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Consideration of accreditation proposals and activities – Addendum XVI

Accreditation assessment of APL197

Summary

This document contains the recommendation by the Accreditation Panel for accreditation of applicant 197 (APL197), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), based in Kenya, in accordance with the revised accreditation framework adopted in paragraph (a) of decision B.42/13, and includes the screening report confirming the applicant meets the screening requirements contained in part 1 of annex II to document GCF/B.42/04/Add.01.

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) is an international access entity headquartered in Kenya. The applicant is an intergovernmental organization and United Nations system entity. It serves as the United Nations programme for sustainable urbanization and coordinates the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, as well as multiple indicators on Sustainable Development Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities).
2. The applicant applied and was assessed in accordance with the revised accreditation framework (adopted in decision B.42/13, paragraph (a)). The applicant is eligible for, and applied under, the fast-track accreditation process (adopted in decision B.08/03, paragraphs (c–h)), as an Adaptation Fund multilateral implementing entity. As per decision B.42/13, paragraph (i), UN-Habitat’s application has been assessed by the AP against the relevant screening requirements as contained in table 1 of annex III to document GCF/B.42/04/Add.01.¹ As part of this assessment, the AP consulted the applicant’s website and third-party websites to complement the information provided in the application.
3. The applicant has applied to be accredited for the following parameters under the GCF fit-for-purpose approach:²
 - (a) **Access modality:** international access;
 - (b) **Track:** fast track; and
 - (c) **Maximum environmental and social risk category:** medium risk (category B/intermediation 2 (B/I-2)).³

II. Contribution to GCF mandate and strategic goals

4. The applicant is found to have the potential to support GCF in implementing its Strategic Plan for 2024–2027 with respect to:
 - (a) The indicative projects/programmes that the applicant intends to submit to GCF;
 - (b) Alignment of the said indicative pipeline with country programming priorities, as the applicant states that project development is designed to align with developing countries’ nationally determined contributions (NDCs), national adaptation plans (NAPs) and other national climate and development strategies. The applicant also reports experience in supporting countries to localize NDCs and strengthen climate investment pipelines;
 - (c) The potential contribution to the adaptation and mitigation balance in the GCF portfolio and diversification of GCF results areas. The applicant’s proposed programming focuses on mitigation, adaptation and cross-cutting climate action through urban resilience, climate-resilient infrastructure, sustainable cities, sustainable mobility, nature-based solutions and low-emission urban development; and
 - (d) Mobilizing and deployment of climate finance at scale.

¹ See <https://www.greenclimate.fund/board-document/gcf-b42-04-add01>.

² Refer to section IV below for the recommendations by the AP.

³ As per the revised Environmental and Social Policy adopted in decision B.BM-2021/18, category B is defined as “Activities with potential limited adverse environmental and/or social risks and impacts that, individually or cumulatively, are few, generally site-specific, largely reversible, and readily addressed through mitigation measures” and intermediation 2 is defined as “When an intermediary’s existing or proposed portfolio includes, or is expected to include, substantial financial exposure to activities with potential limited adverse environmental or social risks and impacts that are few, generally site-specific, largely reversible, and readily addressed through mitigation measures; and includes no activities with potential significant adverse environmental and social risks and impacts that, individually or cumulatively, are diverse, irreversible, or unprecedented.”

