

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

Wednesday, 21 September 2022 – 10:00 – 12:00 East Africa Time – Conference Room 4

Chair: Mr. Patrick Egloff

Deputy Permanent Representative of the Switzerland to UN-Habitat

Agenda item 1 - Adoption of the Agenda

The meeting was called to order at 10:15 am EAT. The working group adopted the provisional agenda for its fourth meeting without any change as follows:

1. Adoption of the provisional Agenda
2. Discussion of the draft stakeholder engagement policy, chapters 1-4
3. Preview of next meeting of the working group scheduled for 5 October 2022
4. Any other business

Agenda item 2 - Discussion of the draft stakeholder engagement policy, chapters 1-4.

Under this item, the Chair gave the following background:

- i. The Chair recalled that at its last meeting held on 15 June 2022, the ad hoc working group discussed and recommended a proposed draft structure for UN-Habitat's Stakeholder Engagement Policy, including 9 parts as follows (i) an introduction, (ii) purpose of the policy, (iii) guiding principles, (iv) the definition of stakeholders, (v) accreditation (as a placeholder), (vi) benefits or privileges of accredited stakeholders, (vii) engagement of UN-Habitat, (viii) the responsibilities and obligations of accredited stakeholders and (ix) funding mobilization. The Chair recalled that at the last meeting of the ad hoc working group, the Chair invited Member States and stakeholders to submit their written inputs and comments for the development of a draft stakeholder engagement policy to the Secretariat.
- ii. The Chair indicated that the Secretariat has carried out internal and external consultations to feed into the drafting of the draft stakeholder engagement policy.
- iii. The Chair further noted that based on the contributions received so far and with the technical support from the Secretariat, he shared with the ad hoc working group on 14 September 2022 a Zero Draft stakeholder engagement policy (the **Zero Draft**) which can be accessed [here](#). The Chair emphasized that it is a proposed draft meant to start the discussions, and which is not cast in stone. He noted that the draft was also shared with other stakeholders and networks actively engaged in UN-Habitat intergovernmental processes.

After this update, the Chair invited the ad hoc working group to provide general comments on the Zero Draft. The comments highlighted the following:

- iv. One Member State noted that the Zero Draft was a good basis to start discussions.
- v. One Member State commented that while the decision-making remains the prerogative of Member States, hearing from stakeholders can improve the quality and effectiveness of the decision-making. The Member State further noted that the normative mandate of UN-Habitat requires a feedback loop from stakeholders and partners on the knowledge products and solutions developed by UN-Habitat. The Member State suggested that the Zero Draft could elaborate a bit more on the pre-requisites for a meaningful engagement of stakeholders, for example access to information and ability to take part in the discussions. The Member State also commented that the stakeholder

engagement should be seen more as a relational and beneficial engagement as opposed to a static addition.

- vi. One Member State commented that the Zero Draft should also focus on the relationship and support to Member States in the decision-making process. The Member State further suggested that the Zero Draft provides an opportunity for stakeholders from developing countries to participate in UN-Habitat's activities. The Zero Draft should also promote engagement amongst the relevant stakeholders so they can provide stronger contributions to Member States in the decision-making process.
- vii. One Member State noted Chapter 5 on accreditation as a placeholder within the Zero Draft and emphasized that the Zero Draft should be envisioned as a comprehensive document encompassing also the accreditation procedure. The Member State sought clarification on the modalities of contribution from stakeholders to the shaping of the agenda of the sessions of the Governing Bodies. The Member State commented that while contribution from stakeholders to the agenda of a session can be beneficial, the decision-making remains the prerogative of Member States.
- viii. One stakeholder noted that it would be important that the Zero Draft provides consultations with stakeholders when shaping the agenda for the sessions of the Governing Bodies. The stakeholder indicated that during the sessions of the Executive Board of UN-Habitat, stakeholders are invited to contribute at the end of each session, when decisions are already adopted. He further suggested that stakeholders be invited earlier in the session to contribute to the decision-making process.

After the discussions, the Chair invited the Secretariat to give a short introduction about the content of the draft Chapter 1 – introduction of the zero draft of the stakeholder engagement policy.

