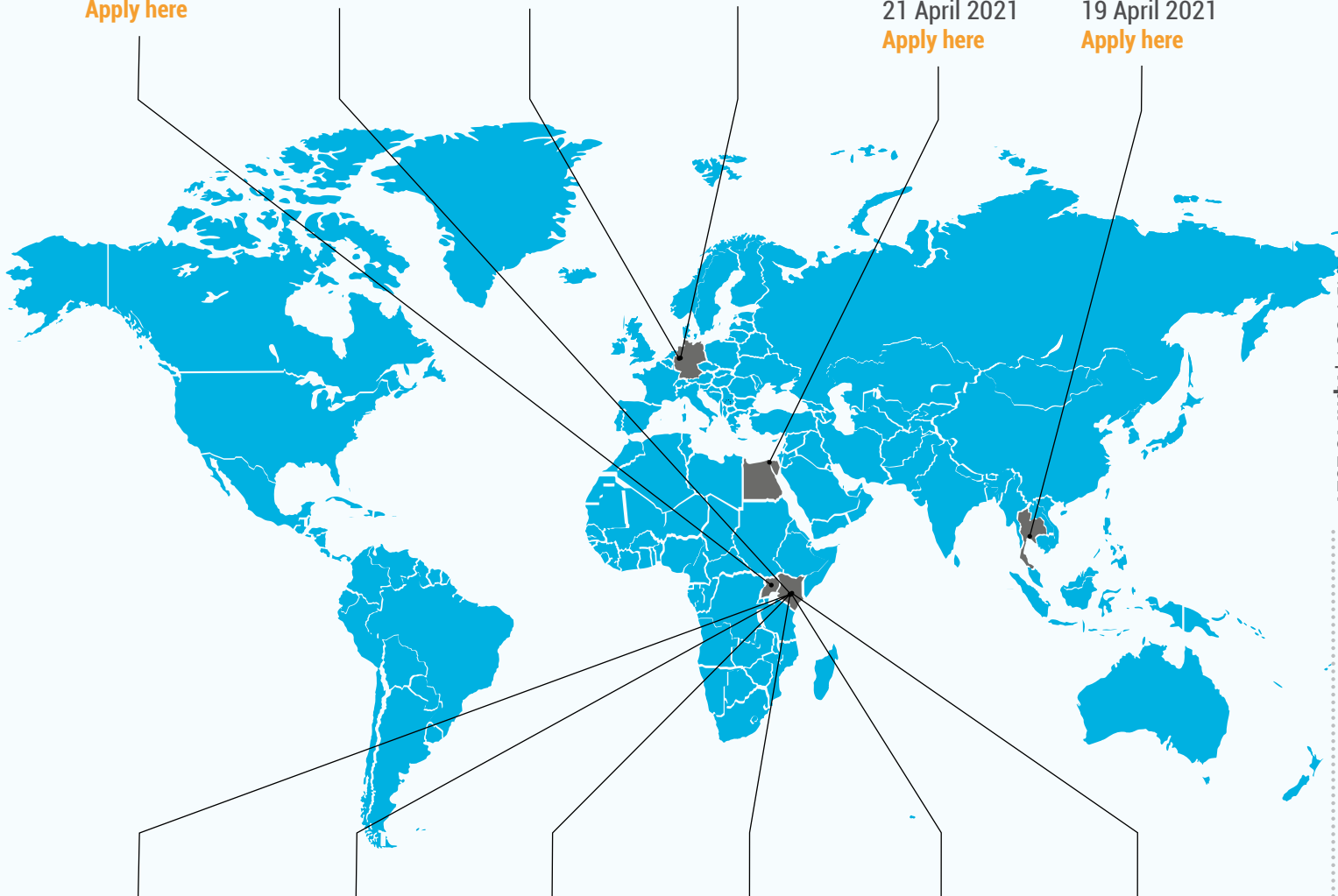
The project, “Nova Vida nas Grotas” (New Life in the *Grotas*), won an award from the Inter-American Development Bank in 2019 and from the World Smart Cities Award in 2020. Its success will continue to inform UN-Habitat's core research, guidelines, and toolkits on participatory slum upgrading.

“This agency has the power to transform people's lives through public policies, Without UN-Habitat we would not have succeeded in half of what we accomplished. Much more than just a simple staircase, the residents now have an address and they have pride in their neighbourhood. They feel part of the city.”

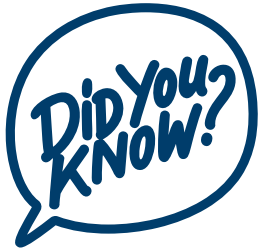
Renata Santos,
Alagoas Treasurer.

► **Vacancies**

<p>Role Associate Programme Management Officer, NO Duty Station Kampala, Uganda Deadline 21 April 2021 Apply here</p>	<p>Role Regional Representative, D1 Duty Station Nairobi, Kenya Deadline 18 April 2021 Apply here</p>	<p>Role Programme Management Assistant, G6 Duty Station Bonn, Germany Deadline 07 May 2021 Apply here</p>	<p>Role Senior Public Information Assistant, G7 Duty Station Bonn, Germany Deadline 21 April 2021 Apply here</p>	<p>Role Regional Representative, Regional Office for Arab States, D1 Duty Station Cairo, Egypt Deadline 21 April 2021 Apply here</p>	<p>Role Programme Management Officer, Human Settlements (Temporary) P3 Duty Station Bangkok, Thailand Deadline 19 April 2021 Apply here</p>
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<p>Role Programme Management Officer (Project Post), P3 Duty Station Nairobi, Kenya Deadline 05 May 2021 Apply here</p>	<p>Role Associate Programme Management Officer (Project Post), P2 Duty Station Nairobi, Kenya Deadline 07 May 2021 Apply here</p>	<p>Role Programme Management Assistant, G6 Duty Station Nairobi, Kenya Deadline 17 April 2021 Apply here</p>	<p>Role Programme Management Officer, P3 Duty Station Nairobi, Kenya Deadline 29 April 2021 Apply here</p>	<p>Role Programme Management Officer (Project Post), P3 Duty Station Nairobi, Kenya Deadline 22 April 2021 Apply here</p>	<p>Role Programme Management Officer, Human Settlements, P4 Duty Station Nairobi, Kenya Deadline 23 April 2021 Apply here</p>
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The results of the UN Survey on Racism are out

And they're fairly concerning. Curious to know why? See the high-level results [here](#).

What we know

One in five

That's the number of respondents who disagreed with the statement that racial discrimination is not tolerated in their workplace.

72 per cent

of those who did not report the incident of racial discrimination did nothing because they thought nothing would happen, lacked trust or feared retaliation.

About a third

That's how many respondents believe our human resources regulations and rules can sometimes be applied unfairly based on race, nationality or ethnic background.

52 per cent

of those who reported the incident of racial discrimination reported being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the way the situation was handled.

One in three

That's the number of respondents who mentioned experiencing racial discrimination based on national origin, racial identity or gender identity; of those, 21 per cent experienced it frequently.

13 per cent

of the respondents who have experienced racial discrimination reported that they had been supported or protected by someone.

What's next

Find about the way forward [here](#) or visit the [United Against Racism](#) page for more information about the work of the Task Force on Addressing Racism and Promoting Dignity for All in the UN. Participate in the discussion forums and provide your ideas on how to build an antiracist culture in our Organization by logging them in [here](#).

Do I know bias?

Find out in the next global event, a panel discussion on implicit bias, on 11 May 2021.

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Participate!

Want your story featured? Submit your ideas or reach out to us at unhabitat-habpost@un.org.

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