

## **Summary of the seventh meeting of the ad hoc working group on stakeholder engagement policy of the Executive Board**

**Wednesday, 16 November 2022** – 10:00 – 12:00 East Africa Time – Conference Room 4

**Chair:** Mr. Patrick Egloff

Deputy Permanent Representative of Switzerland to UN-Habitat

### **Agenda item 1 - Adoption of the Agenda**

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 am EAT. The working group adopted the provisional agenda for its seventh meeting without any change as follows:

1. Adoption of the provisional Agenda
2. Continuation of discussions on the revised draft 1.0 of stakeholder engagement policy
3. Any other matters

### **Agenda item 2 – Continuation of discussions on the revised draft 1.0 of stakeholder engagement policy**

**Under this item, the Chair gave the following background:**

- i. The Chair recalled that the Zero Draft namely, Chapters 1-9, served as the basis for discussions by the ad hoc working group at its fourth and fifth meetings held respectively on 21 September 2022 and 5 October 2022.
- ii. The Chair noted that after these 2 meetings, it received additional written comments from 2 Member States and stakeholders had an opportunity to provide technical inputs to the Zero Draft.
- iii. The Chair indicated that it took every contribution received into account when developing the revised Zero Draft which can be accessed [here](#) .

The Chair recalled that the ad hoc working group, during its meeting held on 7 November 2022, discussed Chapters 1 to 4 of the revised Zero Draft.

**Upon invitation by the Chair, the ad hoc working group provided comments on Chapters 1 to 4 of the revised Zero Draft. The discussions highlighted the following:**

- i. One Member State referred to the definition of stakeholders contained in Chapter 4 of the revised Zero Draft and expressed reservations with respect to the fact that the definition includes coalitions or networks of organizations. The Member State recommended that a clause or a footnote be included in the definition of stakeholders to limit the involvement of coalitions or networks of organizations in the definition and to emphasize that only accredited organizations can attend.
- ii. One Member State enquired why children and youth were included in the definition of stakeholders contained in the revised Zero Draft. The Member State recommended the inclusion in the revised Zero Draft a reference to sustainable urban development as a pillar of UN-Habitat's core mandate. In addition, the Member State sought clarification on the relevance of including 'trade unions' as stakeholders in relation to the work of UN-Habitat.

**In light of the views expressed by Member States, the Secretariat responded as follows:**

- iii. The Secretariat informed that UN-Habitat works with stakeholders accredited to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which may include coalitions and networks, and gave the United Cities for Local Governments (UCLG) as an example. Entities belonging to this global network can only be represented by an accredited member of the network. The Secretariat noted, however, that coalitions and networks are allowed to structure themselves independently for their representation outside of the United Nations (UN) intergovernmental processes.
- iv. The Secretariat indicated that Children and Youth are one of the nine major groups of stakeholders recognized by the UN system. The Secretariat recalled that the groups of stakeholders were formalized in Agenda 21 which came out of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) or Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992. The Secretariat further noted that the inclusion of trade unions in the revised Zero Draft was crucial because of their importance in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, particularly those at the local government level which contribute to ensuring that the rights and entitlements of employees at the municipal level are voiced.

**Upon invitation by the Chair, the ad hoc working group provided comments on Chapter 6 - benefits for accredited stakeholders. The discussion highlighted the following:**

- v. One Member State reiterated the need to streamline the language used in the revised Zero Draft with the language of the rules of procedure of the United Nations Habitat Assembly, particularly rule 64 to rule 69. The need to cluster similar benefits together was highlighted. The policy should also capture other benefits such as stakeholders' ability to submit written submissions on the content, and to organize side events.

- vi. Additionally, the Member State sought clarity on paragraph 6.1 h, i and j related to (i) the creation of cross-linkages with other stakeholders working on global commitments relevant to UN-Habitat mandate, (ii) the wider dissemination by stakeholders of and adherence by stakeholders to UN-Habitat's policies and (iii) support for implementation, monitoring and accountability for norms and standards. The Member State expressed concern that these benefits were not coherent with the approved scope of the stakeholders' engagement policy, especially the focus on intergovernmental processes and not programmes. The Member State observed that (i) was a responsibility already captured, and recommended that (h) should be formulated as a simple higher level reference. The Member State recommended that in (j) there was need to reflect on what is a responsibility and a benefit.