Chapter 1 - Introduction of the zero draft of the stakeholder engagement policy

Upon invitation by the Chair, the Secretariat provided a briefing on the Chapter 1 - introduction of the zero draft of the stakeholder engagement policy. The briefing by the Secretariat highlighted the following:

- ix. The draft stakeholder engagement policy only applies to stakeholder engagement in UN-Habitat intergovernmental processes involving the UN-Habitat Assembly and its subsidiary organs.
- x. The stakeholder engagement policy responds to UN-Habitat Governing Council resolution 26/7, UN-Habitat Assembly decision 1/3 as well as UN-Habitat Executive Board decision 2020/6.
- xi. While inputs from stakeholders can provide valuable contributions to the intergovernmental process, decision-making within UN-Habitat remains the prerogative of Member States.
- xii. A Stakeholder Engagement Mechanism (SEM) with a structure and clear terms of reference will constitute part of the policy to illustrate how stakeholders will engage and participate in practice.
- xiii. The Zero Draft responds to relevant UN-Habitat and UN regulations and rules and builds on the experiences of the World Urban Forum, the New Urban Agenda. It also responds to the UN Secretary General's report, Our Common Agenda paragraphs 2, 54 and 64.

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

- xiv. Two Member States suggested that in the third paragraph of the introduction, the reference to "*socially and environmentally sustainable cities*" be replaced by "*sustainable cities*" not to limit the text to only two dimensions of sustainability.

- xv. One Member State further requested clarification on the way forward for the elaboration of the stakeholder engagement mechanism being referred to in the fifth paragraph of the introduction.
- xvi. Two Member States further suggested that in the last paragraph of the introduction, the reference to the mechanism for stakeholder engagement should be kept generic rather than listing all types of engagement mechanisms. The Member State suggested to refer to “*stakeholder engagement mechanism in line with UN-Habitat rules and regulations*”. The Member State noted that its Capital was still analyzing the draft and therefore further additional comments may be submitted at the next meeting.
- xvii. One Member State commented that the role of Member States in the decision-making process should be further emphasized and developed in paragraph 5. The Member State further suggested to detail the relevant stakeholders being referred to in paragraph 5 of the introduction rather than keeping a generic reference to “stakeholders”.
- xviii. One Member State suggested to emphasize on the relational and collaborative engagement of stakeholders with Member States. The Member State suggested to insert a language reiterating that the decision-making remains the prerogative of Member States and acknowledging that Member States, in such decision-making process, can benefit from the inputs from stakeholders.
- xix. One Member State suggested to include in the introduction a paragraph on why the stakeholder engagement policy is drafted. The Member State further suggested that the seventh paragraph which currently reads “*this policy will enable engagement, serve as an instrument to identify the risks and benefits, protect, and preserve UN-Habitat’s reputation, and integrity as the lead agency for housing and sustainable urban development in the United Nations*” be re-phrased to read “*this policy is for enabling informed and meaningful engagement with stakeholders for UN-Habitat, for its Member States and for its stakeholders*”.

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

- xx. The Secretariat took note and welcomed the comments from Member States and stakeholders and indicated it will be taken into consideration in a revised version of the Zero Draft.
- xxi. The Secretariat noted that the stakeholder engagement mechanisms will be further discussed under Agenda item 3 of the meeting and the definition of stakeholders will be further contemplated when discussing Chapter 4 of the Zero Draft.
- xxii. The Secretariat will prepare a paper on current UN-Habitat’s stakeholder engagement mechanisms.

After the discussions, the Chair invited the Secretariat to give a short introduction about the content of the draft Chapter 2 – purpose of the draft stakeholder engagement policy. Chapter 2 – Purpose of the draft stakeholder engagement policy.

Upon invitation by the Chair, the Secretariat provided a briefing on the Chapter 2 – purpose of the draft stakeholder engagement policy. The briefing by the Secretariat highlighted the following:

- xxiii. The Secretariat noted that the intention of the policy is to improve stakeholder engagement and participation in UN-Habitat intergovernmental processes, with emphasis on stakeholder contribution to policy and decision-shaping in an inclusive and continuous way.
- xxiv. The Secretariat further noted that the stakeholder engagement contributes to building support for implementation of the decisions, recommendations, strategic plans, and work programmes approved by the UN-Habitat governing bodies.

