

## **Toward an Institutional Mechanism for Stakeholder Engagement in the New UN-Habitat Governance**

### *Abstract:*

*As noted in the New Urban Agenda and General Assembly resolutions on the governance of the new UN Habitat, stakeholder engagement is indispensable to policy formulation and implementation, indeed all processes toward realizing UN Habitat's and the global development agenda's ambitious goals. However, within UN Habitat, policy guidance and formulation toward stakeholder engagement have been weak and slow to develop, with UN Habitat's Executive Director ultimately passing the responsibility onto the Executive Bureau.*

*This paper results from efforts of the volunteer Institutional Mechanism Working Group, arising from the Global Stakeholder Engagement Forum at the first UN Habitat Assembly, as a contribution to UN Habitat's long-awaited "new stakeholder engagement policy" and its eventual participatory and self-organized outcome. It draws on the lessons of UN Habitat's history of stakeholder engagement and the current models of effective institutional stakeholder-engagement mechanisms across the UN System. This review uses the generic term of "stakeholder engagement," so as not to prejudice the outcome by referring to any particular mechanism or objective step on the Ladder of Participation.*

*The issues, options and proposals raised here reflect long experience and cumulative understanding that informs stakeholder engagement in the governance and operations of UN Habitat, at headquarters and in the field, as vital to the agency's re-invigoration, promised success and—as needed with governance, in any form—legitimacy. Taking these values into consideration, the paper concludes with a proposal for UN Habitat governance through a Stakeholder Advisory Board, meeting once a year as a kind of Executive Board-plus, convening the self-organized components of UN Habitat and New Urban Agenda (NUA) stakeholders, operating also within the quadrennial UN Habitat Assembly for purposes of review and evaluation of NUA implementation.*

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# **Toward an Institutional Mechanism for Stakeholder Engagement in the New UN Habitat Governance**

## *Executive Summary*

As an accompaniment to its adoption of the New Urban Agenda,<sup>1</sup> the UN General Assembly has resolved that UN Habitat, the agency specialized in developing human settlements, revise its governance and stakeholder-engagement structures. By this resolution, the Assembly in order to contribute to the UN's system-wide sustainable-development strategy by generating evidence-based and practical guidance for implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the related dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>2</sup> in close consultation with Member States, local authorities, relevant stakeholders and experts.<sup>3</sup>

By reviewing and, ultimately, revising the mechanisms for UN Habitat stakeholder engagement, the resulting deliberative and advisory processes would not only lead to a higher quality of documents and outcomes, but a more-inclusive process could engender the commitment and support from those same stakeholders, including through new joint initiatives to implement them. This is seen as indispensable to fulfilling the need to greatly enhance the agency's impacts and the probability of success. A more inclusive process and working relationship would enable stakeholders to restart their engagement on a better footing that build trust and mutual respect. Research on human organization and governance has shown that the greater the level of participation, the greater the dignity of all parties involved.<sup>4</sup>

This follows lessons that other agencies already have learnt and put in practice. However, because of its peculiar history and relatively small size, UN Habitat's impacts and success are especially dependent on the outreach of partnership networks to carry out its ambitious mandate, and even more so than most UN organizations with major normative and operational responsibilities.

While the task may be daunting and call for fresh thinking, developing the mechanisms and functions of any new UN Habitat governance structure must recognize and reflect the work and outcomes of stakeholder-engagement history in and around UN Habitat, as well as the progressive stakeholder-engagement trends across the wider United Nations System. The unfolding perspective suggests much room for innovation beyond the strict verbatim re-confirmation of the Rules of Procedure, as adopted by the UN Habitat Assembly in May 2019. In these changing times, to do less than evolve to—or beyond—the current standards of good practice would be a lost opportunity to achieve solemnly stated goals.

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<sup>1</sup> New Urban Agenda (NUA), A/RES/71/256, 17 January 2017, at: <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/71/256>.

<sup>2</sup> Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), A/RES/70/1, 21 October 2015, <https://undocs.org/A/RES/70/1>.

<sup>3</sup> Implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations Conferences on Human Settlements and on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) A/RES/72/226, 25 January 2018, para. 5, at: <https://undocs.org/A/RES/72/226>.

<sup>4</sup> Sherry Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (July 1969), pp. 216–24, at: [http://www.participatorymethods.org/sites/participatorymethods.org/files/Arnstein\\_ladder\\_1969.pdf](http://www.participatorymethods.org/sites/participatorymethods.org/files/Arnstein_ladder_1969.pdf).

