UN-HABITAT

Meeting Summary

Virtual kick-off of Expert Working Group for the International Guidelines on People-Centred Smart Cities

**Wednesday, December 13, 2023,
14:00 to 16:30 East Africa Time (EAT)**

Time	Agenda items	Speaker
14:00–14:10	Welcome and opening remarks	**Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif** (Executive Director, UN-Habitat)
14:10–14:25	**International Guidelines on People-centred Smart Cities**	**Ms. Edlam Yemeru** (Chief, Knowledge and Innovation Branch, UN-Habitat)
14:25–15:00	**Expert Working Group**: Member introductions	**Ms. Isabel Wetzel** (Programme Management Officer, Innovation Unit, UN-Habitat)
15:00–15:15	**Expert Working Group**: Scope, roles, modalities, timeline	**Mr. Pontus Westerberg** (Programme Management Officer, UN-Habitat
15:15–15:45	**Q&A session**	Interactive (Ms. Edlam Yemeru, facilitator)
15:45–16:00	**Way forward and closing**	**Ms. Edlam Yemeru** (Chief, Knowledge and Innovation Branch, UN-Habitat)

I.   Welcome and opening remarks

Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, UN Under Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Habitat, welcomed the global experts to the first meeting of the Expert Working Group (EWG) for the International Guidelines on People-Centred Smart Cities. She expressed a warm welcome and highlighted the significance of the moment in the urban digital transformation journey.

The Executive Director emphasized three pivotal messages: (1) prioritizing people over technology in the advancement of smart-city initiatives; (2) the pressing need to prioritize people-centred smart cities on the global stage; and (3) the significance of international guidelines that authentically encompass a wide array of perspectives, regional variations, and requirements.

The Executive Director thanked the distinguished experts for their participation in the working group and wished them well in their upcoming discussions.

II.   Overview of the international guidelines on people-centred smart cities

Ms. Edlam Yemeru, the Chief of the Knowledge and Innovation Branch of UN-Habitat's key highlights encompassed various crucial aspects: Firstly, the acknowledgment was extended to the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, distinguished experts, and participants for their presence, emphasizing the importance of the event's relevance in today's urban digital landscape. She highlighted the significance of placing people at the core of smart city development, stressing the guidelines' role in reflecting global diversity and ensuring technology serves everyone equitably.

An emphasis was placed on five key elements shaping the people-centred smart cities approach, including empowerment of communities, accessibility, equity, responsible management of data and digital infrastructure, building trust and security, and adopting a multi-stakeholder approach. She also outlined UN-Habitat's initiatives in promoting people-centred smart cities through advocacy, capacity building, advisory services, and financial innovation.

She explained the process mandated by 193 Member States, underlining the need for extensive consultations, and leveraging existing resources. The presentation outlined the broad timeline and components of the process, emphasizing the development of the guidelines through expert group consultations, global assessments, regional, and stakeholder consultations, leading toward finalization by mid-2025. She concluded by encouraging introductions among attendees and facilitating engagement for the upcoming activities. She also highlighted the need for international guidelines on people-centred smart cities and the purpose of the guidelines was to provide a global reference point and a benchmark of what we mean by people-centred, smart cities.

III.   Expert Working Group: Introductions

During the introductory session led by Ms. Isabel Wetzel, Programme Management Officer, each of the 31 members took the opportunity to present themselves, offering their names along with a brief overview of their professional backgrounds. They elaborated on their areas of expertise and how their knowledge and experience are relevant to the development of international guidelines on people-centred smart cities.

IV.   Expert Working Group: Scope, responsibilities, timelines

Mr. Pontus Westerberg, the Programme Management Officer leading the People-Centred Smart Cities Programme at UN-Habitat, presented an overview of the EWG's scope, roles, modalities, and timeline. He highlighted the importance of the group's collaboration in developing an 18-month action plan and specified the primary responsibilities of the group members. These tasks include contributing to guideline development, participation in global expert group meetings, providing technical guidance, sharing best practices, and assisting in communication and roadmap creation for implementation.

Regarding the modalities, he emphasized that UN-Habitat would facilitate the group's activities while the members focused on contributing their expertise. He outlined the planned timeline, which included in-person meetings in 2024 and 2025, along with online regional and thematic consultations. He clarified logistics, including travel coverage for global meetings and the likelihood of online sessions for other consultations. He further mentioned that platforms would be created for collaboration (e.g. Google folder and email communications) to ensure effective engagement and contribution throughout the process.

Following Pontus's presentation, Ms. Edlam opened the floor for discussion, seeking reflections and input from the group on how they could best collaborate and contribute. She clarified that the guidelines were non-binding and highlighted the technical nature of the EWG's mandate. UN-Habitat would be the pen holder for the drafting of the guidelines, incorporating inputs, guidance, and revisions from the Experts Working Group and ensuring global perspectives were represented. Ms. Edlam noted that UN-Habitat will announce the locations of the three global Expert Group Meetings (EGMs) planned for 2024-2025 before the end of December 2023. She also indicated that UN-Habitat will convene and organize the EWG, with the possibility of appointing a chair and vice-chair to lead the discussions for the in-person global meetings.

