

**Terms of Reference for the UN-Habitat
Expert Working Group (EWG) on People Centered Smart Cities**

1. Background

The Second Session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly passed the **Resolution HSP/HA.2/L.4 on international guidelines on people-centered smart cities**¹, requesting the UN-Habitat Executive Director to:

“...initiate the development of international guidelines on people-centered 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 Assembly at its resumed second session”

and

“...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.”

2. Objective of the Expert Working Group

The objective of the Expert Working Group on People-Centered Smart Cities, in accordance with operational paragraph 4 of the UN-Habitat Assembly Resolution HSP/HA.2/L.4 on international guidelines on people-centered smart cities, is to provide expert advice to UN-Habitat in the development of international guidelines on people-centered smart cities, 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;

¹ <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2023/06/2310561e.pdf>

- (c) Building the appropriate capacity and skills for people-centered 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-centered smart cities, including data governance, management and use, system and data interoperability, ethical considerations regarding technologies such as artificial intelligence, the 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) Centering 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;

Following the second session of UN-Habitat Assembly, the Executive Director is calling upon Member States to collaborate and contribute with their national, regional and local competencies to the development of the international guidelines. Member States are therefore invited to recommend experts to become part of the Expert Working Group (EWG), which will support the development of the guidelines by sharing expert inputs, knowledge and experiences through both online and in-person consultations.

3. Scope of work

The Expert Working Group will serve as the core consultative body that contributes expert guidance for the development of the international guidelines on people-centered smart cities. The work of the Expert Working Group will take 18 months, from November 2023 to April 2025. The Group will meet at least three times through Expert Group Meetings, and as needed, based on a programme and plan of action to be developed at the Group's first meeting. The plan of action will include specific objectives, indicative time frames and associated actions and deliverables, subject to approval and, as appropriate, to be reviewed by UN-Habitat.

During its meetings, the Expert Working Group, with the possible support of dedicated thematic working groups (TWG), will review technical materials, consider contributions from other experts and consider input from regional and UN-system consultations to be organized by UN-Habitat through its regional and country offices. Thematic group, to be formed at the kickoff of the EWG and coordinated by a dedicated chair, will conduct one round of regional consultations, facilitated by their respective chair, leveraging the regional consultation meetings organized by UN-Habitat.

The guidance of the Expert Working Group will inform the drafting of the guidelines bringing sectoral expertise, competences, projects experiences and lessons learnt as well as relevant data and information together in a manner that corresponds to the key areas mentioned in the resolution of the second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly.

4. Composition

The UN-Habitat Executive Director will appoint up to maximum 30 members of the Expert Working Group. In doing so, due consideration will be given to relevant qualifications of candidates and while ensuring gender, geographical and thematic balance. The Executive Director will also appoint a Chair and Co-Chair out of the members. The Working Group will be supported by UN-Habitat as the technical Secretariat.

The composition of the group will consider the following non-exhaustive areas of expertise, constituencies and criteria:

The expert working group should ensure:

- a) Geographical representation
- b) Gender balance
- c) Thematic balance

The expert working group should consist of experts which are:

- a) National, regional and local government representatives with expertise in digital urban transformation and smart cities including in the below areas of expertise, as appropriate
 - Capacity development and digital literacy
 - Community engagement and participation through digital means
 - Digital governance, standards and interoperability
 - Digital transformation
 - Economic development and shared prosperity
 - Smart cities
 - Digital inclusion, equity and human rights
 - Sustainable digital transformation and environmental sustainability

An illustrative list of areas of expertise and related rationale can be found in Annex I

- b) Representatives of relevant stakeholders' groups:
 - Civil Society Organization
 - Business and Industry
 - Foundations and Philanthropists
 - Non-governmental organizations
 - International organization (including United Nations and international financial institutions)
 - Member State (governments and governmental entities, including development agencies)
 - Local authorities
 - Scientific and Technological community

To maintain a balanced regional representation and manageable proceedings, no ad-hoc experts will be included in the group; however, at the request of either the Secretariat or the EWG, additional technical experts may be invited to participate on ad-hoc basis to some of the activities and consultations such as sector-specific or regional dialogues, subject to Secretariat approval, as appropriate and as needed.

