

Follow up to the UNHA Resolutions Action plan and Roadmap to 2025

Resolution on International guidelines on people-centred smart cities (HSP/HA.2/Res.1)

Version 1 – [17.10.2023]

This roadmap and action plan has been prepared by the UN-Habitat Secretariat to reflect on the resolution on International guidelines on people-centred smart cities (HSP/HA.2/Res.1), adopted at the second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly on 09 June 2023. The Resolution was championed by Botswana, France, Germany, Pakistan and the Republic of Korea, and adopted by acclamation. This roadmap and action plan will be adjusted and updated, as needed and relevant, during the course of implementing the resolution.

Overview of resolution

As both urbanization and digitization accelerate at pace, it is urgent to maximize the benefits while mitigating the risks associated with applying digital technology for urban sustainability. As national and local governments and other actors rapidly engage with digital approaches to plan, manage, govern and finance urbanization, it is critical to ensure that people are placed at the centre of such efforts. Towards this end, during the second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly (5-9 June 2023), a resolution on international guidelines on people-centred smart cities was adopted, sponsored by France, Botswana, Germany, South Korea and Pakistan (Resolution HSP/HA.2/Res.1).

Requests for UN-Habitat

The Resolution conveys the following requests to the Executive Director of UN-Habitat:

- To initiate the development of international guidelines on people-centred smart cities as a non-binding framework for developing national and local smart city regulations, plans and strategies, which would ensure that digital urban infrastructure and data contribute to making cities and human settlements sustainable, inclusive and prosperous and respectful of human rights, and to present them for consideration and possible approval by the United Nations Assembly at its resumed second session;
- To ensure an inclusive consultation, including through the existing regional and country offices of UN-Habitat, with Member States and members of United Nations specialized agencies, national and international associations and organizations of local authorities recognized by the United Nations, relevant United Nations organizations, international finance institutions, development agencies, non-governmental organizations, academia, civil-society organizations, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders, taking into account traditional knowledge, in order to inform the drafting process with best practices, guidelines and lessons learned from different contexts and at different scales;
- To report to the Executive Board on progress in the implementation of the present resolution until the completion of the work.

Requests for Member States and other actors

According to the Resolution the followings are the main asks to member States and other actors:

- Member states are encouraged to implement people-centred smart city approaches in the preparation and implementation of smart city regulations, plans and strategies to promote equitable access to, and life-long education and training of all people in, the opportunities provided by data, digital infrastructure and digital services in cities and human settlements, and to favour transparency and accountability;

- Member states, national and international associations and organizations of local authorities recognized by the United Nations, relevant United Nations organizations, international finance institutions, development agencies, non-governmental organizations, academia, civil-society organizations, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders are also asked to play an active role in the consultation process that the Executive Director is requested to lead on;
- Moreover, Member States and members of United Nations specialized agencies and all relevant stakeholders are encouraged to participate in the development of the international guidelines on people-centred smart cities;
- Member States and all relevant stakeholders are encouraged to technically and financially support the process for the development of the guidelines, taking into account national circumstances;
- International multilateral financial institutions, regional development banks, development finance institutions and cooperation agencies are invited to provide support to Member States, in particular developing countries, in the application of people-centred smart cities approaches.

Relationship with prior and existing mandates, resolutions (Governing Council, GA, UNHA, etc)

The matter has not been comprehensively addressed in international agendas or UN resolutions, despite reference to threats and opportunities deriving from information and communication technologies (ICT) use in urban contexts made in international guidelines formerly endorsed by UN-Habitat Governing bodies. In fact, past UN-Habitat produced international guidelines on i) **Urban and Territorial Planning**; ii) **Decentralization and Access to Basic Services for all**; and iii) **Safer Cities and Human Settlements**, encourage Member States to explore digital opportunities by making use of environmentally sound technologies for urban planning, land registers, waste recycling and mapping systems, build sufficient capacity and ensure technologies and modes of delivery are adapted to populations' needs to access basic services. They also encourage national and local governments to develop and enforce appropriate regulations to protect rights to privacy, personal data access and promote algorithmic transparency in the use of technologies in cities.