V.   Q&A session

(a) From Dr. Alanus von Radecki (Germany):

- o Is there a standard process that UN-Habitat will follow for the drafting and assessment of the state of smart city development or are the experts supposed to come up with the process and methodology?
- o Will we have a teams folder or a visual tool (e.g. Miro board) to help us collaborate?

Ms. Edlam highlighted their prior experience in creating similar international guidelines at UN-Habitat, offering to share previous guidelines on urban planning as a reference point for the group (available here. She emphasized that while UN-Habitat had past formats, the team remains open to innovation and adapting the approach to suit the current project's needs. Ms. Edlam addressed the methodology by outlining two key proposals. Firstly, she mentioned the initiation of the World's Smart Cities Outlook to be published in 2024, which would assess the global state of smart city development. The outlook will serve as an essential reference point and input for the guideline development process. Secondly, she proposed sharing an initial structure or potential content framework for the guidelines in early 2024. The proposed structure will aim to initiate discussions within the group, inviting brainstorming and in-depth reflection on the guideline's content. She concluded by stating that more details on the way forward, including these proposals, would be shared at the meeting's conclusion, appreciating the valuable questions raised.

(b) From Ms. Rini Rachmawati (Indonesia):

- o Is it possible to have a meeting offline? If it is, Indonesia is ready to host the next meeting.
- o Many members have experience in projects related to SMART Cities, is there any possibility to have them present their results and their experiences, with the possibility of compiling these into one report?

Ms. Edlam expressed gratitude for the offer to host an in-person meeting in Indonesia, suggesting discussions bilaterally to explore the feasibility further. She clarified the process for selecting meeting locations, explaining that UN-Habitat had recently concluded an open call for countries to express interest in hosting global or regional meetings. While solid proposals for global meetings were received, there remains flexibility to consider additional hosting proposals for regional meetings and thematic consultations.

Ms. Edlam highlighted the openness to suggestions for stakeholder consultations, such as academia, civil society, private sector engagements, or other relevant actors. Addressing Rini Rachmawati directly, Edlam proposed discussing the potential for Indonesia to host a regional meeting for the sub-region or broader region. She emphasized that not all Expert Working Group's meetings would be virtual, expressing the intention to hold at least three global in-person meetings and potentially more regional meetings. Regarding the global EWG's presence and contribution to regional meetings, she envisioned members joining their respective regional consultations in addition to their participation at the global level.

(c) From Ms. Juliet Chinemelu (Nigeria):

- o Is the present plan to meet two times in person enough to achieve the tasks (i.e. the literature review and the assessment of the current state of smart city development etc)?
- o How will UN-Habitat support us to ensure we develop an ideal guideline?

Ms. Edlam emphasized the importance of the forthcoming World's Smart Cities Outlook (which will serve as an essential reference point and input for the group during the guideline development process). She mentioned plans to share a proposed structure, content, and process for this outlook in early 2024,

seeking feedback and guidance from the group. She acknowledged the comprehensive nature of assessing smart city development and highlighted the need for a dedicated process to develop a global assessment report. Ms. Edlam noted that UN-Habitat had opened a call for partners to collaborate on the World's Smart Cities Outlook and would make a selection soon. She conveyed confidence in the assessment report's ability to encapsulate the current state of smart city developments, emphasizing the collaborative involvement of the group in the process.

(d) From Dr. Biyu Wan (China):
  - o Highlighted differences in smart city guidelines; proposed creating an indicator system for economic and infrastructure elements; also voiced support for more in-person meetings and offered to host meetings in China.

Ms. Edlam agreed with the idea of having more in-person meetings while considering time constraints. She appreciated the proposal and expressed willingness to discuss the possibilities bilaterally, exploring the potential for meetings in China or the region. Ms. Edlam acknowledged the importance of indicators linked to the guidelines and sought the group's guidance on the implementation phase, emphasizing the need for operationalization beyond 2025. She suggested initiating discussions on developing indicators aligned with the guidelines, recognizing Dr. Wan's potential contribution to articulating the indicators going forward.

(e) From Mr. Abdelkhalek Ibrahim (Egypt):
  - o Proposed sharing Egypt's national guidelines as a valuable resource. Egypt has developed comprehensive national guidelines as part of its Smart City strategy. Sharing these national and regional guidelines could greatly contribute to the process of formulating global guidelines.

(f) From Mr. François Ossama (Cameroon):
  - o Requested UN-Habitat to share the presentations of the meeting with the participants.
  - o We should not only think in terms of infrastructure or content, but it's also very important to assess the perceptions that various countries or local governments have about smart cities.

