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Technical note by the Secretariat

International guidelines on People-Centred Smart Cities

This technical note has been prepared by the UN-Habitat Secretariat to facilitate discussion of the Executive Board on the draft resolution on International guidelines on People-Centred Smart Cities. The note may be adjusted and updated, as needed and relevant, based on additional information that may become available during consultations.

Overview of past and related resolution

International agendas and UN resolutions, such as Agenda 2030¹ and the SDGs, the New Urban Agenda², the right to privacy in the digital age³ and digital technologies and human rights resolutions⁴, advocate for the adoption of a smart cities approach while ensuring privacy and protecting human rights online and offline.

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, the international guidelines on i) **Urban and Territorial Planning**⁵; ii) **Decentralization and Access to Basic Services for all**⁶; and iii) **Safer Cities and Human Settlements**⁷, 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.

Value Addition

Noting the importance of innovation and technology in accelerating sustainable development and support the Decade of Action and the need to set up modern and agile institutional frameworks reflecting the rapid development of new technologies, there has been growing demand from Member States for overarching, global direction and instructions focusing on how to design, use, and manage new technologies and data. The goal is to make cities inclusive and sustainable as well as allow to evenly maximize digital benefits and prevent unintended consequences such as growing the digital divide and discrimination, while mitigating ICT technologies' related risks. The main objectives of the guidelines on People Centered-Smart Cities are:

¹ General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"

² General Assembly Resolution 71/256 of 23 December 2016 entitled "New Urban Agenda"

³ General Assembly resolution 77/211 of 15 December 2022 on the right to privacy in the digital age

⁴ Human Rights Council Resolution on new and emerging digital technologies and human rights

⁵ GC/Res/25/6 of 23 April 2015

⁶ GC/Res/20/5 of 2007

⁷ UNHA/Res/1/2 of 31 May 2019

- To promote a smart city approach which is people-centered through developing global guidance for national and local governments;
- To ensure that innovation and digital technologies are used to help cities and human settlements achieve Agenda 2030, the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda;
- To provide guidance for policy makers ensuring that technologies in cities are used to i) reduce digital and spatial inequalities and respect human rights; ii) contribute to reducing the environmental impact of cities; iii) promote digital literacy and training to public officials and citizens; iv) adopt appropriate multi-level governance mechanisms and v) foster prosperity and closing socio-economic disparities.

Requests for UN-Habitat / key asks

The agency has provided administrative and technical assistance to the Member States to formulate the draft resolution. Based on discussions conducted in the drafting stage, subject to the resolution's approval, the agency is expected to provide:

1. Technical support to the development of International Guidelines (IGs) on People-Centred Smart Cities, by securing access to internal knowledge, such as studies and lessons learnt from projects, and conducting with partners a global assessment to generate evidence and data for the IGs' development.
2. Administrative support and financial resources' management, acting as Secretariat in facilitating consultation, organizing meetings, coordinating stakeholders inputs, ensuring budgetary control and reporting on the progresses till the completion of the work at the EB meetings.

Relation to UN-Habitat work programme

The guidelines address a "new area" of work for UN-Habitat, which started with the adoption of the **New Urban Agenda in 2016**, calling for the adoption by Member States of a smart-city approach that makes use of opportunities from digitalization, clean energy and technologies⁸. Moreover, in the **Strategic Plan 2020–2023**, UN-Habitat is repositioned as a centre of excellence and innovation, recognizing in Outcome 2.3 the importance of new frontier technologies and innovation for urban development, prosperity and sustainability. In 2020, the [People Centred Smart Cities Flagship Programme](#), was launched to formalize UN-Habitat's efforts to support regional and country offices, as well as national, local and regional governments in responding to real-time challenges related to ICT technologies and smart cities. Given the wide application of technologies, the IGs would support the SDGs targets acceleration at large, while directly 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".

Programme budget implication

Financial estimations for the drafting of the IGs are expected to range between \$500,000 and \$1 million, depending on variables such as the duration of the process, the size of the consultation and stakeholders

⁸ In **paragraph 66** Member States commit to adopting a smart city approach that makes use of opportunities from digitalization, clean energy and technologies and its commitment; in **paragraph 156** to promoting the development of national information and communications technology policies and e-government strategies, as well as citizen-centric digital governance tools, tapping into technological innovations, including capacity development programmes, in order to make information and communications technologies accessible to the public, including women and girls, children and youth, persons with disabilities, older persons and persons in vulnerable situations, to enable them to develop and exercise civic responsibility, broadening participation and fostering responsible governance, as well as increasing efficiency

involved, the number of Expert Group Meetings (EGMs), etc. For a detailed PBI refer to the table below. A consultative and inclusive process lasting approximately two years, with three meetings of experts and a global assessment study would imply an effort of 1 million USD. The latter estimation excludes commitment for the implementation of the guidelines which would only start once formally endorsed by a UN-Habitat Governing Body. While the draft resolution clearly states the need for further funding efforts for the implementation phase, it identifies technological platforms “such as the United Nations Innovation Technology Accelerator for Cities (UNITAC)” and **smart cities hubs** to be established in Member States to support the implementation of the IGs and the New Urban Agenda. Finally, the resolution requests reporting on the work related to the IGs’ development by the UN-Habitat Executive Board (EB) until completion, however extra budget should be allocated to ensure a monitoring and evaluation architecture in place for the implementation.

Subprogramme	Budget Category	Grade/Description	Count	Location	Duration (years)	Total resources	Existing resources	Net Total	
SP2	Staff Costs								
		P3 (PMO) - Part time	1	Nairobi	3	\$105,000.00	0	\$105,000.00	
		Consultant (Subject Matter Expert)	1	Nairobi	1.5	\$79,800.00	0	\$79,800.00	
		Consultant (Consultation Coordinator)	1	Nairobi	3	\$135,000.00	0	\$135,000.00	
		Consultant (Stakeholder engagement & Comms) - Part time	1	Nairobi	1	\$15,000.00	0	\$15,000.00	
	Non-staff cost								
		Expert Group Meetings & Conference	3		3	\$240,000.00	0	\$240,000.00	
		Regional Consultations	30	Online/in presence	2.5	\$180,000.00	0	\$180,000.00	
		Missions and traveling			3	\$120,000.00	0	\$120,000.00	
		Global Assessment and Case Studies			2	\$150,000.00	0	\$150,000.00	
		Communication/dissemination material				\$49,998.00		\$49,998.00	
	Subtotal						\$1,074,798.00	\$0.00	\$1,074,798.00
	Programme Support Costs 13%						\$139,723.74	\$-	\$139,723.74
	Coordination Levy (1%)						\$10,747.98	\$-	\$10,747.98
Grand Total						\$1,225,269.72	\$-	\$1,225,269.72	