The international guidelines address a key focus for UN-Habitat, also encapsulated in the New Urban Agenda in which member States stated, *"We commit ourselves to adopting a smart-city approach that makes use of opportunities from digitalization, clean energy and technologies, as well as innovative transport technologies, thus providing options for inhabitants to make more environmentally friendly choices and boost sustainable economic growth and enabling cities to improve their service delivery"*.

More broadly, the guidelines would support the acceleration of the SDGs targets at large, contributing to target 17.6 to *"fully operationalize the technology bank and science, technology and innovation capacity-building mechanism for least developed countries by 2017 and enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology"*.

In addition, the Ministerial Declaration of the second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly calls for promoting people-centred smart city approaches by enhancing UN-Habitat's existing work on smart cities (paragraph 13 h).

Implementing the resolution through the UN-Habitat Strategic Plan 2020-25

There are strong linkages between the international guidelines and UN-Habitat's Strategic Plan 2020–2025, where there is a focus on the *"Expanded deployment of frontier technologies and innovations for urban development"* (Outcome 2.3) to promote shared prosperity and sustainability (Domain of Change 2).

In addition, the [People Centred Smart Cities Flagship Programme](#), launched in 2020 to formalize UN-Habitat's efforts to support regional and country offices, as well as national, local and regional governments, is the umbrella under which the Agency responds to real-time challenges related to ICT technologies and smart cities, providing normative guidance, technical assistance and technology solutions globally.

The [United Nations Innovation Technology Accelerator for Cities](#), a three-way partnership between UN-Habitat, Hafen City University and UN-OICT is expected to contribute to the development of the guidelines and their operationalization.

Fundraising strategy and key opportunities

UN-Habitat is pursuing multiple advocacy, resource mobilization, and partnership opportunities to promote the guidelines, identify key stakeholders, ensure financial sustainability, and create partnerships. These include the following:

- **Mobilization of financial contributions from Member States and other stakeholders:** The cost of a fully inclusive preparatory process is estimated at \$1,179,384. So far, the Government of France has committed \$311,700. A \$867,684 shortfall is faced. As part of this, UN-Habitat is engaging with Member States and Permanent Missions also through the “Group of Friends of Smart Cities” to solicit financial contribution while also planning for alternative modalities of implementation should the funding gap not be closed.
- **Hosting of global and regional EGMs:** To overcome the funding gap for the global consultation process, UN-Habitat has launched a call for expression of interest to host global and regional expert group meetings as in-kind or financial support to ensure that the consultation process can be successfully continued.
- **Human resource capacities:** UN-Habitat is pursuing opportunities to secure UNVs for the preparatory process of the guidelines including through the ongoing agency wide UNV opening, and others.
- **Technical expertise contributions for World Smart Cities Outlook:** As a valuable reference for the preparations of the international guidelines, UN-Habitat is conducting a global assessment to produce an outlook report on smart cities. A call for proposals addressing academia, research centres, foundations and others has been launched for the assessment and aims to partially leverage on in-kind contributions from these entities.
- **Global advocacy and mobilization:** The guidelines have been presented to global and regional forums namely the Africa Smart Cities Investment Forum in Kigali (September 2023), the World Smart Cities Expo in Seoul (September 2023) and will be shared at the Smart City Expo World Congress (November 2023).

