

Summary of the eighth meeting of the ad hoc working group on stakeholder engagement policy of the Executive Board

Wednesday, 7 December 2022 – 10:00 – 12:00 East Africa Time – Conference Room 3

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 10:00 am EAT. The working group adopted the provisional agenda for its sixth meeting without any change as follows:

1. Adoption of the provisional Agenda
2. Stakeholders' presentation of proposals on stakeholder engagement mechanisms
3. Secretariat's presentation of a stakeholder engagement mechanism
4. Discussion
5. Next steps
6. Any other matters

Agenda item 2 - Stakeholders' presentation of proposals on stakeholder engagement mechanisms

Upon invitation by the Chair, Mr. Joseph Schechla, Coordinator at the Habitat International Coalition (HIC), presented a proposal for a stakeholder engagement mechanism.

- i. His detailed statement can be found [here](#). The full presentation can be accessed [here](#).

After the presentation by Mr. Joseph Schechla from Habitat International Coalition (HIC), the discussions highlighted the following:

- ii. With respect to the proposal for a secretariat of the Habitat Stakeholders Advisory Board as presented by Mr. Joseph Schechla, one Member State enquired whether the Secretariat would be managed by members of different stakeholder organizations or by UN-Habitat staff. The Member State further sought clarification on the criteria for the selection of the members of the proposed secretariat.
- iii. One Member State requested examples of stakeholder engagement mechanisms within the United Nations system.

In light of the views expressed by Member States, and upon invitation by the Chair, Mr. Joseph Schechla from the Habitat International Coalition (HIC) responded as follows:

- iv. Members of the proposed secretariat of the Habitat Stakeholders Advisory Board would be from stakeholder organizations. The Board will be autonomous and neutral, not representing a particular organization or constituency. It would comprise of one coordinator and one support staff for facilitation and policy input to the Executive Board.

- v. Examples of stakeholder engagement mechanisms in the UN system include:
 - UN Women
 - The Committee for World Food Security (CFS), an international and intergovernmental platform for stakeholders to work together to ensure food security and nutrition for all. It develops and endorses policy recommendations through work supported technically by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Feed Programme (WPF) and representatives of the CFS.
 - The Human Rights Council which has embedded in its rules of procedure the right for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to speak during the sessions of the Council.
- vi. Best practices of stakeholder engagement mechanism implemented from other UN agencies could inspire the UN-Habitat stakeholder engagement mechanism, given the limited time and resources currently available.

Upon invitation by the Chair, Prof. Eugenie Birch from the General Assembly of Partners (GAP) presented a proposal on stakeholder engagement mechanism.

- vii. Her detailed statement can be found [here](#). She noted that her statement was delivered on behalf of GAP and acknowledged that GAP was not accredited to United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

After the presentation by Prof. Eugenie Birch from the General Assembly of Partners (GAP), the discussions highlighted the following:

- viii. One Member State requested further clarification on the meaning of the following proposal: *“Provide a broad, clear definition of stakeholders to reflect 21st century practice that recognizes the emergence, importance, and efficiency of multi-stakeholder platforms?”*.

In light of the view expressed by Member States, and upon invitation by the Chair, Ms. Eugenie Birch responded as follows:

- ix. Ms. Eugenie Birch clarified that in the current version of the Revised Zero Draft of the stakeholder engagement policy, the major groups and Habitat agenda partners are listed as separate categories of stakeholders. The objective of multi-stakeholder platforms would be to recognize all groups of stakeholders without distinction of categories.

Upon invitation by the Chair, Prof. Siraj Sait, Co-Chair of UN Habitat Stakeholder Advisory Group Enterprise (SAGE) presented a proposal on stakeholder engagement mechanism.

- x. His detailed statement can be found [here](#).

After the presentation by Prof. Siraj Sait, Co-Chair of UN Habitat Stakeholder Advisory Group Enterprise (SAGE), the discussions highlighted the following:

- xi. One Member State requested further clarification with respect to the following proposal: *“Conduct of Stakeholder Engagement Mechanism business - The selected members of the Stakeholder Engagement Mechanism shall meet on a regular, possibly monthly, basis and would be supported by the UN Habitat Secretariat as it exists or a new Secretariat that is set*

up. They would be invited to carry out duties under the TOR. If members fail to attend a certain number of meetings, between 2 and 3, continuously, their place will become vacant and is given to a candidate who is on the waiting list”.

