

Additional Statement and Proposal of Prof. Siraj Sait, Co-Chair of UN Habitat Stakeholder Advisory Group Enterprise to the Working Group on Stakeholder Engagement Policy

Wednesday 30th November 2022

I have the honour of presenting this statement as Co-Chair of UN Habitat Stakeholder Advisory Group Enterprise (SAGE), which is comprised of 16 independent global experts. SAGE since its establishment in 2019 has met over 50 times, including with senior managers, and has been a key contributor World Urban Forums 11 and 12, Global Stakeholder Forum, Global Stakeholder Consultations, World Habitat Day, and World Cities Day. It has also presented before the UN Habitat Assembly, UN Habitat Midterm Review, and every single meeting of the UN Habitat Executive Board since 2019.

I am submitting this statement and proposal as a follow-up to my previous statement for the kind consideration of the Honourable Chair and Working Group. This presentation focuses on the practical aspects of setting up a Stakeholder Engagement Mechanism (SEM) from the experience of SAGE:

1. **BEST HYBRID MODEL:** As explained in the SAGE statement, SAGE is not proposing that it serve as the SEM as no one body, NGO or network can claim the capacity to create the broad SEM that is fit-for-purpose. Each experience has its strengths and weaknesses, and the SEM should endeavour to set up the most appropriate hybrid model from available best practices.
2. **MUTUAL INTEREST:** The setting up of the SEM is for productive co-operation between stakeholders, UN Habitat and Member States. Therefore, it is not simply an exclusive matter of stakeholder interest. All three are committed to meaningful and effective partnerships.
3. **EXPLAINING PARTNERSHIPS:** UN Habitat works with an estimated 25,000 stakeholder representatives, drawn from over 5,000 organizations, through constituency caucuses, professional bodies, stakeholder clusters, advisory groups and implementing partners working with UN Habitat and Member States. The proposed SEM should not extinguish or exclude these pathways but expand opportunities for engagement.
4. **SEM FOCUS:** The SEM should not try to do everything everywhere but focus on key functions that complement, rather than undermine or duplicate the mandates of existing bodies. Thus, SEM membership would be based on effective representation for particular competencies and outcomes, including KPIs.
5. **SELF ORGANISING PRINCIPLE:** Self-organisation should be a preferred approach but may not be possible in all cases. As the Stakeholder Engagement Policy points out there are many principles and objectives. In the SAGE plus criteria, stakeholders representation is one of six criteria. Others are thematic/professional expertise, relevant experience, example at Executive Board, gender and age balance, regional balance and accreditation/bona-fide. Thus, self-organising is given priority but within a balanced workable criteria and model.

6. **INCLUSIVE MEMBERSHIP:** The SEM should seek to include all 18 major groups to the maxim extent possible in the context of UN Habitat. But all minor groups may not be equally represented at one time owing to size and other reasons. Here rotational membership would be used but the one interest of that group could be secured through experience of other members.
7. **SIZE AND TERMS OF REFERENCE OF SEM:** From experience it is proposed that in order to function effectively, the SEM could be composed of 18 members including two Co-chairs for a term of 3 years each. The TOR could be drawn up as it has for SAGE as well as for other UN Habitat bodies which identifies the objectives, roles, process and criteria of nomination and other details.
8. **NOMINATION PROCESS:** The nominations to the SEM should be open to everyone including constituency groups where self-organisation in terms of their internal election process would be given preference and due consideration. Nominations would also be invited from all advisory groups, professional bodies, stakeholder clusters, UN Habitat implementing partners, regional offices, as well as Member States. If there are more than 18 nominations that would be received, these would be vetted according to the criteria set out in the terms of reference. Candidates should be asked to fill up the 6 criteria that are set out in the terms of reference and also indicate their suitability for the role. There will also be a waiting list of prospective candidates.
9. **SELECTION PROCESS:** Though the SEM will be comprised of stakeholders based on self-organising as a key principle, the process would involve an open, transparent process, involving stakeholders, UN-Habitat members, and Member State representatives in equal numbers. It is proposed that there would be 9 members under the Chair of the Executive Director. In this way, all members will work together on the common criteria. The reason for this is that UN-Habitat is most familiar with its partners and needs, and also has a commitment to and interest in expanding stakeholder participation. There is obvious precedence for this in terms of ECOSOC, which carries out a vetting process for both accreditation and suitability of candidates. SAGE can also lend its experience in terms of the vetting and selection process applied for recruiting new members.
10. **CONDUCT OF SEM BUSINESS:** The selected members of the SEM shall meet on a regular, possibly monthly, basis and would be supported by the UN Habitat Secretariat as it exists or a new Secretariat that is set up. They would be invited to carry out duties under the TOR. If members fail to attend a certain number of meetings, between 2 and 3, continuously, their place will become vacant and is given to a candidate who is on the waiting list.

Thank you to the Honourable Chair and Working Group for the honour and opportunity of presenting this proposal for their kind consideration.

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