

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

Monday, 6 February 2023 – 10:00 hrs – 12:00 noon 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 10:10 am EAT. The working group adopted the provisional agenda for its tenth meeting without any change as follows:

1. Adoption of the provisional Agenda
2. Discussions on chapter 5 on Accreditation
3. Update on stakeholder engagement mechanism
4. Any other matters

Agenda item 2 – Discussions on chapter 5 on accreditation

- i. The Chair noted that the purpose of the meeting of the working group was to have discussions on Chapter 5 on accreditation of stakeholders and recalled that a draft version of the stakeholder engagement policy was shared by the Secretariat on 26 January 2023. The draft can be accessed [here](#). The Chair encouraged the working group to provide feedback on the draft chapter 5 on accreditation.

Upon invitation by the Chair, the Secretariat introduced draft chapter 5 on accreditation.

The presentation by the Secretariat highlighted the following:

- ii. The Secretariat updated that the draft accreditation procedure was aligned to UN-Habitat's current practice, and that it incorporated suggestions for responding to the challenges identified by the Secretariat in its presentation made to the ad hoc working group on 17 January 2023. The presentation made by the Secretariat at that meeting can be accessed [here](#).
- iii. The Secretariat noted that the accreditation procedure was informed by:
 - (i) The Rules of Procedure of the UN-Habitat Assembly [66-69](#), and the Executive Board, [17.3](#).
 - (ii) Governing Council Resolutions 19/8 and 26/7; and
 - (iii) ECOSOC Resolution [1996/31](#).
- iv. The Secretariat noted that the scope of accreditation would be:
 - (i) Organisations accredited to the UN-Habitat Assembly and the Executive Board,
 - (ii) Organisations accredited to Habitat II, the Special session of the General Assembly to review the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, and Habitat III.
 - (iii) Local authorities and other Habitat Agenda partners accredited to Habitat II and III,

- (iv) Other local authorities, national or international associations and organizations not accredited,
 - (v) Non-governmental organizations in consultative status with ECOSOC, and
 - (vi) Other Habitat Agenda partners not accredited at all.
- v. The Secretariat noted that draft chapter 5 provides (i) accreditation criterion (ii) supporting documents required for such accreditation (iii) procedure for accreditation.
- vi. The Secretariat noted that the noted that the requirement to submit a quadrennial report would allow verification of competence and relevance of organizational activities to the work and mandate of UN-Habitat and to the agenda of the respective governing bodies of UN-Habitat.
- vii. The Secretariat noted that the final part of chapter 5 covered renewal of accreditation, expectations, and timelines, which would allow for continuous accreditation by the Executive Board for ultimate approval by the UN-Habitat Assembly.

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

Following the presentation by the secretariat, the discussions highlighted the following:

- viii. One Member State noted that the accreditation of stakeholders to participate in UN-Habitat's work should be considered the prerogative of Member States. The Member State further noted that the creation of the stakeholder engagement policy by Member States should explicitly reiterate that Member States would approve accreditation on a no objection basis as mentioned in the draft policy. The Member State further noted that should one Member State object to a stakeholder's application for accreditation, other Member States should be consulted and if deemed necessary, the application in question should not be approved.
- ix. One Member State sought clarification regarding the proposed periodical review of accredited stakeholders and renewal of accreditation every four years as contained in draft chapter 5.
- x. With respect to paragraph 5.1 of draft chapter 5 on "*Reconfirmation, on request, the accreditation of organisations accredited to the UN-Habitat Assembly and the Executive Board subject to submission of a quadrennial report on the scope and relevance of their activities to the work and mandate of UN-Habitat including the agenda items under discussion by the intergovernmental meeting*":
- a. One Member State suggested that the entity in charge of reconfirming the accreditation of organizations should be clearly mentioned.
 - b. Several Member States expressed concerns regarding the accreditation of stakeholders by Executive Board, requesting the Secretariat to provide legal background for the accreditation of stakeholders by the Executive Board.
 - c. One Member State further suggested an amendment of paragraph 5.1 so that the reference to "ECOSOC and UN-Habitat Assembly accredited organizations" be clearly inserted in the paragraph.