5. UN-Habitat has an extensive international operational presence and networks that are relevant to the implementation of climate-related projects and programmes. The applicant operates through more than 90 country and programme offices, working across developing countries, least developed countries and small island developing States. Through its role as the United Nations focal point for sustainable urbanization and its mandate to coordinate implementation of the New Urban Agenda, the applicant maintains longstanding relationships with national and local governments, development partners and urban stakeholders.
6. The applicant intends to support countries in localizing their NDCs, advancing multilevel climate action and strengthening climate investment pipelines. Through initiatives such as Resilient Settlements for the Urban Poor, climate finance clinics, communities of practice, technical assistance and capacity-building programmes, the applicant works with national, regional and local institutions to strengthen climate planning, project development and access to climate finance. UN-Habitat has a broad portfolio of programming across Africa, Asia-Pacific, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and other developing regions, providing the applicant with established implementation networks and experience in diverse country contexts.
7. The proposed programmes and projects the applicant intends to submit to GCF are aligned with national development priorities and climate change strategies, including the respective NDCs and NAPs. All projects and programmes by UN-Habitat are reviewed through its Programme Review Committee process to ensure consistency with the organization's climate mandate and applicable strategies. This approach is designed to align proposed activities with the priorities of developing countries as articulated in their NDCs, NAPs and green growth strategies. This includes the localization of NDCs, climate-resilient urban infrastructure, nature-based solutions and locally led adaptation initiatives, among others.
8. The applicant intends to contribute to the GCF mandate through its strategic frameworks and planned programming, with climate action embedded in its 2026–2029 Strategic Plan. This is also reflected in the United Nations Habitat Assembly resolution on enhancing interlinkages between urbanization and climate change resilience. The applicant identifies climate action, sustainable urbanization and resilient development as core elements of its institutional mandate and programming approach.
9. UN-Habitat has experience in financing and implementing climate-related projects and programmes. From 2020 and 2025, the applicant reports managing a portfolio with a total grant value of USD 1.82 billion. This portfolio includes both adaptation and mitigation activities across multiple geographic regions and. Some examples of the current portfolio (2020 – 2025) under implementation include the following:
 - (a) USD 13.99 million (grant) for Improved Resilience of Coastal Communities in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana;
 - (b) USD 10 million (grant) for Increased the Climate Change Resilience to Water Scarcity and Flooding in the Tuban Delta in Yemen;
 - (c) USD 5.2 million (grant) Supporting the shift towards Integrated, Low-Carbon and Nature-Positive Neighborhoods in Nairobi, Kenya, funded by a Global Environment Facility;
 - (d) USD 10 million (grant) for Increasing Climate Resilience Through Small-Scale Infrastructure Investments and Enhancing Adaptive Capacity of Vulnerable Communities in Kampot and Koh Kong Provinces in Cambodia; and
 - (e) USD 10 million (grant) for Building Climate Resilient Cities and Communities in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

10. The applicant has also previously served as the readiness delivery partner for seven projects under the GCF's Readiness and Preparatory Support Programme, in Cambodia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Lao PDR and Yemen.

III. Screening report

3.1 Screening requirements assessed by the Secretariat

3.1.1 Legal status

11. The applicant, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, is a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly of the United Nations established by resolution 56/206 of 21 December 2001 adopted by the General Assembly (which transformed the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements) with its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya.

12. The applicant has provided evidence that it has legal personality, the legal capacity and authority to enter into contracts, and can bear financial and legal responsibility for performing those obligations. Based on the evidence submitted, the Secretariat finds that the applicant meets the "legal status" screening requirement.

3.1.2 International access applicant's support to direct access applicants

13. The applicant intends to support direct access entities and other national and subnational institutions through technical assistance, climate finance readiness support, capacity-building and project preparation activities. Through its international network and country-level engagement, the applicant reports supporting partners in areas including project development, environmental and social safeguards, fiduciary standards, gender considerations, stakeholder engagement, monitoring and evaluation, and climate finance access.

14. Based on the evidence submitted, the Secretariat finds that the applicant meets the "international access applicant's support to direct access applicants" screening requirement.

3.2 Screening requirements assessed by the Accreditation Panel

15. As per paragraph 2 above, the applicant is eligible for, and applied under, the fast-track accreditation process as an Adaptation Fund multilateral implementing entity. The screening requirements for corporate governance and internal control, financial management, procurement, project management, and integrity except for the investigation function are considered to have been met by way of fast-track accreditation.

3.2.1 Integrity

16. The screening requirement for integrity is considered to have been met by way of fast-track accreditation, with the exception of the investigation function.

