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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	1
FOREWORD	2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
SITUATION ANALYSIS	4
National context	4
National development goals and priorities	4
Human settlements context	6
LESSONS LEARNED FROM UN-HABITAT'S ACTIVITIES IN AFGHANISTAN	9
UNHABITAT'S STRATEGIC DIRECTION IN AFGHANISTAN 2016-2019	9
Vision and mission	9
Focus areas 2016-2019	10
Focus area 1: Planned and well-governed settlements	10
Focus area 2: Inclusive settlements	10
Focus area 3: Prosperous settlements	11
STRATEGY	16
Implementation strategy and partnerships	16
Human resources and organizational structure	17
Financial resources and mobilization strategy	17
UN-Habitat's core values	18
Risk management	18
Monitoring and evaluation framework	18
ACRONYMS	19
BIBLIOGRAPHY	20

FOREWORDS

REGIONAL DIRECTOR



Aligning the normative and operational capacities of UN-Habitat is the underlying purpose for the strategic plan covering the period 2016–2019 and for the work programme for 2014–2015 that was approved at the Twenty-Fourth Governing Council of UN-Habitat in April 2013. The strategic plan promotes the

alignment of the United Nations Common Country Assessments with the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF) and serves as a blueprint for all UN-Habitat programming in Afghanistan for the next four years, in partnership with our line ministries.

An important dimension of the UN-Habitat Country Programme Document for Afghanistan is to articulate and address emerging urban challenges facing one of the world's poorest countries that has seen decades of conflict and political instability. The UN-Habitat Country Programme Document for Afghanistan identifies national urban development goals and priorities including shelter, urban governance, and access to basic services. Important cross-cutting issues such as the environment, gender and disaster risk reduction have also been addressed.

The UN-Habitat Country Programme Document for Afghanistan focuses on UN-Habitat's proposed country programming and includes strategies that will be adopted over the course of the next four years. It serves as a work plan and reference tool to improve the implementation and coordination of all human settlements activities across Afghanistan. It also promotes the involvement and ownership by government and local actors in sustainable urban development strategies by building on the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, National Priority Programs and UNDAF.



I wish to express my gratitude to the Government of Afghanistan for their guidance and advice in the preparation of this key document. In addition I wish to thank the many donors and partners who have demonstrated their faith in the people of Afghanistan by contributing to UN-Habitat's efforts to provide for a better urban future for all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Y. Fukasawa', written over a light grey rectangular background.

Yoshinobu Fukasawa

Director, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Urbanisation is changing the face of Afghanistan. Unprecedented rates of growth in the nation's cities present a major development challenge in a country whose population has until recently been predominantly rural. In addition to the physical impact of decades of conflict and under-investment in towns and cities, the institutions responsible for managing urban development struggle to keep pace with the changes that are taking place. While urbanization offers new opportunities for social and economic development, meeting the expectations of an expanding and increasingly young urban population for a secure and healthy living and working environment will require innovative approaches, sound planning and increased levels of support from the international community.

This document sets out the strategic direction of UN-Habitat's engagement in Afghanistan for the period 2016-19. Aligned with the national development goals and priorities of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Country Programme Document draws on lessons learned from UN-Habitat's experience working hand-in-hand with communities across the nation over the past 22 years and on our understanding of the ongoing process of transformation in human settlements across the country.

In the context of its global mission to 'promote socially

and environmentally sustainable human settlements development and the achievement of adequate shelter for all', and guided by the recently-approved Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (especially Goal 11), UN-Habitat's programme in Afghanistan aims to 'transform lives by enhancing access to urban land, housing and services, while making systems and institutions responsive to the views and needs of all Afghans'. In order to realize our vision of prosperous and healthy settlements whose residents can live in security and harmony, while contributing to development, the focus of UN-Habitat's work over the coming four years will be on three key thematic areas:

- **Planned and Well-Governed Settlements** to enhance the government's capacity to guide the development of human settlements in a participatory, equitable and accountable manner while ensuring access to basic services;
- **Inclusive Settlements** to improve access to affordable land and housing, services and infrastructure for all residents of human settlements; and
- **Prosperous Settlements** to contribute to towns and cities being hubs of economic activity that generate sustainable employment and enable residents particularly the young to acquire productive skills.