In light of the view expressed by the Member State and upon invitation by the Chair, Prof Siraj Sait responded as follows:

- xii. The UN-Habitat stakeholder engagement mechanism should be able to link with other various platforms, advisory groups and campaigns, and a secretariat should therefore ensure capacity development of certain groups that might not have the ability or resources to be affectively represented.

Agenda item 3 – Secretariat’s presentation of a stakeholder engagement mechanism

Upon invitation by the Chair, the Secretariat provided a presentation of a stakeholder engagement mechanism.

- xiii. The detailed statement by the Secretariat can be found [here](#). The presentation can be found [here](#).

The briefing by the Secretariat highlighted the following:

- xiv. The Secretariat noted that the UN-Habitat Secretariat currently provides baseline support as guided by the rules of procedure of the UN-Habitat Assembly, as follows:
 - a) Sharing the calendar of meetings of the governing bodies of UN-Habitat and their related ad hoc working groups.
 - b) Sharing information and documents for intergovernmental meetings – in this regard, the Secretariat noted that it took note of the suggestion made by Professor Eugenia Birch from the General Assembly of Partners (GAP) to share the documents early enough prior to meetings in order to give stakeholders ample time to prepare for the meetings of the governing bodies of UN-Habitat.
 - c) Providing support for meaningful stakeholder engagement.
 - d) Facilitating participation of stakeholders at informal consultations.
- xv. The Secretariat noted that UN-Habitat facilitates stakeholders’ engagement opportunities as follows:
 - a) Accreditation of stakeholders to UN-Habitat governing bodies
 - b) Organization of side events by stakeholders
 - c) Participation of stakeholders in events as panellists or guest speakers
 - d) Submission of written or oral statements by stakeholders at intergovernmental meetings

- xvi. The Secretariat noted some examples of stakeholder engagement within the last three years as follows: SAGE has submitted eight statements to the Executive Board and Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) meetings since 2020, and there has been launch of the Global Stakeholder Consultations to support programmes and intergovernmental processes; at the first session of the UN-Habitat Assembly held in May 2019, 197 organizations were accredited, 213 participants attended the two-day Global Stakeholders Forum and its outcome document, a Stakeholder Declaration, was presented to the Member States; and the great participation by stakeholders from 2020 to present at the sessions of the Executive Board and the CPR.
- xvii. The Secretariat proposed three possible options to enhance the current practices described above as follows:
 - a) **Outsourced option:** An external body takes the lead to mobilize and engage diverse groups without Secretariat involvement, similar to the arrangement put in place for stakeholder engagement during Habitat III. This option would require stakeholders to be self-organized and look for resources. UN-Habitat would not be involved in any way other than to facilitate the registration, enabling confirmed representatives to speak or submit written statements during the meetings of the governing bodies; and providing relevant documents in a timely manner.
 - b) **Secretariat-Light option:** Based on the principle of self-organisation, stakeholders would organise, coordinate, and develop their interventions with UN-Habitat providing a neutral platform, convening stakeholders' meetings when required and, facilitating the involvement of stakeholders in specific activities associated with the inter-governmental processes. In addition to this baseline support, UN-Habitat would facilitate, with the support of United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) and other relevant partners, the booking of rooms for side events or other self-organised activities in accordance with the UN Charter and the rules of procedure of the governing bodies of UN-Habitat.
 - c) **Enhanced Secretariat option:** the Secretariat would provide SAGE with services such as (i) drafting summaries of meetings, (ii) setting up of virtual platforms, (iii) providing support in mobilizing new stakeholders and partners, (iv) helping in organizing regular stakeholder briefings and consultations, and (v) organizing side events with stakeholders and Member States through joint fundraising. It should be noted that this option would have budgetary implications due to the increased services as compared to what is currently provided.

After the presentation by the Secretariat, the discussions highlighted the following:

- xviii. One Member State emphasized that the proposed stakeholder engagement mechanism should not add extra financial burden to UN-Habitat in light of its current financial situation.
- xix. One Member State sought clarification with respect to the meaning of the word "*opinion*" in the following sentence: "*Provide support and opinion for meaningful stakeholder engagement*".
- xx. One Member State suggested that UN-Habitat develops a concept note for Member States on the stakeholder engagement mechanism vis-à-vis the stakeholder engagement policy. The Member State further enquired about how Member States would contribute to the self-organization of stakeholders

accredited to UN-Habitat.

