



Statement by the World Blind Union on behalf of the General Assembly of Partners (GAP) at First Session of the UN-HABITAT Executive Board 2021 April 7-8, 2021

Dear Excellencies, partners, colleagues

1. I am Hannes Juhlin Lagrelius, Program Officer for World Blind Union's Global Program for Inclusive and Accessible Urban Development. We are affiliated with General Assembly of Partners (GAP), in which I am member of its Executive Council and co-chair of its Partner Constituent Group of persons with disabilities. **The following statement by WBU is made on behalf of the GAP.**
2. GAP is an independent, self-organized platform of 17 equal partner constituent groups devoted to expanding the voices of urban civil society to ensure that our needs, desires and contributions are part of planning local responses to and the implementation of *the New Urban Agenda* and other global agreements as they relate to sustainable urban development. It represents 1,200 unique organizations encompassing 58,000 networks and several hundred individuals from around the world.
3. GAP share your belief that that the achievement of sustainable urban development will only occur through the efforts of strong partnerships among national governments with a broad array of concerned stakeholders drawn from local government, civil society broadly construed, academia, private sector arenas.
4. GAP appreciates the work of UN-Habitat in creating the Stakeholder Advisory Group Enterprise (SAGE) and in supporting the first Global Stakeholders' Forum in May 2019 as first steps in defining the UNH stakeholder engagement policy. UNH selected SAGE's members based on their personal professional expertise, not as representatives of stakeholder groups; it established its function narrowly as advisory to the UN-Habitat Executive Director on policy and programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
5. The 2019 Global Stakeholders' Forum's declaration committed civil society to collaborating with member states on the implementation of the *New Urban Agenda* and sustainable urban development. Further, it called for "adequate support from Member States and other parties for meaningful stakeholder partnership within the UN Habitat governance and operational structures" ([2019 Habitat Assembly Global Stakeholder Forum Declaration](#)). The UN Habitat Executive Board recognized the efforts by UN-Habitat in creating SAGE and the first Global

Stakeholders Forum in its report ([Decision adopted at the second session 2020 of the UN-Habitat Executive Board](#) para B(7)).

Moreover,

6. With regards to progress on advancing the stakeholder engagement policy following these preliminary efforts by UN-Habitat, GAP applauds the Executive Board for
 - A) approving the detailed draft partnership strategy annexed to the UN Habitat Strategic Plan 2020-2023 containing UN Habitat's pledge to draft a development plan to implement the strategy [UN-HABITAT Draft Partnership Strategy](#) (V.15) and;
 - B) appointing an *ad hoc* working group on the development of a draft stakeholder engagement policy, with a view to agreeing, as soon as possible, on a draft stakeholder engagement policy and presenting it to the Executive Board for consensus agreement and provisional implementation, pending consideration and possible approval by the UN-Habitat Assembly at its second session [Adopted decisions by the UN-Habitat Executive Board at its resumed first session 2020](#).

However,

7. GAP is disappointed at the lack of progress on the stakeholder engagement policy. While we acknowledge the difficulties caused by the pandemic, nonetheless we have noted that the lack of any discussion of the topic on the present agenda of this first session of the Executive Board 2021

Moving forward,

8. GAP respectfully requests that the Executive Board undertake the following three actions:
 - a) **re-activate** its *ad hoc* working group on the development of a draft stakeholder engagement policy in consultation with stakeholders to ready it for approval at the second UN-Habitat Assembly
 - b) **ask** UN- Habitat to assist the working group with the development of its plan to implement its partnership strategy including direct consultation with partners
 - c) **place** reports on these items on its official agenda for the second session of the Executive Board of 2021.

Finally,

9. GAP remains fully committed to actively support UN-Habitat in advancing meaningful stakeholder engagement – as well will all be needed – in creating better lives for all where no one is left behind from urban progress.

We wish you a successful 2 days and conclusion of this session.