- d. One Member State suggested that paragraph 5.1 should read as follows *“Reconfirmation, on request, ~~the accreditation of organisations of the accredited organizations to the UN-Habitat Assembly and the Executive Board~~ subject to submission of a quadrennial report on the scope and relevance of their activities to the work and mandate of UN-Habitat including the agenda items under discussion by the intergovernmental meeting”*.
 - e. One Member State suggested the need for an alternative language instead of the phrase *“on request”*.
- xi. With respect to paragraph 5.2 on *“Reconfirmation, on request, the accreditation to the UN-Habitat Assembly of local authorities and other Habitat Agenda partners that were accredited to Habitat II, the special session of the General Assembly for overall review and appraisal of implementation of the Habitat Agenda, and Habitat III. This is subject to submission of a quadrennial report on the scope and relevance of their activities to the work and mandate of UN-Habitat including the agenda items under discussion by the intergovernmental meeting, except for local authorities.”*:
- a. One Member State enquired why local authorities would not be required to submit a quadrennial report despite their work being relevant to the mandate of UN-Habitat.
 - b. The Chair requested the Secretariat to provide the list of Habitat partners accredited to Habitat II and Habitat III as mentioned in paragraph 5.2.
 - c. One Member State requested the Secretariat to clarify which stakeholders should submit quadrennial reports. The Member State further suggested that paragraphs 5.2 & 5.5 be merged as both paragraphs address Habitat agenda partners.
- xii. With respect to paragraph 5.3:
- a. One Member State suggested that it should read as follows *“Accreditation of other local authorities or representatives of national or international associations and organisations recognized by the United Nations referred to in rule 67 of the rules of procedure of the UN-Habitat Assembly shall be approved by ~~the Executive Board~~ the UN-Habitat Assembly on the recommendation of the Executive Director in consultation with their Governments where requested”*.
 - b. Two Member States suggested the insertion of a footnote in paragraph 5.3 to outline the *“States not members of the United Nations”*. In this respect the Chair noted that such footnotes are already present in chapter 4 on *“Definition of stakeholders”*.
- xiii. With respect to paragraph 5.5 on *“Other Habitat Agenda partners referred to in rule 68 of the rules of procedure of the UN-Habitat Assembly that were not accredited according to paragraphs 5.2 and 5.4 above may be invited by the Executive Director and accredited to the UN-Habitat Assembly. The Executive Director shall submit the list of such Major*

Groups and other stakeholders to the Executive Board and to Governments not represented on the Executive Board for approval on a no-objection basis on 1 February and 1 September of each year. Final approval will be done by the Executive Board. The following criteria for accreditation in 5.6 must be met and supporting documents in 5.7 submitted”:

- a. One Member State suggested that paragraph 5.5 should read as follows:

*“Other Habitat Agenda partners referred to in rule 68 of the rules of procedure of the UN-Habitat Assembly that were not accredited according to paragraphs 5.2 and 5.4 above may be invited by the Executive Director and accredited to the UN-Habitat Assembly. The Executive Director shall submit the list of such Major Groups and other stakeholders to ~~the Executive Board~~ **UN-HABITAT Assembly** and to Governments ~~not represented on the Executive Board~~ for approval on a no-objection basis, on 1 February and 1 September of each year. The following criteria for accreditation in 5.6 must be met and supporting documents in 5.7 submitted”.*
 - b. Another Member State suggested that paragraph should read as follows:

*“Other Habitat Agenda partners referred to in rule 68 of the rules of procedure of the UN-Habitat Assembly that were not accredited according to paragraphs 5.2 and 5.4 above may be invited by the Executive Director and accredited to the UN-Habitat Assembly. The Executive Director shall submit the list of such Major Groups and other stakeholders to the Executive Board and to Governments not represented on the Executive Board for approval on a no-objection basis on 1 February and 1 September of each year. **Those stakeholders that are not objected by Member States will be considered for** ~~Final approval will be done~~ by the Executive Board. The following criteria for accreditation in 5.6 must be met and supporting documents in 5.7 submitted”.*
 - c. The Chair encouraged Member States to share in writing to the Secretariat their suggestions regarding a mechanism for ad hoc registration.
- xiv. The Chair noted that under the current practice, accreditation took place every four years prior to the sessions of the United Nations Habitat Assembly. He further emphasized that the Secretariat suggested in the draft chapter on accreditation a continuous accreditation process, to be conducted twice a year, which would allow accreditation of new organizations without having to wait 4 years. The Chair pointed that the United Nations Habitat Assembly only convenes once every 4 years and that granting accreditation authority to the Executive Board during the intersessional period would allow business continuity. The Chair further welcomed suggestions from Member States and stakeholders on how UN-Habitat could ensure intersessional accreditation.
 - xv. Three Member States expressed that organizations that are already in consultative status with ECOSOC would not need to (i) go through the accreditation process to the UN-Habitat Assembly to get accredited to UN-Habitat and to (ii) submit a quadrennial report. The Member States suggested that draft chapter 5 should clarify that organizations in consultative status with ECOSOC are welcome to participate in the UN-Habitat meetings.
 - xvi. One Member State suggested that draft chapter 5 should differentiate two categories of

organizations for the purpose of accreditation (i) organizations accredited to ECOSOC (ii) organizations accredited on an ad hoc basis.

- xvii. One Member State suggested that the expected content of the “quadrennial report on relevant activities carried out in the last four years” being referred to in paragraph 5.9 be fully detailed.
- xviii. One Member State noted that there should be a reservation on approval of accreditation by the Executive Board and suggested that there should be an alternative paragraph on the same.

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

- xix. The Secretariat took note of the comments and inputs.
- xx. The Secretariat specified that in the current draft of chapter 5, accredited stakeholders would be required to reconfirm the relevance of their mandate through the submission of a quadrennial report. The Secretariat noted that this mechanism is similar to the process implemented by ECOSOC, pursuant to which accredited organizations can be deregistered if they are not performing the functions related to the ECOSOC mandate.
- xxi. The Secretariat noted that all stakeholders accredited to UN-Habitat would be invited to the United Nations Habitat Assembly and when confirming their participation, they would be required to submit a report of their activities to enable the Secretariat to check their relevance in relation to the work and mandate of UN-Habitat, for their accreditation to be activated.
- xxii. The Secretariat noted that some organizations which participated in the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in 1996, the review meeting of the General Assembly of Implementation of the Habitat Agenda in 2001, or Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in 2016 had never established a relationship with UN-Habitat. Hence the reason why the Secretariat in draft chapter 5 introduced the requirement of the submission of a quadrennial report, to check if these organizations are still relevant to the Agenda and mandate of UN-Habitat.
- xxiii. The Secretariat clarified that under the current draft, local authorities would be exempted from submitting a quadrennial report because they form part of governments, and their work is directly related to the mandate of UN-Habitat.
- xxiv. The Secretariat emphasized that local governments would not be required to apply for consultative status with ECOSOC because they form part of governments. Five local government organizations including United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) had been granted consultative status with ECOSOC, because that was before the adoption of resolution 1996/31 in 1996.
- xxv. The Secretariat clarified that organizations accredited to the UN-Habitat Assembly, Habitat II, Istanbul+5 and Habitat III would submit their quadrennial reports to UN-Habitat. The Secretariat also added that in paragraph 5.4, “non-government organizations” refer to major groups and stakeholders and in paragraph 5.5, “other Habitat Agenda partners” designates major groups and stakeholders, aligned with the language of the rules

of procedures.

- xxvi. Regarding the proposed merge of paragraphs 5.2 and 5.5, the Secretariat noted the 2 paragraphs covers two different categories of organizations. The Secretariat indeed noted that paragraph 5.2 covers organizations that were accredited to Habitat II in 1996, to the UN Special Assembly in Istanbul in 2001, and to Habitat III. The Secretariat further noted that the organizations referred in paragraph 5.5 are organizations that have not participated in any UN-Habitat meetings and are applying for the first time.
- xxvii. The Secretariat requested Member States to suggest what should be the frequency of submission of the quadrennial report by accredited organizations.