Ms. Edlam confirmed that UN-Habitat would follow up with all of the presentations made during the session including the previous guidelines from UN-Habitat on urban planning, serving as informative resources for our collective understanding. Ms. Edlam shared that in the preparation of the World's Smart Cities Outlook study, perception-based surveys would play a significant role, involving both the public and decision-makers. In early January or February 2024, UN-Habitat will plan to present a comprehensive roadmap detailing the methodologies and scope of the global assessment. This would provide an opportunity for the experts' valuable input on how best to conduct the assessment of smart city development, encompassing various perspectives and considerations.

(g) Suggestions from the chat:
  - o Proposal to share Russia's digitalization rating called the IQ index which is the standard for smart cities.
  - o There is a need to have a common space to collaborate and chat. Suggestions include; Google, Teams, Miroboards, FigmaJam etc.

UN-Habitat will review all suggested collaboration spaces and provide feedback to all experts accordingly.

VI.   Way forward and closing.

Ms. Edlam closed the meeting and provided an overview of the next steps and way forward for the Expert Working Group:

- **December 2023**: UN-Habitat to announce global EGM locations and dates.
- **Early January 2024**: Detailed work plan shared with experts for review.
- **January 2024**: Full proposal for conducting the World Smart Cities Outlook presented to experts for their input.
- **February 2024**: Virtual consultation on proposed guidelines' outline and content.
- **February 2024**: Status update on planned regional and thematic consultations, the modalities, and purposes.
- **Early March 2024**: Modalities and scope of consultations shared before global EGMs.
- **April 2024**: First in-person global EGM.
- **April to October 2023**: Drafting of guidelines by UN-Habitat in consultation with experts.
- **October 2024**: Second global EGM to present a preliminary draft of the guidelines.
- **Throughout 2024**: Drafting of the guidelines and regional/stakeholder consultations.
- **Throughout 2024**: Periodic virtual meetings throughout the year, convening as needed for ongoing progress.

VII.   Participant List

	Name	Organization	Country
1	Maimunah Mohd Sharif	Executive Director, UN-Habitat	Kenya
2	Edlam Abera Yemeru	UN-Habitat	Kenya
3	Isabel Wetzel	UN-Habitat	Kenya
4	Pontus Westerberg	UN-Habitat	Kenya
5	Hazel Kuria	UN-Habitat	Kenya
6	Bruno Dercon	UN-Habitat	Japan
7	Matthew Benn	UN-Habitat	Kenya
8	Rafael Tuts	UN-Habitat	Kenya
9	Rong Yang	UN-Habitat	Kenya
10	Runze Wang	UN-Habitat	Kenya
11	Muslim Qazimi	UN-Habitat	Iraq
12	Fernanda Lonardoni	UN-Habitat	Kenya
13	Mariem Rekik	UN-Habitat	Tunisia
14	Amr Lashin	UN-Habitat	Cairo
15	Anar Valiyev	ADA University	Azerbaijan
16	Shahnaz Badalova	The State Committee of Urban Planning and Architecture	Azerbaijan
17	Yame Nkgowe	Africa Place & Equity Cities Foundation	Botswana
18	Antonio Francisco da Costa e Silva Neto	City Hall of Maceio	Brazil
19	Ana Paula Bruno	Ministry of Management and Innovation on Public Services	Brazil
20	François Ossama	Ministry of Housing and Urban Development	Cameroon
21	Biyu Wan	China Smart City Planning & Design Research Institute Co. LTD	China
22	Zhao		China

23	Abdelkhalek Ibrahim	Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities	Egypt
24	Santiago Caprio	PolisMaker Lab	El Salvador
25	Zorn Caroline	City of Strasbourg	France
26	Brigitte Bariol-Mathais	French network of urban planning agencies (FNAU)	France
27	Charlotte Räuchle	Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development	Germany
28	Alanus von Radecki	Data Competence Center for Cities and Regions	Germany
29	Rini Rachmawati	Universitas Gadjah Mada	Indonesia
30	Sharone April	National Digital Agency	Israel
31	Tanaka Yukinari	Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)	Japan
32	Lucas Omollo	Konza Technopolis Development Authority (KoTDA)	Kenya
33	Zaheer Allam	Curtin University	Mauritius
34	Dr. Hugo Isaak	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Mexico
35	Rogelio Alcocer Gómez	Government of the State of Querétaro	Mexico
36	Selma Tabet	Ministry of National Territorial Planning, Urban Planning, Housing, and City Policy	Morocco
37	Juliet Chinemelu	Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic Uwana Afikpo	Nigeria
38	Ekaterina Baranova	FAU "Project Directorate of the Ministry of Construction, Housing and Utilities"	Russia
39	Rashnee Atkinson	National Department of Human Settlements	South Africa
40	Lee Junghoon	Yonsei University, Graduate School of Information	South Korea
41	Santiago Garces	City of Boston	United States
42	Michael C Masuda	U.S. Department of State	United States
43	Fathi Saeed Salem	Ministry of Public Works and Roads	Yemen