



United Nations Habitat Assembly of the
United Nations Human Settlements Programme
Second session
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Resolution adopted by the United Nations Habitat Assembly on 9 June 2023

2/1. International guidelines on people-centred smart cities

The United Nations Habitat Assembly,

Recognizing the profound and dynamic impact that digitalization and smart cities are having on human settlements and human lives, both in positive ways, by providing new ways to support sustainable urban development and enhancing access to basic services, and – if not managed well – in negative ways, by exacerbating existing inequalities and accessibility barriers and compromising economic growth and privacy rights, among other things,

Noting the definition of *smart city* by United for Smart Sustainable Cities, the United Nations smart city platform coordinated by the Economic Commission for Europe, the International Telecommunication Union and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and supported by 14 other United Nations entities, as “an innovative city that uses information and communication technologies and other means to improve quality of life, efficiency of urban operation and services, and competitiveness, while ensuring that it meets the needs of present and future generations with respect to economic, social, environmental as well as cultural aspects”,¹

Recalling General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, and in particular the recognition, in paragraph 15, that the spread of information and communications technology and global interconnectedness has great potential to accelerate human progress, to bridge the digital divide and to develop knowledge societies,

Recalling also Sustainable Development Goal 11 on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable,

Reaffirming targets 17.6 and 17.8 of the Sustainable Development Goals and their respective objectives to enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation and enhance knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms, including through improved coordination among existing mechanisms, in particular at the United Nations level, and 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,

Reaffirming also the pledge in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that no one will be left behind,

¹ See recommendation ITU-T Y.4900.

Recalling the New Urban Agenda² and reaffirming the commitment in paragraph 66 of the Agenda to adopting a smart-city approach that makes use of opportunities from digitalization, clean energy and technologies, as well as innovative transport technologies, and the 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

in line with the priorities described in paragraph 19 of the New Urban Agenda,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 77/211 of 15 December 2022 entitled “The right to privacy in the digital age”, which calls upon all States to respect and protect the right to privacy, both online and offline, including in the context of digital communications and new and emerging technologies; according to which no one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence, and the right to the protection of the law against such interference; which also calls on all States to take measures to put an end to violations of the right to privacy and to create the conditions to prevent such violations, including by ensuring that relevant national legislation complies with their obligations under international human rights law; which furthermore calls on all States to establish or maintain existing independent, effective, adequately resourced and impartial judicial, administrative and/or parliamentary domestic oversight mechanisms capable of ensuring transparency, as appropriate, and accountability for State surveillance of communications, their interception and the collection of personal data,

Recalling Human Rights Council resolution 41/11 of 11 July 2019 on new and emerging digital technologies and human rights, which recognizes the potential of digital technologies to facilitate efforts to accelerate human progress, to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, to bridge digital divides, to support, inter alia, the enjoyment of the rights of persons with disabilities, the advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and to ensure that no one is left behind in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals,

Noting the Secretary-General’s road map for digital cooperation,³ in which the Secretary-General set out a global agenda on internet connectivity, digital inclusion, digital capacity-building, digital human rights, artificial intelligence, and digital trust and security,

1. *Requests* the Executive Director of UN-Habitat to further support Member States and relevant stakeholders in promoting a people-centred smart cities approach that is consistent with the purpose and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including full respect for international law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to ensure that innovation and digital technologies are used to help cities and human settlements in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda, taking into account the following considerations:

(a) Ensuring the equitable involvement and values of people, including women and girls, children and youth, persons with disabilities, older persons and persons in vulnerable situations, and ensuring that digital and other new technologies help reduce spatial, economic, social and digital inequalities, overcome economic and social development challenges, and support respect for human rights for inclusive cities;

(b) Ensuring that urban digital infrastructure contributes to reducing the environmental impact of cities and minimizing the pollution and the consumption of natural resources caused by digitalization itself;

(c) Building the appropriate capacity and skills for people-centred smart cities, including by promoting digital literacy, education and the training of the officials and technical staff of national, regional and local authorities and governments in digital transformation, digital accessibility, data governance, smart city planning and digital public participation, among others, leaving no one behind;

(d) Facilitating appropriate multilevel digital governance to guide the development of people-centred smart cities, including data governance, management and use, system and data interoperability, ethical considerations regarding technologies such as artificial intelligence, the

² General Assembly resolution 71/256, annex.

³ A/74/821.

privacy and human rights of individuals and communities, and appropriate collaboration frameworks between governments, the private sector, academia and civil society;

(e) Creating economic opportunities and an enabling environment through innovation and smart technologies, including to reduce socioeconomic inequalities and foster cities' shared prosperity;

(f) Centring smart city activities on people's needs by maximizing transparency as well as community participation, representation and control;

(g) Safeguarding public trust by putting cybersecurity measures in place that protect data and infrastructure, including trusted, secure and resilient digital infrastructure;

2. *Encourages* Member States to implement people-centred smart city approaches in the preparation and implementation of smart city regulations, plans and strategies to promote equitable access to, and life-long education and training of all people in, the opportunities provided by data, digital infrastructure and digital services in cities and human settlements, and to favour transparency and accountability;

3. *Requests* the Executive Director, subject to the availability of funding, to initiate the development of international guidelines on people-centred smart cities as a non-binding framework for developing national and local smart city regulations, plans and strategies, which would ensure that digital urban infrastructure and data contribute to making cities and human settlements sustainable, inclusive and prosperous and respectful of human rights, and to present them for consideration and possible approval by the United Nations Habitat Assembly at its resumed second session;

4. *Also requests* the Executive Director to ensure an inclusive consultation, including through the existing regional and country offices of UN-Habitat, with Member States and members of United Nations specialized agencies, national and international associations and organizations of local authorities recognized by the United Nations, relevant United Nations organizations, international finance institutions, development agencies, non-governmental organizations, academia, civil-society organizations, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders, taking into account traditional knowledge, in order to inform the drafting process with best practices, guidelines and lessons learned from different contexts and at different scales;

5. *Invites* Member States and members of United Nations specialized agencies and all relevant stakeholders to participate in the development of the international guidelines on people-centred smart cities;

6. *Encourages* the Executive Director to leverage technological platforms, such as the United Nations Innovation Technology Accelerator for Cities (UNITAC), to support the development of international guidelines for people-centred smart cities;

7. *Encourages* Member States and all relevant stakeholders to technically and financially support the process for the development of the guidelines referred to in paragraphs 3–6 above, taking into account national circumstances;

8. *Invites* international multilateral financial institutions, regional development banks, development finance institutions and cooperation agencies to provide support to Member States, in particular developing countries, in the application of people-centred smart cities approaches;

9. *Requests* the Executive Director to report to the Executive Board of UN-Habitat on progress in the implementation of the present resolution until the completion of the work.