

## Summary of the second meeting of the ad-hoc working group on stakeholder engagement policy of the Executive Board

Wednesday, 23 March 2022 – 14:30 – 16:30 East Africa Time

**Chair:** Mr. Patrick Egloff

Deputy Permanent Representative of the Swiss Confederation to UN-Habitat

### 1. Adoption of the Agenda

The meeting of the ad hoc working group on stakeholder engagement policy of the Executive Board was called to order at 14:35 EAT. The working group adopted the provisional agenda for its second meeting without any change as follows:

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. Current stakeholder engagement practice at UN-Habitat.
3. UN-Habitat Partnership Strategy.
4. Discussion on the organization of work of the ad hoc working group, including modalities of stakeholder participation in the work of the working group and way forward.

### 2. Current stakeholder engagement practice at UN-Habitat

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

- i. The Chair recalled that in 2017, Governing Council Resolution 26/7 requested the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, in consultation with Member States, to develop a draft stakeholder engagement policy, drawing on best practices and models from relevant multilateral institutions and exploring new mechanisms to promote transparency and the effective engagement of civil society, and to submit the draft policy by the end of 2017 for consideration by the Committee of Permanent Representatives with a view to submitting it for consideration and possible approval by the Governing Council at its twenty-seventh session. The same resolution also recognized the need to reform the accreditation system, in consultation with member states, drawing on best practices and models from relevant multilateral institutions, to ensure the active participation of all relevant stakeholders, the monitoring of accreditation, and the enhancement of transparency and accountability.
- ii. Subsequently, an ad hoc working group on stakeholder engagement policy chaired by USA was created and held its first meeting in March 2018. In support of this exercise, the Secretariat provided background information and good practices on stakeholder engagement in the work of selected UN agencies, funds and programmes and other multilateral institutions.
- iii. The Chair recalled, taking into account the status of discussions on the Stakeholder Engagement Policy and noted that a lot progress had been made but one area of contention was what would happen if a member state objected to accreditation of a non-governmental organization.
- iv. Subsequently, the Chair noted that Decision 1/3 of the UN-Habitat Assembly, on the arrangements for the transition towards a new governance structure for UN-Habitat decided on an exceptional basis, to entrust the Executive Board with continuing the discussions on, and completing as soon as possible, the development of UN-Habitat stakeholder engagement policy, as requested by the Governing Council Resolution 26/7, with a view to its provisional implementation based on consensus, and to submit the draft policy for consideration and possible approval by the UN-Habitat Assembly at its second session.
- v. The Chair noted that in May 2020, the 2019-2020 Bureau of the Executive Board acknowledged the need to first prepare the stakeholder engagement policy before the accreditation procedure.

- vi. The Chair further recalled that due to the global Coronavirus pandemic, the working group was unable to meet since physical meetings not desirable, in line with paragraph 5 of Executive Board Decision 2020/6 which recommended that the working group should resume its work once in-person meetings are possible.

Following the above background information, the Secretariat provided a briefing on the current stakeholder engagement practice at UN-Habitat.

**The briefing by the Secretariat highlighted the following:**

- vii. The Secretariat outlined that the purpose of the presentation was (i) to provide the context of stakeholder engagement at UN-Habitat; (ii) to explain the meaning of stakeholder engagement for the mandate of UN-Habitat; and (iii) to see how UN-Habitat worked with stakeholders so far.
- viii. The Secretariat indicated that engagement with stakeholders is at the core of UN-Habitat's DNA as its mandate requires to work with all levels of government and stakeholders. UN-Habitat uses an evidence-based approach to develop norms and guidance and assist Member States to translate these into policies (policy into practice). As such, UN-Habitat needs to work with experts to ensure that the organization has advocates for evidence-based decision making with research expertise in academia, and to increase consultations with grassroots leaders, women & youth groups to ensure normative guidance is robust and inclusive.
- ix. The Secretariat highlighted that under the current governance framework of UN-Habitat, the stakeholder engage through statements, providing expert advice and engaging in informal discussions at the sessions of the governing bodies. Additionally, UN-Habitat engages with stakeholders during inter-sessional periods, during which they (i) provide technical support, (ii) contribute to programme implementation, (iii) monitor the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda, to discuss innovative funding for resource mobilization and to provide a platform for advocacy during meetings such as the World Urban Forum and World Urban Campaign.
- x. The Secretariat reiterated that since 2019, stakeholder engagement has become more structured with the establishment in May 2019 of the Stakeholder Advisory Group Enterprise, (SAGE) , a platform which advises the organization on stakeholder engagement in strategies, policies, knowledge, advocacy, and programmes to improve living conditions for all in an urbanizing world. SAGE provides a mechanism to strengthen innovative and effective of stakeholder engagement as stakeholders play a crucial role in implementing the New Urban Agenda and the urban dimensions of the SDGs. The advisory role by the SAGE will be on technical and financial perspectives as guided by the stakeholder collaborative implementation framework and as requested by the Executive Director. The Secretariat reiterated it welcomes the support from stakeholders on specific deliverables directly related to the Organization's mandate. A good example is the upcoming high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda to be held in April 2022. Stakeholders actively contributed through write-shops, providing inputs to the Secretary-General's Quadrennial Report and some have been selected by the President of the General Assembly to be part of his Advisory Committee on Sustainable Urbanization.
- xi. The Secretariat concluded that stakeholders play a crucial role to bring to life the mandate of UN-Habitat, as they support Member States in the data collection, highlight the special requirements of specific constituencies and beyond advocacy, they are key to any effort to scale up and translate policy into practice.