17. As a programme established by a United Nations General Assembly resolution, UN-Habitat falls under the accountability framework of the United Nations Secretariat. UN-Habitat document HSP/EB.2020/24, titled "Organizational and personnel accountability within the United Nations Human Settlements Programme: implementing the accountability framework of the United Nations Secretariat",⁴ outlines how the accountability framework of the United Nations Secretariat is applied to the specific environment of UN-Habitat. Several independent bodies provide oversight of UN-Habitat. The United Nations's Board of Auditors and Office of

⁴ See <https://docs.un.org/en/HSP/EB.2020/24>.

Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) have exclusive authority to conduct external and internal audits, respectively, of UN-Habitat's operations and accounts. Both are operationally independent of UN-Habitat, follow internationally accepted auditing standards and publish their reports. The Joint Inspection Unit is the independent external oversight body of the United Nations mandated to conduct evaluations, inspections and investigations system-wide. The Independent Audit Advisory Committee plays a distinct, higher-level role in advising the General Assembly on the effectiveness of the Board of Auditors' and OIOS's work, providing an extra layer of oversight.

18. OIOS has an independent mandate from the United Nations General Assembly for conducting investigations. Its terms of reference are defined in General Assembly resolution 48/218 B⁵ and further detailed in United Nations document ST/SGB/2002/7.⁶ OIOS serves as the United Nations Secretariat's central authority for receiving reports on fraud, mismanagement or misconduct, as also clarified on UN-Habitat's website in the Accountability and Transparency section, with a link to an online OIOS form to report wrongdoing.⁷ Guidance on how OIOS conducts investigations as well as the detailed OIOS Investigations Manual are available on its website.⁸ The OIOS Investigations Division reviews all reports of possible wrongdoing and has discretionary authority either to investigate a matter itself or refer it to another entity for appropriate action. Where misconduct is established, its findings and recommendations are transmitted to the United Nations Secretary-General. UN-Habitat's Legal Unit coordinates with OIOS to help manage complaints and ensure compliance with OIOS investigative procedures. UN-Habitat is responsible for implementing OIOS recommendations and regularly receives feedback through oversight reports, including to its Executive Board. The latest OIOS report presented to the Executive Board of UN-Habitat in November 2025 documents activities conducted during the year and reports on investigations carried out.⁹ These reports provide trend information to senior management and help to inform UN-Habitat's risk management and internal policy improvements.

19. The AP finds that the applicant meets the screening requirements for integrity.

3.2.2 On-lending/blending

20. The applicant did not apply to be assessed against this screening requirement.

3.2.3 Revised Environmental and Social Policy and ESS standards

A. Revised Environmental and Social Policy

21. UN-Habitat's environmental and social management system, first established in December 2016, is the agency-wide Environmental and Social Safeguards System (ESSS), supported by the ESSS Guidelines and by ESSS Version 3.1 (from December 2021), which is the operational version. The ESSS contains a formal policy statement, UN-Habitat's Commitment to Environmental and Social Sustainability, which is issued at programme level and binds the organization as a whole. The policy statement is accompanied by the governance arrangements that give it effect, the allocation of roles and responsibilities for safeguards, and the procedures for identifying, assessing, managing, monitoring and reporting environmental and social risks and impacts throughout the project and programme cycle. The applicant therefore has a

⁵ See <https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/48/218B>

⁶ See <https://docs.un.org/en/st/SGB/2002/7>.

⁷ See <https://unhabitat.org/about-us/accountability>.

⁸ See <https://oios.un.org/en/other-documents>, <https://oios.un.org/en/investigations>, and <https://oios.un.org/en/how-we-investigate>.

⁹ See https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2025/11/annual_report_un_ethics.

formally adopted institutional policy on environmental and social risks, impacts and safeguarding, and that policy is operationalized rather than declaratory.

B. Environmental and social management system

22. The ESSS Guidelines identify the standards the applicant applies, commit it to comply with relevant national laws and regulations, and incorporate environmental and social principles corresponding to the International Finance Corporation Performance Standards, requiring their application across the project cycle.