**In light of the views expressed by Member States, the Secretariat responded as follows:**

- vii. The Secretariat indicated that 'the creation of cross-linkages' (paragraph 6.1-h) would allow UN-Habitat to explore opportunities for thematic partnerships with stakeholders of other UN organizations, and expand efforts for sharing knowledge and the incorporation of urban issues into other relevant agendas.
- viii. With respect to wider dissemination and adherence by stakeholders to UN-Habitat's policies (paragraph 6.1-i), the Secretariat noted that it would allow stakeholders to have a better knowledge of UN processes on policy formulation, norms, and standards. As stakeholders contribute to UN intergovernmental processes on the formulation of policy, norms, and standards, they also support their implementation, monitoring and accountability (paragraph 6.1-j).

**Upon invitation by the Chair, the ad hoc working group provided comments on Chapter 7 – responsibilities and obligations of accredited stakeholder. The discussions highlighted the following:**

- ix. One Member State sought clarification on the implications of paragraph 7.1-c on 'regular communication and reporting activities every four years'. The Member State further enquired if the timeline for the reporting of activities would be aligned to the cycle of the UN-Habitat Assembly. The Member State further commented that the stakeholder engagement mechanism (paragraph 7.1-d) in the revised Zero Draft was still unclear and remained bracketed at this stage.
- x. One Member State reiterated the importance for accredited stakeholders to adhere to the UN Charter and to the UN code of conduct to prevent all forms of harassment. The Member State further suggested that the language contained in the sentence "commitment to cooperation, collaboration, and coordination while respecting their specificities" (paragraph 7.1-e) should be clearer. The paragraph should also be clear on whether cooperation and collaboration are between Member States and stakeholders or among stakeholders themselves.
- xi. One Member State suggested that the two guiding principles contained in the Zero Draft namely: '*to protect UN-Habitat from any undue influence, especially in the process of setting up policies, norms, and standards*' and '*never*

*compromise UN-Habitat interpretation, integrity, independence and credibility*’ would fit better under Chapter 7 on the responsibilities and obligations of accredited stakeholders.

- xii. Several Member States called for a clearer distinction between the rights and responsibilities of stakeholders either in the form of an addendum or by rephrasing paragraph 7.1-a and making clear reference to the existing rules of procedures of the governing bodies of UN-Habitat.
- xiii. One Member State reiterated its concern with the reference made to ‘UN-Habitat Assembly and its subsidiary organs’ on paragraph 7.1-a and suggested to refer to “each of the governing bodies of UN-Habitat – UN-Habitat Assembly, Executive Board, Committee of Permanent Representatives and related ad hoc working groups throughout the document”.

**In light of the views expressed by Member States, the Secretariat responded as follows:**

- xiv. The Secretariat confirmed that the four-year reporting timeline provided in the revised Zero Draft is intended to coincide with the cycles of the sessions of the UN-Habitat Assembly. The Secretariat further commented that regular communications and reporting (paragraph 7.1-c) are crucial to allow UN-Habitat to identify relevant stakeholders in the field of sustainable urban development to be invited to key sessions of UN-Habitat intergovernmental meetings. In the absence of a stakeholder engagement policy and revised accreditation procedure, the current rules of procedure allow stakeholders accredited to the UN-Habitat Assembly or stakeholders in consultative status with ECOSOC to attend the UN-Habitat Assembly and the Executive Board. Additionally, UN-Habitat Governing Council resolutions 19/8 and 26/7 respectively provides for automatic accreditation of organizations accredited to Habitat II and Habitat III, and those in consultative status with the ECOSOC. These provisions make it difficult to identify which accredited organizations remained relevant to the mandates of UN-Habitat.
- xv. The Secretariat noted that the cooperation being referred to in the revised Zero Draft encompasses engagement amongst stakeholders themselves, engagement between UN-Habitat and stakeholders as well as the synergies between Member States, stakeholders, and UN-Habitat.
- xvi. With respect to the request to add a clause on sexual exploitation and abuse in Chapter 7, the Secretariat would adopt the sexual exploitation and abuse clause provided in the legal agreements signed with partners, using language already approved by the Office of the Legal Affairs in New York.

**Upon invitation by the Chair, the ad hoc working group provided comments on Chapter 8 - the role of UN-Habitat. The discussions highlighted the following:**

- xvii. One Member State sought clarification on the meaning of paragraph 8.1-b which reads as follows “*facilitate stakeholders’ accreditation and registration for participation in the public meetings*”. The Member State requested further information about paragraph 8.1-g related to the financing of UN-Habitat’s Partnership Unit.

- xviii. One Member State sought clarification on paragraph 8.1-c on “advocacy campaigns and initiatives” and on paragraph 8.1-h on “designated advisory groups and committees” in the context of stakeholder engagement in UN-Habitat’s governance process.
- xix. One Member States suggested the insertion of “subject to the availability of funding” in paragraph 8.1-d to manage stakeholder expectations.