In light of the views expressed by Member States, the UN-Habitat responded as follows:

- xxi. The Secretariat indicated that the current version of the approved budget for the Foundation non-earmarked for the year 2023 would not be enough to support a self-organized stakeholder engagement mechanism for an amount of \$800,000 to \$1,000,000 as proposed by HIC.
- xxii. Mr. Joseph Schechla from HIC clarified that the \$800,000 to \$1,000,000 budget was the example from the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) vis-à-vis FAO which holds multiple meetings and has a high travel budget implication. He further noted that the cost of a UN-Habitat stakeholder engagement mechanism would be less than the example provided.
- xxiii. With respect to the sentence “*Provide support and opinion for meaningful stakeholder engagement*”, the UN-Habitat noted that stakeholders are able to currently provide input through consultations with UN-Habitat or by providing inputs to Agenda items of the governing bodies of UN-Habitat pertaining to their scope and mandate in line with the rules of procedure.
- xxiv. The Secretariat noted that it would develop a concept note for Member States’ reference.

Agenda item 4 – Discussions

Upon invitation by the Chair, the discussions highlighted the following:

- xxv. Professor Eugenia Birch welcomed options 2 and 3 respectively, “Secretariat-light option” and “Enhanced Secretariat option”. She further noted concerns with option 3 “Enhanced Secretariat option” as the terms of reference (TORs) of SAGE do not incorporate a stakeholder engagement mechanism. Should consideration be given to option 3 as presented by the Secretariat, it would require an amendment of SAGE’s TORs.
- xxvi. In reaction to the proposal made by Professor Eugenia Birch to amend SAGE’s TORs to allow the implementation of option 3 “Enhanced Secretariat option”, the Chair noted that the amendment of SAGE’s TORs would be handled by SAGE because Member States would not have responsibility on this matter.
- xxvii. Ms. Sri Sofjan from the Huairou Commission noted that SAGE’s TORs mention that SAGE is not a representative of the voices of all the partner constituencies. She, however, emphasized the importance of the self-organizing principle of stakeholders.
- xxviii. Professor Siraj Sait from SAGE noted that SAGE was set up as an Advisory Board to the Executive Director, playing multiple roles in terms of advocacy, fundraising, representation, and program implementation. He further agreed that if under option 3 “Enhanced Secretariat Option” SAGE was to be considered as

a model, an amendment of SAGE TORs would be required. He noted the flexibility of SAGE in responding to the needs of stakeholders, UN-Habitat or Member States through utilizing opportunities and existing resources. He agreed to the need for an enhanced hybrid approach to stakeholder engagement. He welcomed option 2 and 3 “Secretariat lite option” and “Enhanced Secretariat option” as proposed by the Secretariat.

- xxix. One Member State noted that the ad hoc working group should be careful and prudent on budgetary and financial implications of the stakeholder engagement policy.
- xxx. Ms. Inés Sánchez Madariaga from Advisory Group on Gender Issues to UN-Habitat’s Executive Director (AGGI) expressed the need to have representatives of stakeholders’ constituencies speak on behalf of a constituency and not in a personal capacity.
- xxxi. Mr. Joseph Schechla noted the need to clarify the functions and purpose of the stakeholder engagement mechanism in relation to the Executive Board of UN-Habitat.

In light of the discussions, the Secretariat responded as follows:

- xxxii. UN-Habitat took note of the suggestion for self-organization by stakeholders when they engage with UN-Habitat.
- xxxiii. The Secretariat further noted that it will develop and share with the ad hoc working group the cost implications of the three options.

Agenda item 5 – Next Steps

- xxxiv. The Chair recalled that the Secretariat is working on a revised version of the draft stakeholder engagement policy.
- xxxv. The Chair noted that the next meeting of the ad hoc working group is scheduled on 18 January 2023 for a thematic discussion on accreditation. The revised version of the draft stakeholder engagement policy will be discussed on 15 February 2023.

Agenda item 6 - Any other matters

There were no other matters considered and the Chair adjourned the meeting at 12:10hrs East Africa Time