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

- xxv. One Member State suggested to insert in paragraph 1 of Chapter 2 of the Zero Draft a reference to Member States, in order for paragraph 1 reads as follows: *“the intention of the policy is to improve stakeholder engagement and participation in UN-Habitat intergovernmental processes, with emphasis on stakeholder contribution to support Member States’ policy and decision-shaping in an inclusive and continuous way”*. Two Member States further requested that this reference to Member States with respect to decision-making and Agenda-setting be inserted in a consistent manner throughout the document.

After the discussions, the Chair invited the Secretariat to give a short introduction about the content of the draft Chapter 3 – guiding principles of the draft stakeholder engagement policy.

Chapter 3 – Guiding principles of the draft stakeholder engagement policy

Upon invitation by the Chair, the Secretariat provided a briefing on the Chapter 3 – guiding principles of the draft stakeholder engagement policy. The briefing by the Secretariat highlighted the following:

- xxvi. Stakeholder engagement in UN-Habitat intergovernmental processes is guided by the following overarching guiding principles:
- a) Illustrate benefits to housing and sustainable urban development and be relevant to UN-Habitat mandates.
 - b) Abide by the Rules of Procedure of the UN-Habitat Assembly and its subsidiary organs and respect the intergovernmental nature and decision-making authority of member states over policy and programmatic decisions.
 - c) Actively contribute towards decision-shaping and agenda-setting in sessions and intersessional periods.
 - d) Contribute to decision-shaping based on evidence, quantitative and qualitative data to back up UN-Habitat’s policy work.
 - e) Ensure stakeholder access to documentation and information on intergovernmental sessions and processes shared with member states in real time.
 - f) Be undertaken in a fair, transparent, open, inclusive, accessible, and accountable manner.
 - g) Respect for diversity of views, equality, non-discrimination, and self-organisation with adherence to the guiding principles in this policy.
 - h) Commit to monitoring and reporting on the engagement.
 - i) Protect UN-Habitat from any undue influence, especially the processes in setting and applying policies, norms, and standards.
 - j) Never compromise UN-Habitat reputation, integrity, independence, and credibility.
 - k) Be effectively and efficiently managed with a view to promoting improvements on current engagement practices including by exploring innovative tools and mechanisms.
- xxvii. The Secretariat noted that the above guiding principles have been draft based on a combination of the current practice within UN-Habitat and within the UN system and consultations undertaken with stakeholders since 2018.

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

- xxviii. One Member State requested the Secretariat to provide reference documents which were taken into consideration for drafting the list of the above-mentioned guiding principles.
- xxix. One Member State, with respect to guiding principle, e), enquired whether or not Member States and stakeholders receive at the same time the documentation and information related to intergovernmental sessions and processes.

- xxx. Three Member States noted that some of the afore mentioned guiding principles appear to be Terms of Reference, for example guiding principles b), i), g). The guiding principles should not be new rules of procedure and should focus more on the relationship between Member States and stakeholders. An emphasis should be put on principles such as transparency, information sharing, possibilities to participate, informal collaboration between Member States and stakeholders, etc.
- xxxi. One Member State sought clarification on guiding principle, c) which reads as follows “*Actively contribute towards decision-shaping and agenda-setting in sessions and intersessional periods*”. Specifically, the Member State recalled that there is already a resolution in place at UN-Habitat with respect to contribution by stakeholders to agenda-setting in sessions and suggested that this be reflected in a clearer manner in the Zero Draft.
- xxxii. One Member State sought clarification on the possibility for Member States to hold special sessions to discuss specific issues which would require the presence of Member States only.
- xxxiii. One Member State suggested that the Zero Draft details the role and contribution of stakeholders in the decision-making and agenda-setting details for each body of the governance structure of UN-Habitat - for the Executive Board, the Committee of Permanent Representatives and the UN-Habitat Assembly.
- xxxiv. One stakeholder suggested to include a preamble to the guiding principles that will acknowledge the Stakeholder Advisory Group Enterprise established by the Executive Director of UN-Habitat in 2018. The stakeholder further suggested to insert five key drivers to capture the key principles of stakeholder engagement, as follows: a. Illustrate b. Facilitate c. Contribute d. Undertake e. Promote.
- xxxv. One stakeholder supported the list of guiding principles as proposed by the Secretariat in the Zero Draft. The stakeholder also suggested that guiding principle, c), which currently reads “*Actively contribute towards decision-shaping and agenda-setting in sessions and intersessional periods*”, should be in line with the language inserted in the Chapter on the purpose of the policy, which stresses the “*continuous contribution*” of stakeholders.