SITUATION ANALYSIS

NATIONAL CONTEXT

Afghanistan is a landlocked, mountainous state situated between central and south Asia with an estimated population of 30 million and a land area of 653,000 square kilometres. The geography of the country has profoundly influenced its history and development, with patterns of settlement largely reflecting established land trade routes. The central highlands effectively divide the country into two geographic zones; a southwestern plateau and a fertile northern plain. Distinct ethnic and socio-political characteristics have emerged in these zones, where communities have asserted a degree of autonomy from central authority.

Since late 2001, when international military intervention removed the Taliban administration, Afghanistan has experienced a period of political transition. A Transitional Administration was formed in 2002 under provisions agreed at the landmark Bonn Conference and endorsed by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1385 (UNSCR 1325). In June 2002 an Emergency Loya Jirga (an assembly of representatives from across Afghanistan) endorsed the transitional process, under which a constitution was drafted and presented in December 2003 to a Constitutional Loya Jirga. Presidential elections were held in October 2004, with elections for the National Assembly and provincial councils in September 2005. The second Presidential elections were held in 2009, with National Assembly and provincial council elections taking place in 2010. A third presidential election took place in April 2014, with a second round run-off in June 2014, and with a National Unity Government (NUG) formed in September 2014.

The political transition in Afghanistan has taken place in a context of demographic change that has wide-ranging implications for the development of the country. With natural population growth at between 2.2% and 2.6% annually, nearly half (47%) are under 15 years of age, and 67% of all Afghans under 25 years of age.

Since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2002, 5.7 million refugees have returned to Afghanistan, and in many cases the skills or education they acquired abroad has facilitated their integration. Similar to the predicament of the growing numbers of internally displaced people, most of those who resettle in urban areas face intense competition for jobs, housing, access to basic services and infrastructure. They represent the vanguard of the urban poor, whose needs present urban planners and government authorities an immense challenge.

Since 2014 Afghanistan has faced considerable

challenges largely as a result of the drawdown of international assistance. The economy, which grew at an average GDP growth rate of between 7% and 9% per annum since 2004 has contracted, with growth rates for 2014 and projections for 2015 at 2.0% and 2.5% respectively. Unemployment, under-employment and food insecurity have increased and the security situation has deteriorated, particularly in urban areas, which are adding to the fragility of Afghanistan's reconstruction efforts.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND PRIORITIES

Since 2002 Afghanistan has been the focus of the largest aid effort in modern history, with pledges of civilian assistance by mid-2012 amounting to over USD60 billion.¹ External aid during 2011 was equivalent to the country's entire GDP.² Initially the bulk of aid was delivered through contractors or NGOs, but efforts have been made of late to ensure that it is 'on-budget' and delivered through line ministries and local authorities, so as to strengthen official capacity and ensure that government leads the process of development.

Twelve major international conferences between 2001 and 2012 provided a platform for the Afghan government and its international partners to discuss national development priorities. Donors progressively aligned their investments with the Government's 22 National Priority Programmes,³ which emerged from the 2008 Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS). In the 2012 Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF) donors identified a number of benchmarks⁴ against which further pledges would be made. The need for strengthened local governance was one of the issues identified in a review of progress against these carried out in July 2013.

It is widely acknowledged that an effective and accountable Afghan government at central as well as at sub-national levels will be as crucial to the nation's stability as any of the military gains achieved over the past decade with international support. There have been significant development gains since 2002 in health (60% of the population now has access to primary health care and essential hospital services), education (2.7 million girls are currently enrolled in schools), rural livelihoods, irrigation and microfinance along with improvements in public

1. The flow of external aid peaked in 2011, when \$16 billion was reportedly disbursed. 28% of this was disbursed on governance, 18% on infrastructure, 17% on agriculture and rural development and 11% on health.

2. The Economist, July 2012.

3. Donors committed then to align 80% of spending with the NPPs and ensure that 50% of funds are on-budget.

4. Among these were the holding of credible, inclusive, and transparent elections, improved access to justice and respect for human rights, improved integrity of public financial management and the commercial banking, and enhancement of revenue systems and budget execution.



financial management. Launched in 2003, the flagship National Solidarity Programme (NSP) of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development supports self-governance and development through Community Development Councils covering 361 districts in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan, where over 68,000 development projects have been financed.