23. UN-Habitat maintains a zero-tolerance approach to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH), consistent with the United Nations Secretary-General's standards. The framework applies to UN-Habitat personnel and extends relevant prevention and compliance obligations to implementing partners and contractors. Several instruments¹⁰ establish prevention measures, mandatory reporting, a survivor-centred response, investigation procedures and obligations that extend to implementing partners, staff training and accountability mechanisms. In 2021, the applicant designated SEAH and conduct-and-discipline focal points specifically to implement the organization's zero-tolerance policy.

24. ESSS Version 3.1 sets out the applicant's procedures for managing environmental and social risks and impacts across the activity cycle. Proposed activities are screened, assigned a risk category and scoped; activities of higher risk proceed to environmental and social impact assessment, and management measures are consolidated in an environmental and social management plan. Stakeholder engagement, disclosure and grievance handling are required during an activity's preparation and continue through implementation. Implementation is monitored, with provision for adaptive management where risks change or where measures prove insufficient, and requirements extend through reporting to activity closure. The procedures assign each step to a stage of the cycle and specify the output that stage must produce, which allows the application of the system to be traced on a given project.

25. The applicant demonstrated a track record of identifying and assessing environmental and social risks and impacts under these procedures. The submission includes screening reports for Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Lebanon and Nepal, scoping reports, environmental and social impact assessments for Yemen and for the Enhancing Development through Energy in Southern Africa (EDESA) project, and environmental and social management plans, including for housing rehabilitation in Lebanon and for emergency shelter operations. The examples cover a range of sectors, risk categories and operating contexts, including humanitarian and post-crisis settings, where safeguards application is more demanding and where the applicant carries a substantial part of its portfolio. The documentation shows assessment being carried out at the stage of the cycle at which the ESSS requires it and being used to define management measures rather than to record compliance after decisions were taken.

26. The applicant also demonstrated a track record of monitoring and managing environmental and social risks during implementation. The evidence includes independent audits of operations in Burkina Faso and Egypt, mid-term evaluations for Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Urban Resilience Programme, periodic implementation reports, monitoring documentation, and project-level environmental and social management plans containing monitoring indicators. These materials show supervision during delivery, performance tracked against indicators, and corrective action identified and pursued where

¹⁰ UN-Habitat's 2025 Protection against Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment Policy, issued under Executive Board symbol HSP/EB.2025/9; the Secretary-General's Bulletin ST/SGB/2003/13 on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse; the United Nations Implementing Partner Protocol on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse; the United Nations Common PSEA Assessment; and the Victims' Rights Statement.

implementation diverged from the agreed measures. Environmental and social performance is therefore subject to assurance functions that are independent of the delivery teams.

27. UN-Habitat delivers a significant share of its portfolio through implementing partners and contractors, and its system extends to those entities. The ESSS establishes safeguard obligations for implementing partners and contractors, and the ESSS Guidelines require due diligence before engagement, safeguards clauses in contractual arrangements, supervision of partner performance during delivery, and monitoring and reporting by the partner. The United Nations Implementing Partner Protocol on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse extends a specific and higher-risk category of obligation to those entities and sets out how allegations involving them are handled. The audits and evaluations referred to above examined delivery arrangements in which partners were involved and provide evidence that partner performance is monitored in practice.

28. On external communications, ESSS Version 3.1 requires stakeholder engagement throughout the activity cycle, including mechanisms for receiving feedback and for managing grievances during implementation, which gives third parties a route to raise environmental and social matters with the applicant and creates an obligation to respond. Implementation was demonstrated by the Fiji Resilient Informal Settlements Project, in which a grievance and communication poster was displayed publicly at the site so that residents could see how to contact the project and lodge a complaint. In a settlement upgrading context, a visible on-site notice is the form of communication most likely to reach the people affected.