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

- xxxvi. The Secretariat took note and welcomed the comments from Member States and stakeholders and indicated it will be taken into consideration in a revised version of the Zero Draft.
- xxxvii. The Secretariat clarified that 4 weeks prior to a session of a governing body and in line with the rules of procedure, it sends any pre-session documents to Member States first and then sends such pre-session documents to partners and stakeholders, time enough to allow them for a meaningful contribution during a session of a governing body.
- xxxviii. The Secretariat recalled that rule 10.5 of the [Rules of Procedure of the UN-Habitat Assembly](#) provides that “*In drawing up the provisional agenda, the Executive Director may take into account suggestions made by any intergovernmental organization entitled to notification under rule 66. The Executive Director may also submit for the consideration of the Committee of Permanent Representatives suggestions from the organizations referred to in [rules 67 and 68](#)*”
- xxxix. The Secretariat clarified that Member States have the prerogative to convene sessions which are open to Member States only, and noted it is part of their prerogatives as set out in the rule of procedure. The stakeholder engagement policy is not meant to interfere with the rules of procedure in that respect.

- xl. The Chair recalled that the objective was to develop a stakeholder engagement policy which is not too compartmentalized for each of the governing bodies of UN-Habitat. The Secretariat recalled that the rules of procedure already provide rules and TORs for stakeholder's engagement.

After the discussions, the Chair invited the Secretariat to give a short introduction about the content of the draft Chapter 4 – Definition of stakeholders

Chapter 4- Definition of stakeholders

Upon invitation by the Chair, the Secretariat provided a briefing on the Chapter 4 – definition of stakeholders. The briefing by the Secretariat highlighted the following:

- xli. The Secretariat defined that stakeholders are all non-members of UN-Habitat Assembly provided they support or work in the field of housing and sustainable urban development and, also support the work and mandate of UN-Habitat. These include international, regional, and national organisations, local and regional governments through its organised constituency of networks and associations, particularly through the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments, civil society organisations, academia, the built environment professionals, private sector and philanthropic organisations as well as UN-Habitat established advisory boards and professional networks.

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

- xlvi. The Chair requested the Secretariat to clarify why the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments is singled out in the Zero Draft.
- xlii. One Member State requested if the Zero Draft will limit the type of organizations to be recognized as stakeholders by UN-Habitat and suggested that such a list be inserted in the draft.
- xliii. One Member State suggested that a provision on geographical representation of stakeholders be inserted in the Zero Draft.
- xliv. Two Member States suggested to narrow the definition of stakeholders as contained in the Zero Draft and requested the Secretariat to provide background references which were used to develop the definition of stakeholder as it currently stands in the Zero Draft.
- xlv. One Member State further suggested to review the definition of stakeholders as follows : *“For purposes of this policy, stakeholders are all non-members of UN-Habitat Assembly provided they support or work in the field of housing and sustainable urban development and, also support the work and mandate of UN-Habitat; namely, ~~These include~~ international, regional, and national organisations, local and regional governments of UN Member States through its organised constituency of networks and associations, ~~particularly through the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments,~~ civil society organisations, academia, the built environment professionals, private sector and philanthropic organisations as well as UN-Habitat established advisory boards and professional networks.”*
- xlvi. One Member State noted that stakeholders are not a homogeneous group and suggested that stakeholders could be categorized in the Zero Draft in 2 or 3 concentric rings as “core stakeholders”, “wider stakeholders”, *etc.* depending on how close the various groups would be to the work and mandate of UN-Habitat.
- xlvii. One Member State and one stakeholder cautioned on trying to establish a narrow definition of stakeholders and further noted that different categories of stakeholders are listed in the New Urban Agenda. It was further suggested to use the language form the New Urban Agenda in that respect.
- xlviii. One Member State invited the Secretariat to narrow the definition of stakeholders as set out in the Zero Draft and suggested that the Secretariat uses the rules of procedure to develop the definition.