The importance of effective and accountable sub-national governance (Provincial, Municipal, District and Village levels) in achieving development, peace and security is reflected in key national development frameworks. Pillar 3: 'Economic and Social Development' of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) notes: "effective management of the rapid urbanization process will make a significant contribution to the recovery of the country. The ANDS strategic objective is to ensure increased access to improved services and affordable shelter, while promoting sustainable economic growth."⁵

Two National Priority Programmes (NPP) guide this HCPD: The National Programme for Local Governance (in the Governance Cluster) and the Urban Management and Support Programme (in the Infrastructure Development Cluster). These are closely aligned. The former deals with municipal

service delivery and municipal governance, of which Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) is the lead Executing Agency; and the latter deals with urban infrastructure development and urban management more broadly.

The NPP on Local Governance notes the importance of Municipalities as a sub-national governance entity: "Municipal Administration requires special attention, not only because of the particularities of municipalities as a sub-national government entity, but also because of their growing significance in the context of Afghanistan, particularly the problems related to the booming urban population, the need for improved urban management, and to address the growth of the urban-rural divide."⁶

Despite gains made over the last decade, development in some areas and sectors remains hostage to local political dynamics that undermines the effectiveness of government institutions, some of which have capacity gaps that limit budget execution⁷ and slow policy development. Moreover institutions at both the national and local levels remain prone to nepotism and corruption,⁸ the burden of which falls disproportionately on the poor, who are most likely to suffer from the diversion of badly needed resources

6. GoIRA (2010) NPP Local Governance. p.64

7. Especially with a greater proportion of resources being on-budget. Afghanistan Economic Update, April 2013, World Bank.

8. An estimated \$3.9 billion was paid in bribes in 2011. Corruption in Afghanistan: recent patterns and trends, UNODC 2012.

5. GoIRA (2008) Afghanistan National Development Strategy, Executive Summary. ANDS Secretariat, Kabul.

intended for development at the community level. As a result, there is growing public resentment at the manner in which a significant proportion of the extraordinary levels of investment made by the international community since 2002 have largely been 'captured' by a privileged urban elite, who have exploited weak institutions and poor governance mechanisms for their own personal benefit.

Despite the levels of external assistance made available in recent years, 36% of Afghans continue to live in poverty⁹ and, at USD528,¹⁰ have one of the world's lowest average per capita incomes. Afghanistan is ranked 175th among all nations on the UNDP Human Development Index.¹¹ A series of bumper harvests and generous levels of international spending on public services have buoyed economic growth, but the prospects for the future are uncertain at best.¹² Foreign direct investment represented an estimated 2% of the nation's GDP in 2012, indicating a lack of business confidence, reflected in the recent renegotiation of concessions under the Resource Corridor Initiative which foresees exploitation of the nation's very considerable oil, gas and mineral resources.

The Afghan government elected in 2014 has listed urban development as one of the key priorities in its Reform Programme "Realising Self-Reliance: Reform and Renewed Partnership" of 20th November 2014. Improving government efficiency and effectiveness calls for making:

"Cities are the economic drivers for development. In order to do so we need to improve living conditions and service delivery in urban centers. Urbanization will need to be managed by reducing disparity between rural and urban areas and thereby controlling rural-to-urban migration. The government plans to appoint mayors based on merit and a public consultation

into cities that already cannot provide adequate services and are experiencing economic contraction." An important aspect of reducing disparity between rural and urban areas is the strengthening of citizen-based governance:

"Afghanistan's underserved poor need to achieve a basic level of economic services in order to participate productively in the arenas of economic growth. To help poor communities reach a minimum level of services, we will develop a Citizens Charter that will set a threshold of core services to be provided to all communities. The government will formalize Community Development Councils as village councils through a new law, which will become the mechanism for line agencies to plan and manage local level service delivery. The government will continue to help make Community Development Councils inclusive and representative bodies."

The Government is currently embarking on a revision of the National Priority Programme (NPP). One of the first four to be developed is the NPP on Urban Development (U-NPP). Urban Working Group has been established under the leadership of MUDA, with IDLG/DMM, Kabul Municipality, ARAZI, AUWSSC, Deh Sabz (Kabul New City), among others. UN-Habitat is acting as the technical secretariat and supporting these institutions. The draft overall framework for the U-NPP has three pillars:

- 1. Strengthening urban governance and institutions;**
- 2. Ensuring adequate housing for all;**
- 3. Harnessing the urban economy.**

HUMAN SETTLEMENT CONTEXT

Over the past decade Afghanistan has witnessed

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https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5_18496