5. Roles and responsibilities

A key function of the Expert Working Group is to assist and advise the Executive Director of UN-Habitat and the Secretariat in:

- (a) Promoting the adoption of best practices in the development of international guidelines on people-centered smart cities;
- (b) Identifying relevant trends, challenges and opportunities in making cities inclusive, sustainable, prosperous and respectful of human rights leveraging digital technologies;
- (c) Exchanging knowledge, lessons learnt, data and information on policy development, projects' implementation or other activities enabling people centered smart cities approaches at regional, national and local level;
- (d) Advising on recent scientific research, digital technologies, participatory mechanisms, institutional frameworks, educational programmes, standards, amongst others, for people centered smart cities solutions
- (e) Contributing substantively to the discussions on the development of the international guidelines and definition of the approach, principles and guidelines outline
- (f) Providing guidance, technical comments and recommendations to be considered in the global assessment titled "World Smart Cities Outlook" as well as in EGMs and in regional and other consultations
- (g) Supporting the preparation, agenda setting and thematic discussions of the Expert Group Meetings, as needed
- (h) Contributing to the drafting, undertaking reviews and ensuring completion of the international guidelines on people centered smart cities throughout the two years
- (i) Supporting the dissemination of progresses and results according to any official communication, as requested by the UN-Habitat Secretariat
- (l) Advising on a Roadmap for the implementation of the guidelines, based on the EWG work, results and discussions, beyond 2025

6. Mode of work of the Expert Working Group

The mode of work of the expert groups will comprise:

- a) Electronic means/modalities; for example, email, video conferencing, collaboration spaces and telephone as needed;
- b) In-person meetings, as deemed necessary, but not exceeding three meetings

Expert group work will be co-facilitated by a Chair and a co-chair for the EWG and a Chair for each thematic working group (TWG), as necessary, and supported by the UN-Habitat Technical Secretariat.

7. Required qualifications and expertise

Experts need to fulfill the following criteria:

- a) Advanced university degree (Master's or equivalent) in Business Administration (MBA), Finance, Economics, Electronic Engineering, Political Studies, Law or related field is required. A first level

university degree in combination with an additional two years of qualifying experience may be accepted in lieu of the advanced university degree.

- b) Significant experience in digital government and smart cities experience or experience in the fields indicated in paragraph 4 (c)
- c) Representing one of stakeholder groups indicated in paragraph 4 (d)
- d) Proven track records in coordinating and managing projects, research and initiatives in the fields indicated in paragraph 4 (b)
- e) Working knowledge of English and good drafting skills

8. Reporting of the EWG

A progress report on the work of the EWG will be presented by the UN-Habitat Secretariat in collaboration with the Chair and Co-Chair upon completion of the EWG work.

9. Terms of engagement

Participation in the Expert Working Group is voluntary and does not include remuneration.

10. Timeline

The Expert Working Group will conclude its mandate upon completion of its work.

11. Annex I

The table below provides an illustrative and non-exhaustive list of the areas of expertise the UN-Habitat Secretariat is looking for to develop international guidelines on people centered smart cities. For each area, a list of sub-areas is provided as example. Expertise in these areas and related sub-areas is necessary to develop guidelines that will address the considerations outlined in the Resolution HSP/HA.2/L.4

Cross-cutting themes	Sub-themes	Rationale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital transformation • Smart Cities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Digital infrastructures - Cybersecurity and ICT infrastructures protection - Data and privacy - Change management & digital transformation - Smart cities solutions - Financing to foster innovation - Safe and trustworthy deployment of digital technologies - Public procurement for innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensuring that innovation and digital technologies are used to help cities and human settlements achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda through approaches which are respectful of Human Rights principles and aim to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community engagement and participation through digital means • Digital inclusion, equity and human rights • Economic development and shared prosperity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - E-participation and digital services - Community engagement and participation - Digital solutions to reduce inequalities (targeting vulnerable and marginalised groups) - Digital economy and inclusive socio-economic opportunities - Inclusion and human rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensuring that digital technologies help reduce spatial, economic, social and digital inequalities and respect human rights; - Creating economic opportunities and an enabling environment through innovation and smart technologies; - Centering smart city activities on people’s needs by maximizing transparency as well as community participation, representation and control;
Capacity development and digital literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Digital skills development and literacy - Institutional strengthening: digital skills for public officials - Education and training - Knowledge sharing and collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building the appropriate capacity and skills for people-centered smart cities;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research and Innovation in public and private sectors 	
Sectoral themes	Sub-themes	Rationale
Sustainable digital transformation and environmental sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Climate change mitigation - Waste management - Water resources management - e-mobility - Land degradation and natural resources exploitation - Biodiversity conservation - Standards for sustainable digital transformation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensuring that urban digital infrastructure contributes to reducing the environmental impact of cities;
Digital governance, standards and interoperability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - E-government architecture - E-government coordination and policy-making - Multilevel digital governance: interoperability, exchange, protection and cybersecurity - The regulatory ecosystem: strategies, rules and regulations - Transparency enhancing and governmental mechanisms optimisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitating appropriate multilevel digital governance to guide the development of people-centered smart cities, - Safeguarding public trust by putting cybersecurity measures in place that protect data and infrastructure;