

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

Tuesday, 17 January 2023 – 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 10:00 am EAT. The working group adopted the provisional agenda for its ninth meeting without any change as follows:

1. Adoption of the provisional Agenda
2. Presentation of Current Accreditation Practice at UN-Habitat
3. Presentation on ECOSOC Accreditation
4. Discussion
5. Any other matters

Agenda item 2 – Presentation of Current Accreditation Practice at UN-Habitat

- i. The Chair noted that the purpose of the meeting of the working group was to have discussions about accreditation of stakeholders so as to build consensus and gain an understanding of the current accreditation practice at UN-Habitat.

Upon invitation by the Chair, the Secretariat provided a presentation of the *Current Accreditation Practice of UN-Habitat*.

The presentation by the Secretariat highlighted the following:

- ii. That Rules 66-69 of the rules of procedure of the United Nations Habitat Assembly (UN-Habitat Assembly) provides for participation of non-members, particularly intergovernmental organizations and related entities, local authorities, other Habitat Agenda Partners, and Non-Governmental Organizations in the sessions of the UN-Habitat Assembly. Additionally, rule 17.3 of the rules of procedure of the Executive Board provides that "the Executive Board may also invite, when it considers it appropriate, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council or accredited to the UN-Habitat Assembly to participate in its deliberations on matters that relate to their activities".
- iii. In the absence of a stakeholder engagement policy and related accreditation procedure, the existing accreditation decisions will apply based on Governing

Council¹ Resolutions 19/8 and 26/7. These procedures were used to accredit stakeholders to the 27th session of the Governing Council, and subsequently the First session of the UN-Habitat Assembly.

- iv. Specifically, UN-Habitat Governing Council Resolution 19/8 of 9 May 2003 states as follows:
 - “Decides to reconfirm, on request, the accreditation to the Governing Council of local authorities and other Habitat Agenda partners that were accredited to Habitat II and the special session of the General Assembly for overall review and appraisal of implementation of the Habitat Agenda”.
 - “Decides also that accreditation shall be automatically granted, on request, to non-governmental organizations, including other Habitat Agenda partners, which are in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council”.
 - “Decides further that other Habitat Agenda partners referred to in rule 65 of the rules of procedure that were not accredited according to operative paragraphs 1 and 3 above may be invited by the Executive Director and accredited on an ad hoc basis to a session of the Governing Council: the Executive Director shall submit the list of such partners to the Committee of Permanent Representatives for approval on a no-objection basis by final decision of the Committee, and to Governments not represented on the Committee of Permanent Representatives for their consideration, 10 weeks in advance of the Governing Council session”.
- v. In addition, UN-Habitat Governing Council Resolution 26/7 of 12 May 2017 states as follows:
 - “Decides to reconfirm, upon request, the accreditation to the Governing Council of the stakeholders that were accredited to Habitat III. The same resolution provides for development of a stakeholder engagement policy and reformulation of accreditation procedure”.
- vi. One hundred and sixty-two (162) organizations were accredited to the first session of the UN-Habitat Assembly in 2019, 45 through ad hoc accreditation, and 117 were reconfirmed upon request either as being in consultative status with ECOSOC or accredited to Habitat II or Habitat III. During the inter-sessional period, a total of 55 organizations attended the various sessions of the Executive Board as observers.
- vii. Based on past experience, UN-Habitat has not received any objections from Member States regarding granting ad-hoc accreditation to stakeholders for the participation of an organization in UN-Habitat intergovernmental meetings.

¹ The Governing Council of UN-Habitat was replaced by the United Nations Habitat Assembly through General Assembly resolution A/RES/73/239 of December 2018

viii. The challenges that UN-Habitat is facing with the current accreditation system is as follows:

- Stakeholders can only apply for accreditation once every four years because the current procedures do not provide for continuous accreditation process. This is a disincentive especially to organizations not accredited to the UN-Habitat Assembly that may wish to participate in the sessions of the Executive Board and the meeting of the Committee of Permanent representatives. A more streamlined accreditation process would allow the Secretariat to better support active stakeholders and enable them to engage more effectively in intergovernmental meetings.
- Reconfirmation upon request by organizations accredited to Habitat II, the special session of the General Assembly on review of implementation of the Habitat Agenda, Habitat III, and automatic accreditation upon request by organizations in consultative status with ECOSOC does not allow the Secretariat to check for relevance of organizations to UN-Habitat's mandate and their competence in the areas under discussion by the governing bodies. Yet some organizations have not been in contact with UN-Habitat since 1996, 2001 or 2016 for example. There is need for verification of relevance and competence possibly through submission of periodic reports to the Secretariat. Alternatively, these organizations should reapply for accreditation.
- The current accreditation procedures refer to Governing Council Sessions and the Committee of Permanent Representatives, the then governing bodies, without the Executive Board and the UN-Habitat Assembly. This is indeed a cause to revise the accreditation procedures to align with the current governing bodies.

ix. The detailed statement presented by the secretariat can be found [here](#). The full presentation can be accessed [here](#).