29. The applicant has an information disclosure process that applies to the environmental and social information generated at each stage of the activity cycle. Disclosure is made in locations and formats accessible to the communities concerned, including at or near the activity site and in the language used locally, and in parallel through the publicly accessible UN-Habitat ESSS web page, which also carries the ESSS Guidelines and the standards the applicant applies. The obligation continues during implementation, with monitoring information on environmental and social performance made available to the same parties. Evidence of application was provided in the environmental and social impact assessments for Yemen and EDESA, and the screening reports for Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Lebanon and Nepal record the disclosure of assessment findings to affected communities and authorities.

30. On public consultation, the ESSS requires consultation with affected people and other stakeholders as part of activity preparation and implementation, operationalized through the screening, scoping and impact assessment stages described above. The project documentation submitted, in particular the screening reports and the impact assessments for Yemen and EDESA, records consultation being carried out during preparation and the results being reflected in the assessment. The applicant's mandate places it in continuing contact with residents of the settlements in which it works, and the consultation practice documented is consistent with this operating model.

31. The institutional arrangements supporting the system consist of defined governance arrangements for safeguards decisions, designated personnel, responsibilities allocated across the activity cycle, and supporting tools and systems. The ESSS assigns specific responsibilities to safeguards personnel and to project teams at each stage, distinguishing the tasks of those preparing an activity, those reviewing and clearing it, and those supervising delivery, so that clearance does not rest with the team proposing the activity. These arrangements sit within the wider United Nations accountability architecture, which supplies oversight, audit and investigation functions that the applicant does not need to replicate internally.

32. The personnel carrying out these responsibilities are appropriately qualified. The submission documents safeguards professionals with relevant qualifications and experience, dedicated institutional roles, formal training arrangements and continuing capacity-building through which staff maintain and extend their expertise. Staffing is commensurate with the

applicant's operational scale and with the range of contexts in which it works, including fragile and post-crisis settings, where safeguards decisions are taken under time pressure and with limited information.

C. Grievance redress mechanism

33. UN-Habitat has established publicly accessible channels for receiving environmental and social grievances, complemented by project-level grievance mechanisms. The available evidence demonstrates provisions for accessibility, confidentiality, anonymous complaints, non-retaliation, timely handling, appeal and escalation to the UN-Habitat environmental and social safeguards team.

34. At the activity level, the ESSS requires a grievance mechanism to be established as part of the activity's design and to operate during implementation, so that affected people can raise concerns while they can still be addressed. The Fiji Resilient Informal Settlements Project showed this in practice: a grievance and communication poster was displayed publicly at the site, setting out how complaints could be lodged; this demonstrated that the mechanism was accessible to the people entitled to use it, rather than existing only in project documentation. Evidence from other implemented projects demonstrates provisions for anonymous complaints, non-retaliation, confidentiality and survivor-centred handling of SEAH grievances. For example, the Beirut Environmental and Social Management Framework - ESMF provides for anonymous complaints, confidentiality, SEAH referral pathways, a survivor-centred approach, dedicated environmental and social safeguards responsibility, and allocation of human resources for resolving grievances within defined time frames.

35. Complaints may also be submitted institutionally,¹¹ differentiated by the nature of the complaint. Allegations of SEAH and other misconduct can be reported online through the Office of Internal Oversight Services facility, which the applicant's Accountability and Transparency web page links to, alongside the Ethics Office, the Joint Inspection Unit and the internal justice system. Environmental and social concerns, risks, grievances or complaints relating to the implementation of UN-Habitat projects and programmes can be submitted through dedicated form,¹² by email,¹³ by letter, or by hand delivery at UN-Habitat headquarters in Nairobi or at any UN-Habitat office. A complainant therefore has an identified route for each category, including routes requiring neither internet access nor contact with project staff.

36. These channels are institutionally separate from project management, and cases are handled by dedicated staff independently of the project or programme concerned and in accordance with due process, so that a complainant for whom raising a matter locally would not be safe or effective retains an avenue that does not depend on the persons concerned. Grievances are communicated in anonymized form and personal information is protected against reprisals or retaliation. Information on complaints, their status and their resolution is instead reported annually to UN-Habitat's governing bodies, including the Executive Board, and to the United Nations Secretariat, redacted and publicly disclosed. The Accountability and Transparency web page links to the latest of those reports, on the activities of OIOS and the United Nations Ethics Office (November 2025) and on action against SEAH (April 2026).