Agenda item 3 – Update on stakeholder engagement mechanism

- i. The Chair noted that comments and questions by Member States were welcomed under this agenda item but emphasized that the stakeholder engagement mechanism should be organized between the Secretariat and stakeholders, with the understanding that Member States should uphold the principle of self-organization of stakeholders.
- ii. The Chair further noted that the principle of self-organization of stakeholders received a lot of support in the previous discussions of the working group and is applicable throughout the UN system. The Chair encouraged Member States not to be too prescriptive on how stakeholders should organize themselves.

Upon invitation by the Chair, the Secretariat presented an update on stakeholder engagement mechanism.

The presentation by the Secretariat highlighted the following:

- iii. With over 7,000 different stakeholder entities associated with the work of UN-Habitat and the New Urban Agenda, and 200 organizations accredited to the first session of the UN-Habitat Assembly and the Executive Board, the purpose of the Stakeholder Engagement Mechanism (SEM) would be to assist stakeholders to participate in intergovernmental meetings in a meaningful and effective way.
- iv. A SEM describes the approaches by which stakeholders can plan, consult, coordinate, and contribute expertise on substantive policy issues in housing, sustainable urban development, and human settlements, especially within the mandate of UN-Habitat. It would provide clear guidance for stakeholder engagement during the sessions of the governing bodies of UN-Habitat and would facilitate stakeholder participation during inter-sessional periods.
- v. Following the 8th meeting of the ad hoc working group on stakeholder engagement policy held on 7 December 2022, the Secretariat prepared a concept note on a stakeholder engagement mechanism, which was shared with stakeholders on 11 January 2023. The proposed SEM builds on option 2 suggested by the Secretariat as follows: *“Stakeholders are self-organized. The secretariat provides a neutral platform, organizes stakeholder meetings, and facilitates participation in the intergovernmental meeting and self-organized activities in conformity with the UN Charter and the Rules of Procedure.”*
- vi. The stakeholder engagement mechanism will include a stakeholder coordinating committee (following the UNEP model) which role would be to liaise with the Secretariat,

major groups and other stakeholders on matters concerning stakeholders' engagement in intergovernmental meetings. The Secretariat noted that the criteria, membership, role, specific terms of reference, composition of the stakeholder coordinating committee, working methods, internal governance, geographical balance, age, and other considerations will be developed in due course.

- vii. The Stakeholders Advisory Group Enterprise (SAGE) at their meeting on 27 January 2023 also considered the stakeholder engagement mechanism.
- viii. A stakeholder working group will be established by 15 February 2023 to review the details of the SEM with the support of the UN-Habitat Secretariat.
- ix. The Secretariat noted that the deadline for submission of comments on the concept note on SEM has been extended to Wednesday 8 February 2023 to allow more stakeholders to provide comments.
- x. A revised concept note will be prepared by the Secretariat by 10 February 2023, which will serve as a background document to the development of the full SEM.
- xi. The current proposal would finalize the SEM for adoption by the Global Stakeholder's Forum, which would take place on 3-4 June 2023.

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

- xii. One Member State enquired if there will be establishment of a (i) quarterly or biannual stakeholder meeting with the Secretariat (ii) dedicated portal for stakeholder engagement envisaged as part of the process of SEM.

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

- xiii. The Secretariat noted that there was an orientation towards an annual consultation between stakeholders and Member States which would most likely happen during urban October or before the last session of the Executive Board each year. The Secretariat added that depending on the calendar of events, there could also be briefing meetings scheduled.
- xiv. The Secretariat noted that it foresees a portal and a platform where stakeholders could engage. The Secretariat noted that the development of such portal would have financial implications.

Agenda item 5 - Any other matters

The Chair noted that the working group will start readings of the draft stakeholder engagement policy scheduled for 15 February 2023, 20 February 2023 and 1 March 2023. At the end of March 2023, the ad hoc working group will report back to the next session of the Executive Board which will be held on 28 to 29 March 2023.

The Chair invited the Member States to share written comments prior to the readings.

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