Challenges or gaps foreseen in the implementation of the Resolution

The preparatory process faces some critical challenges which require deliberate remedial measures and effective collaboration across actors. These include the following:

- a. **Balancing ambitions and resources:** as mentioned above the \$867,684 shortfall might necessitate a more streamlined and less consultative approach, if not covered. The dedication of additional resources remains time sensitive given the need to complete the guidelines in 2025.
- b. **Ensuring comprehensive consultations:** The issue of smart city development is a very vast and fast evolving topic with a wide range of actors and stakeholders, requiring extensive research and consultation. This complexity will be captured through the global assessment and multi-layered consultation process. However, the latter requires strong collaboration and efforts from both Member States and other stakeholders.
- c. **Managing a rigorous timeline:** The guidelines are expected to be completed by the resumed second session of the UN-Habitat Assembly in 2025. This necessitates UN-Habitat to undertake extensive consultations, gather data and statistics, execute recruitment procedures and drafting the guidelines with exceptional efficiency within a tight timeframe. The assurance of robust work quality within these stringent deadlines could greatly benefit from additional resources, both in terms of material contributions and financial support. This bolstered support will enhance internal capacity to effectively facilitate the afore-mentioned processes.

Roadmap for implementation of the Resolution including timelines (indicate if time-bound or open-ended)

The implementation of the resolution is a timebound process ending in 2025. UN-Habitat has drawn on its previous experience in preparing global guidelines to define a roadmap for the current preparatory process. Key milestones are expected to be achieved as per below timeline.

Milestone	Description	Date (tentative)
Call for nomination of experts	Member States are invited to nominate experts in the field of digitalization and smart cities to contribute to the guideline's development	September 2023
Call for Expression of Interest to host EGMs and regional consultations	Member States have been invited through a global call to host EGMs and regional consultations	September 2023
Call for partnership on the Global Assessment of Smart Cities	Call for academic partnership to carry out the World Smart Cities Outlook	September 2023
EWG kick-off	The global consultation process officially starts with the online meeting of the Expert Working Group, to detail the scope of work, the action plan and timeline	November 2023
World Smart Cities outlook Zero Draft	Preliminary results of the World Smart Cities Outlook to inform the first EGM	February 2024
Expert Group Meeting I	First in-person meeting of the EWG	February 2024
Regional Consultation Meeting I	In-person meeting of regional experts/groups	January to May 2024
World Smart Cities outlook Final Results	Results of the World Smart Cities Outlook to inform the second EGM	July 2024
Zero Draft of the International guidelines on People Centred Smart Cities	First draft of the international guidelines following the first EGM, detailing the key principles and the structure of the guidelines	August 2024
World Smart Cities Outlook Report	Publication of the study	October 2024
Expert Group Meeting II	Second in-person meeting of the EWG	October 2024
Draft of the International guidelines on People Centred Smart Cities	Second draft of the guidelines following the second EGM and circulated across the various consultation groups for final comments and remarks	December 2024
Regional Consultation Meeting II	In-person meeting of regional experts/groups	June to December 2024
Expert Group Meeting III	Third in-person meeting of the EWG	March 2025
International guidelines on People Centred Smart Cities	Final version of the guidelines, tabled for approval to the UN-Habitat Assembly	June 2025

Focal point and contact

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Annex – Programme Budget Implications Summary (as of after UNHA2)

Relevant Subprogramme(s)	Budget Category	Total Resources	Existing Resources	Net total
Recurrent Resource Requirements (Annual)				
SP2 (100%)	Post Costs	210,463	-	210,463
	2x P-3 (PT)*	203,830	-	203,830
	1x G / LL (PT)*	6,633	-	6,633
	Non-Post Costs	12,025	-	12,025
	Other Operating Expenses	12,025	-	12,025
	Subtotal, Recurring Resource Requirements	222,489	-	222,489
One-Time Resource Requirements				
SP2 (100%)	Post Costs	340,200	56,000	284,200
	1x P-3	185,300	-	185,300
	1x P-2/P-1 (PT)*	154,900	56,000	98,900
	Non-Post Costs	627,863	50,000	577,863
	Documents, Meetings and Services	142,000	-	142,000
	Consultants	181,950	50,000	131,950
	Travel	284,800	-	284,800
	Other Operating Expenses	19,113	-	19,113
	Subtotal, One-Time Resource Requirements	968,063	106,000	862,063
Grand Total		1,190,551	106,000	1,084,551
<i>(PT)* denotes that at least one of the positions in this Post Level are designated part-time</i>				