37. The AP finds that the applicant meets the screening requirements for the revised environmental and social policy and the screening requirements for environmental and social safeguards standards for activities of up to medium environmental and social risk (category B/I-2), as applied for.

¹¹ See <https://unhabitat.org/about-us/accountability>.

¹² See <https://unhabitat.org/un-habitat-global-grievance-redress-mechanism-grm>

¹³ unhabitat.esss@un.org

3.2.4 Indigenous Peoples Policy

38. UN-Habitat is aware of the requirements relating to Indigenous Peoples and has embedded commitments within the ESSS to address the rights and interests of Indigenous Peoples during activity preparation and implementation. Indigenous Peoples are treated in the ESSS as a distinct area of environmental and social risk within screening and categorization, so that the presence of Indigenous Peoples in an activity area is identified at the outset and triggers the corresponding assessment, engagement and management requirements, rather than being absorbed into a general stakeholder consultation obligation. Indigenous Peoples live in urban and peri-urban areas and hold rights over land affected by housing, settlement upgrading and urban infrastructure activities, and the applicant's commitments are framed to apply in those circumstances.

39. The applicant demonstrated that awareness and commitments to Indigenous Peoples are embedded in the ESSS.

40. The AP finds that the applicant meets the screening requirement for the Indigenous Peoples Policy.

3.2.5 Updated Gender Policy

41. UN-Habitat's Policy and Plan for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in Urban Development and Human Settlements, with the Gender Equality Action Plan attached to it, is the applicant's institutional gender policy and implementation framework. The policy is aligned with the principles and requirements of the GCF Updated Gender Policy and Gender Action Plan 2020–2023, including commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women in the design and delivery of its activities. The action plan operates as an accountability framework, with a results framework for each subprogramme and for the executive management, specified institutional roles, and a mechanism for allocating and tracking financial resources.

42. The applicant provided evidence of procedures that carry the policy into operation across the activity cycle. Gender considerations are incorporated at the design stage, are reflected in implementation arrangements and are monitored and reported rather than being addressed only at appraisal. The applicant's screening documentation records gender analysis alongside other environmental and social considerations, which places gender within the same procedural sequence as the rest of the safeguards system.

43. Dedicated capacity exists in defined roles. The 2023 Terms of Reference for Gender Focal Points set out responsibilities for implementing the gender policy, covering technical advice, quality assurance, capacity-building and monitoring. The submission includes four curricula vitae of staff with professional experience in gender mainstreaming, gender-responsive programming and women's empowerment, documentation on the Gender Champions arrangement and records of staff participation in internal and external gender training. Capacity is therefore both designated and maintained.

44. On diversity and inclusion, UN-Habitat, as a United Nations Secretariat programme, is covered by the 2017 System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity, which sets a parity range of 47 to 53 per cent. As at 31 December 2025, the applicant reported 343 staff, 55 per cent women and 45 per cent men, and 51 per cent women among 191 international staff, placing it within that range.

45. The applicant demonstrated a track record of applying the policy in operations, for example the "Peaceful Natural Resources Management in the Koliba-Corubal Basin" project (2023), the field site monitoring report (2022), the ESSS screening report for Afghanistan (2021), and the ESSS screening report for the "Azerbaijan Climate Resilient Cities and

Communities” project (2025). These cover different regions and operating conditions, including a fragile setting, and show gender considerations recorded in screening and in monitoring during implementation.

46. The AP finds that the applicant meets the screening requirements for the updated gender policy.

IV. Recommendations

47. Based on the assessment, the applicant is found to have met all applicable screening requirements.

48. Therefore, the AP recommends APL197 for accreditation and that it be accredited for **maximum environmental and social risk category**: medium risk (category B/I-2).