**Following the presentation by the Secretariat, the discussions highlighted the following:**

- xii. One Member State enquired whether UN-Habitat's stakeholder engagement and practice would adopt the same accreditation and stakeholder verification processes that are in place at the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

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

- xiii. The Secretariat informed that non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) or accredited to participate in the first session of the UN-Habitat Assembly, on matters that relate to their activities and in accordance with Rule 69 of the Rules of Procedure of the UN-Habitat Assembly as well as rule Section XIV, 17.3 of the Rules and Procedure of the Executive Board of UN-Habitat. Consequently, non-governmental organizations proceed with registration only if in consultative status with either ECOSOC or if accredited to the UN-Habitat Assembly, and if their competence is relevant to the provisional Agenda of the governing bodies of UN-Habitat.

After Agenda item 2, the meeting considered Agenda item 3, namely UN-Habitat's Partnership Strategy.

**3. UN-Habitat's Partnership Strategy**

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

- xiv. The Chair recalled that at its second session of the year 2020, the Executive Board adopted the partnership strategy of UN-Habitat as set out in document [HSP/EB.2020/10/Rev.1](#). The Chair noted that the purpose of the partnership strategy was to advance the partnerships that UN-Habitat needed to establish and maintain to successfully coordinate and implement its strategic plan for the period 2020-2023. The strategy was intended to serve as a vehicle for strategic political engagement with Member States and the United Nations system; mobilize stakeholders at various levels; ensure the effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda; and the UN-Habitat flagship programmes and substantially strengthen the depth and breadth of resource mobilization activities.

**The briefing by the Secretariat highlighted the following:**

- xv. The Secretariat indicated that the UN-Habitat Partnership Strategy referred to an action plan developed by UN-Habitat to help the programme achieve the objectives of the Strategic Plan of UN-Habitat for the period 2020-2023 and the implementation of its mandate.
- xvi. The Secretariat concluded that partnerships are often associated with resolutions or demands from Member States that require immediate support. For instance, youth and grassroots organization played a crucial role to support UN-Habitat during the implementation of UN-Habitat's COVID-19 Response Plan and local government groups such as United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), Cities Climate Leadership Group (C40) and Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) played a critical role during the 26th meeting of the Conference of Parties in Glasgow. Similarly, the World Economic Forums have been particularly helpful with advocacy for sustainable urbanisation and awareness about UN-Habitat in engagement with the business community & engaging donor countries. The Secretariat noted that stakeholders play a key role in advocacy, research, technical cooperation, and other tangible support for Member States.

**Following the presentation by the Secretariat, the discussions highlighted the following:**

- xvii. One Member State sought clarification on the mandate and background of the ad hoc working group and suggested that the Secretariat should circulate a roadmap with key dates for the ad hoc working group.

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

- xviii. The Chair recalled that that given that the ad hoc working group is required to present a draft stakeholder engagement policy for possible approval by the UN-Habitat Assembly at its second session in June 2023, the working group should begin substantive discussion on the stakeholder engagement policy in May 2022, after the first session of the Executive Board for the year 2022.
- xix. The Chair noted that the objective would be to discussions on the modalities of stakeholder engagement which should be concluded before the second session of the Executive Board for the year 2022. The Chair further noted that discussions on accreditation procedures may begin after the second session of the Executive Board for the year 2022 .

**4. Discussion of the organization of work of the ad hoc working group and way forward, including expectations, scope of work, and participation of stakeholders**

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

- xx. The Chair invited the working group to recommend a way forward and scope of the work of the ad hoc working group.
- xxi. The Chair recommended that the ad hoc working group focuses on the modalities of the stakeholder engagement before focusing on the accreditation procedure.
- xxii. The Chair suggested that partners and stakeholders be invited to participate in in the meetings of the ad hoc working group, with the understanding that they may contribute to the discussions on matters within their expertise or scope of activities and on which they have special competence and that they would not be expected to participate in the decision-making process. There was no objection to this suggestion.

**The ad hoc working group recommended as follows:**

- a) That its scope of work and focus be on stakeholder engagement in intergovernmental processes and UN-Habitat governance structure given the fact that stakeholder engagement in normative and operational programmes are defined in partnership strategies and standard operating procedures for partners and covered by various policies, strategies, guidelines, and procedures including the implementing partners policy, and partnership strategy.
- b) That the ad hoc working group focuses first on the modalities of the stakeholder engagement, and then on the accreditation procedure, noting that should the need for change arises in the course of its discussions, the ad hoc working group will adjust accordingly.
- c) That stakeholders and partners be invited to participate in the meetings of the ad hoc working group in an observer capacity, with the understanding that that they will contribute to the discussions on matters within their expertise or scope of activities and

on which they have special competence but would not be expected to participate in the decision-making process.

- d) That the ad hoc working group starts the substantive discussions on stakeholder engagement in May 2022 with the aim to conclude the discussions on modalities of stakeholder engagement before the second session of the Executive Board later this year 2022.
- e) That subsequently, discussions on accreditation procedures should start after the second session of the Executive Board for the year 2022 and recommended that the stakeholder engagement and the accreditation procedure be concluded prior to the first session of the Executive Board in 2023.

## 5. Any other matters

**There were no other matters considered and the Chair adjourned the meeting at 15:45 East Africa Time.**

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