1. One stakeholder further noted that while the definition of stakeholder should not be too broad, it should not mention specific network so as not to exclude any organization. The stakeholder further suggested that adherence to the UN charter should be inserted in the definition.

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

- li. The Secretariat indicated that the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments was initially inserted in the Zero Draft based upon recommendations and consultations carried out with stakeholders. The Secretariat further indicated that it would, however, be preferable to keep a generic definition of stakeholders rather than singling out specific ones in the Zero Draft.
- lii. The Secretariat noted that UN-Habitat works with over 14 000 stakeholders' groups on the ground, out of which 162 are accredited to ECOSOC and the UN-Habitat Assembly. The Secretariat confirmed that the breakdown of geographical representation of stakeholders working with UN-Habitat can be provided at a later stage to the working group.
- liii. The Secretariat took note and welcomed the comments from Member States and stakeholders and indicated it will be taken into consideration in a revised version of the Zero Draft.

After Agenda item 2, the meeting considered Agenda item 3, namely preview of next meeting of the working group scheduled for 5 October 2022

Agenda item 3 - preview of next meeting of the working group scheduled for 5 October 2022

- liv. The Chair noted that there is a provision in the Zero Draft for the development of a stakeholder engagement mechanism included. The Chair noted that this is a significant element of the draft stakeholder engagement policy as it will explain how stakeholders can meaningfully engage and participate in UN-Habitat intergovernmental processes.
- lv. The Chair further commented that some stakeholders have taken steps to consult members of their networks and other stakeholders on a stakeholder engagement mechanism that can improve stakeholder engagement in UN-Habitat intergovernmental processes.
- lvi. The Chair further informed that he received so far two options for a stakeholder engagement mechanism, providing an insight into some of the key elements that can constitute an appropriate stakeholder engagement mechanism for UN-Habitat.
- lvii. The Chair suggested to continue discussions on the Zero Draft during the next meeting of the working group scheduled for 5 October 2022, focusing on chapter 5 to 9 and get back to discussions on stakeholder engagement mechanism at a later stage after the second session of the Executive Board for the year 2022.

Following the update by the Chair, the discussions highlighted the following:

- lviii. One Member State enquired if there was the distinction between the stakeholder engagement mechanism and Chapters 5,6,7, and 8 which are still due for discussions.
- lix. The Secretariat noted that there will be no overlap between the stakeholder engagement mechanisms and Chapters 5,6,7, and 8 which focus more on principles and role of UN-Habitat.
- lx. One stakeholder indicated its readiness to support UN-Habitat in developing the stakeholder engagement mechanism as a relevant and practical policy document.

In light of the views expressed by Member States and stakeholders, the ad hoc working group recommended as follows:

- lxi. The ad hoc working group will continue its discussions on the Zero Draft during the next meeting of the working group scheduled for 5 October 2022, focusing on chapter 5 to 9.
- lxii. The Secretariat will prepare a short note on current stakeholder engagement mechanisms at UN-Habitat and will circulate to Member States the contributions received from two stakeholders on stakeholder engagement mechanisms. These will inform the continuation of discussions to be held on 05 October 2022.
- lxiii. The ad hoc working group will discuss the stakeholder engagement mechanism at a later stage after the second session of the Executive Board for the year 2022.

After Agenda item 4, the meeting considered Agenda item 4, namely any other matters.

Agenda item 4- Any other matters

There were no other matters considered and the Chair adjourned the meeting at 12:16 hrs East Africa Time.