Following the presentation by the secretariat there were no comments from Member States and stakeholders on the current accreditation practice of UN-Habitat.

Agenda item 3 – Presentation on ECOSOC Accreditation

Upon invitation by the Chair, the Secretariat presented an overview of the procedures and criteria used by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in granting consultative status to organizations.

The presentation by the Secretariat highlighted the following:

- i. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is a principal body of the United Nations that coordinates the economic and social work of the United Nations and its specialized agencies. One of the ways it does this is through the granting of consultative status to non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which allows these organizations to engage with the UN and contribute to its work. The guidelines for NGO consultative status with the United Nations are contained in ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31.
- ii. There are three types of consultative status: General, special and roster. The consultative status process is a rigorous one, as it is designed to ensure that only organizations that can make a valuable contribution to the UN's work are granted consultative status. Organizations must demonstrate their commitment to the UN's goals and principles of the UN Charter, as well as their ability to provide expert information or public opinion and advice on matters related to their field of competence.
- iii. The criteria for organizations to be granted consultative status with ECOSOC include:
 - Applying organization's activities must be relevant to the work of ECOSOC,
 - The NGO must have been in existence (officially registered) for at least 2 years to apply,
 - The NGO must have a democratic decision-making mechanism,
 - The major portion of the organization's funds should be derived from contributions from national affiliates, individual members, or other non-governmental components.
- iv. The supporting documents to meet the criteria as requested by ECOSOC include:
 - Copy of constitution/charter and/or statutes/by-laws and amendments to those documents (pursuant to paragraph 10 of ECOSOC resolution 1996/31).
 - Copy of certificate of registration. According to resolution 1996/31 an organization "should attest that it has been in existence for at least two years as at the date of receipt of the application by the Secretariat". Please provide a copy of the registration paper or, if your country does not require registration, please provide other proof of existence.
 - Copy of most recent financial statement and annual report.
 - Optional: Copy of examples of your publications and recent articles or statements.
 - Optional: Organization chart (if available).
- v. The process begins with an application, which is reviewed by the NGO Branch of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. If the application is deemed complete and meets the criteria, it is then referred to the Committee on NGOs for further review. The committee, which is made up of 19 member states,

conducts a thorough evaluation of the organization's qualifications and activities. After this, the committee makes a recommendation to the ECOSOC, which then makes a final decision on granting consultative status.

- vi. The consultative status is not a one-time event, but rather an ongoing process. Organizations that are granted such status must continue to meet the criteria and demonstrate their ongoing commitment to the UN's goals and principles. Organizations with general or special consultative status must also submit quadrennial reports on their activities and provide information on how they are contributing to the UN's work.
- vii. The ECOSOC consultative status process is a crucial mechanism for the UN to engage with civil society and ensure that the voices of NGOs are heard in the international arena.
- viii. In concluding the presentation, the Secretariat urged all organizations that are interested in contributing to the UN's work to consider applying for consultative status with ECOSOC and reminded all organizations that have been granted consultative status to continue to meet the criteria and stay engaged with the work of the United Nations.
- ix. The detailed statement can be found [here](#). The full presentation can be accessed [here](#).

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

- x. One Member State thanked the Secretariat for the presentation and enquired about the number of major groups and stakeholders in the UN-Habitat system and requested for the Secretariat to point out the practice of the accreditation process in other organizations because accreditation once in every four years does not give much incentive for engagement. The Member State further sought to understand if the current rules refer to the former governing bodies and whether they can be translated to the current governing bodies.

In light of the views expressed by Member States, and upon invitation by the Chair, the Secretariat responded as follows:

- xi. The Secretariat pointed out 16 groups out of Habitat III, and that migrants and refugees, and volunteer organizations had been added to the list of major groups and stakeholders.
- xii. Regarding the accreditation process, the Secretariat noted that that registration after every four years is unique to UN-Habitat because of the decisions in resolution 19/8 and 26/7 of the Governing Council which was replaced by the UN-Habitat Assembly that meets after every four years. The Secretariat further underlined the examples of the accreditation process in other UN organizations

as indicated below:

- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP): UNEP follows its accreditation procedure and checks the relevancy of the organization's work to the agenda of UNEA. Whether an organization is in consultative status with ECOSOC does not guarantee automatic accreditation to sessions of UNEA. UNEP doublechecks to see the relevance of the work of an organization to the agenda under discussion.
 - United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD): UNCTAD grants accreditation and specifies it into general and special organizations, Organizations under general accreditation do substantive work related to the mandate of UNCTAD, in many countries and are closely connected to the people. Once accredited to UNCTAD, an organization continues to be accredited to other meetings but there is need to demonstrate that it is still staying in the course through submitting reports.
 - UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC): At ECOSOC, once an organization is accredited, it remains accredited. However, organizations in the general and special categories are required to submit quadrennial reports every four years which indicate that the organization is still relevant and working in the areas that are beneficial to the United Nations.
- xiii. Regarding the existing rules referring to the previous Governing Council of UN-Habitat which has been replaced by the UN-Habitat Assembly in 2018 by the UN General Assembly, the Secretariat noted that unless the General Assembly passes a resolution disposing or eradicating residual issues with respect to the existing resolutions of the Governing Council, the presumption is that the new body takes on all the resolutions of the old body.

Agenda item 4 – Discussions

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

- i. One stakeholder group informed that some active stakeholders' groups were missing in the list of stakeholders accredited to UN-Habitat Assembly and those in consultative status with ECOSOC and further enquired whether there will be a process for participation of stakeholders in the second session of the UN-Habitat Assembly. He recognised that due to the planned series of meetings of the working group to come up with a stakeholder engagement policy for UN-Habitat, there might not be enough time for stakeholders to apply for accreditation before the second session of the UN-Habitat Assembly.
- ii. One Member State sought to understand how the implementation of the accreditation process is financed.
- iii. One Member State enquired to know at what point national governments would

be informed about the accreditation approval and further sought clarification on whether national governments are consulted before the accreditation of stakeholders is done.

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

- viii. The Chair noted that the stakeholder engagement policy will be submitted to the Executive Board in March 2023 then adopted by the UN-Habitat Assembly in June 2023. The accreditation process for the second UN-Habitat Assembly will follow the practice of the first session of the UN-Habitat Assembly and the new policy will only be valid and applicable after its adoption by the second session of the UN-Habitat Assembly.
- ix. Regarding the active stakeholders missing from the ECOSOC list, the Secretariat noted that it would double check the list and requested the stakeholder to submit the names of the stakeholders missing from the ECOSOC list.
- x. Regarding how the UN-Habitat staff working on the implementation of the accreditation process is financed, the Secretariat noted that it is financed by existing resources through two UN-Habitat staff working on stakeholder engagement throughout the Organization. The Secretariat highlighted that under current rules the accreditation process is done every four years but if it requires to be done once or twice a year, there is need for an additional post to support the work.
- xi. Regarding approval of the accreditation by Member States, the Secretariat noted that the approval is the decision by Member States, the current ongoing process will take place until Member States are comfortable enough to take it to the UN-Habitat Assembly.
- xii. Regarding when national governments would be consulted before accreditation of stakeholders is done, the Secretariat informed that in practice a list of interested Habitat Agenda Partners would be sent to the Member States 10 weeks before the session of the UN-Habitat Assembly for approval on a no objection basis as provided for in operative paragraph four of the Governing Council Resolution 19/8, which states that “Habitat Agenda Partners referred to in Rule 65 of the rules of procedure that were not accredited according to operative paragraphs one and three, may be invited by the Executive Director and accredited on an ad hoc basis to a session of the Governing Council. The Executive Director shall submit the list of such partners to the Committee of Permanent Representatives for approval on a no-objection basis by the final decision of the Committee”.
- xiii. The Secretariat further underlined that for stakeholders that are already accredited to ECOSOC, Habitat II, Habitat III, and the first session of the UN-Habitat Assembly, will be invited to attend the UN-Habitat Assembly as

observers, and then be accredited after expression of interest in a letter submitted to the Executive Director.

Next Steps

- i. The Chair noted that the Secretariat will work with stakeholders and Member States' input to draft chapter 5 of the stakeholder engagement policy and the next meeting which will be held on 6 February will hold a discussion on this chapter.
- ii. The Chair noted that a new revised version of the draft stakeholder engagement policy containing the chapter on accreditation will be ready by 25 January 2023 and will be discussed paragraph by paragraph at the next working group meeting on 15 February 2023.
- iii. The Chair noted that the next meeting of the ad hoc working group is scheduled on 6 February 2023 and from there the working group will hold weekly meetings.

Agenda item 5 - Any other matters

There were no other matters considered and the Chair adjourned the meeting at 11:58 East Africa Time