**In light of the views expressed by Member States, the Secretariat responded as follows:**

- xx. The Secretariat noted that paragraph 8.1-b of the revised Zero Draft refers to the facilitation of stakeholders’ on-site registration to meetings of the governing bodies of UN-Habitat.
- xxi. The Secretariat noted that UN-Habitat’s Partnership Unit responsible for stakeholder engagement has a P-4 level staff member on regular budget and another staff member on extra-budgetary resources. The Secretariat also indicated that the Partnership Unit also actively engages with stakeholders virtually, which has proven to be efficient and cost effective.
- xxii. The Secretariat noted that under the current practice, the Executive Director established advisory groups on youth, gender issues and stakeholder engagement. These groups fall under the category of “other designated advisory groups and committees” being referred to in paragraph 8-h. The Secretariat also noted that advocacy campaigns and initiatives refer to the thematic knowledge shared by stakeholders during the meetings of the governing bodies of UN-Habitat.

**Upon invitation by the Chair, the ad hoc working group provided comments on Chapter 9 of the revised Zero Draft. The discussions highlighted the following:**

- xxiii. One Member State suggested that paragraph 9.1 made reference to UN-Habitat’s annual work programme and budget. The Member State also suggested simplifying the language used in paragraph 9.3 to read as follows: “*UN-Habitat will include stakeholder engagement in its resource mobilization strategy*”.
- xxiv. One Member suggested that the Secretariat provides the budget implications with respect to paragraph 9.2 taking into consideration the vast priorities to be implemented by UN-Habitat.
- xxv. One Member State suggested that the implementation of the stakeholder engagement policy should be considered in UN-Habitat’s annual work programme and budget. The Member State further suggested that paragraph 9.4 should read as follows: ‘*invite Member States to provide **additional** financial resources for the **further** implementation*’
- xxvi. Several Member States expressed the view that it may not be appropriate to include paragraph 9.4 in the revised Zero Draft.

**In light of the views expressed by Member States, the Secretariat responded as follows:**

- xxvii. The Secretariat will provide scenarios related to the implementation of the stakeholder engagement policy.

- xxviii. The Secretariat noted that the *rationale* of paragraph 9.3 is to focus of the inclusion of joint fundraising efforts related to the implementation of the stakeholder engagement policy into the wider UN-Habitat resource mobilization strategy. This inclusion would allow UN-Habitat to approach donors on stakeholder engagement matters.
- xxix. The Secretariat highlighted that paragraph 9.4 covers (i) the possibility of using the Trust Fund which was set up to support the participation of Least Developing Countries in the meetings of the governing bodies of UN-Habitat also for the participation of stakeholders and (ii) the principle of voluntary contributions.

**The Chair provided the following way forward:**

- xxx. The Chair provided the following roadmap with respect to the upcoming meetings of the working group:

<b>Wednesday 7 December 2022</b> – eighth meeting of ad hoc working group on the development of a stakeholder engagement policy	- Discussions on the stakeholder mechanism
<b>Wednesday 18 January 2023</b> – ninth meeting of ad hoc working group on the development of a stakeholder engagement policy	- Discussions on the accreditation procedure
<b>Wednesday 15 February 2023</b> – tenth meeting of ad hoc working group on the development of a stakeholder engagement policy	- Discuss of full draft of stakeholder engagement policy with accreditation procedure and stakeholder engagement mechanism.

- xxxi. The Chair acknowledged that two thematic issues that are yet to be discussed by the ad hoc working group a) the stakeholder engagement mechanism and b) the accreditation procedure.
- xxxii. The Chair noted that the Secretariat will provide a revised version of revised Zero Draft by early February 2023. After which, discussion on the stakeholder engagement policy with a view for the working group to finalize a draft for approval during the first session of the Executive Board for the year 2023.

**Agenda item 3 - Any other matters**

- xxxiii. The Director of UN-Habitat’s Liaison New-York Office, Mr. Chris Williams, provided a briefing on the practices of stakeholder engagement at the United

Nations Headquarters in New York. He elaborated on the establishment of an Advisory Board by the President of the General Assembly to advise on sustainable urban development issues within the context of the High-Level meeting to assess implementation of the New Urban Agenda since its adoption in October 2016. The advisory board comprised representatives drawn from member states, local and regional governments, professional associations, business and industry, and grassroots. This was a good example of stakeholder engagement in intergovernmental processes.

**The Chair adjourned the meeting at 12:10hrs East Africa Time.**

\*\*\*