### *Reviewing UN Habitat Stakeholder Engagement over Time*

UN Habitat's stakeholder engagement to date forms a patchwork of cumulative bodies created at various points over time since its 1976 inception. The tableau of current stakeholder mechanisms in and around UN Habitat is dizzyingly complex and often duplicative or overlapping, and needs to be rationalized. Such is an underlying premise of the General Assembly's call for UN Habitat's fundamental restructuring and a new Stakeholder Engagement Policy (SEP).

The present proposal for a new fit-for-purpose institutional mechanism for UN Habitat stakeholder engagement reviews the history and constellation of UN stakeholder-engagement mechanisms inside and outside the realm of UN Habitat.<sup>5</sup> Independent of how these mechanisms are presently structured in each case, the long absence of a UN Habitat SEP since 2017 has left the future existence, roles and functions of stakeholders in doubt, or at least ambiguous.

Interestingly, the trend toward civic engagement in UN processes had its genesis in the first UN Conference on Human Settlements (Vancouver, 1976) and the negotiation process toward the Habitat Agenda, with a Plan of Action that explicitly recognized the role of local governments and civil society partner groupings and others in its implementation. However, for UN Habitat, the experience of civil society and local government/authority engagement peaked in the negotiation of the (since neglected) Habitat Agenda. The Habitat II process saw unprecedented "rights of participation" by local governments and non-governmental organizations in its deliberation, but also as needs of the Agenda's execution. However, that experience was not institutionalized and has not yet risen to the level of policy in UN Habitat, which has flat-lined with the new UN Habitat.<sup>6</sup>

Nonetheless, these formed instructive moments in an accelerating movement within the UN System parallel to, and perhaps as a consequence of the UN's attempt to mobilize the world community in broad partnerships around common development objectives in a systematic way. This picked up later through the period of the Millennium Development Goals and now the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda. These global policy commitments are now understood to be country driven, leading to the recognition of what were then unprecedented rights of "participation" by local governments and non-governmental organizations in their deliberations and execution, and decision-making processes of Habitat II.

### *Stakeholder-engagement Mechanisms for the UN's Executive Boards*

The original Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS, the template for other Executive Boards to follow, date from 1993, a time preceding the Second UN Conference on Human Settlements, when the issue of civil society and other stakeholder participation and partnership in the workings and deliberations of UN organizations and their governing bodies, as well as in UN conferences, was still its infancy. Stakeholder engagement did not gain traction until three years later at UN Habitat II. It is now considered only natural that the voices of relevant stakeholders such as civil society, in its broadest meaning, local spheres of government and the private sector also be heard and

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<sup>5</sup> This survey does not review the temporary arrangements set up for the two UN Conferences on Human Settlements: The Habitat Forum at Vancouver (1976), or the self-organized Joint Steering Committee, channeling civil society inputs into the Habitat II process (1994–96). Nor does it review the General Assembly of Partners (GAP), which the former executive director of UN-Habitat set up and guided through the Habitat III process. Nonetheless, these temporary structures they also yield important lessons for their specific time and purpose.

<sup>6</sup> As observed in Habitat International Coalition (HIC), "Charting UN Habitat-Stakeholder Engagement," May 2019, at: <http://www.hic-gs.org/content/Media/PDF/HIC%20Milestones.pdf>.

taken into account within UN organizations and their respective governing bodies. Bringing them together also would enhance mutual understanding and enable synergy.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, over the years, even in the case of earlier Executive Boards, the Rules allow for all stakeholders to “participate as observers.” However, this imprecise formulation is also contradictory and obsolete, since actual participation, by social science definition,<sup>8</sup> refers to relations of partnership, delegation and democratic control never yet achieved or tried within UN Habitat.<sup>9</sup> For these reasons, the controversial Stakeholder Advisory Group (now named Stakeholder Advisory Group Enterprise), a panel of 18 individuals appointed by the UN-Habitat Executive Director, does not count among the legitimate good-practice models, as is also the case with other handpicked designations.

Partnership of non-governmental organizations in sessions of the UN entities’ executive structures has been habitual elsewhere, most notably in the Rome-based agencies—notably the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN (FAO) and the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS)—to allow for structured interaction with representatives of civil society, the private sector and others that go beyond those reserved for mere mute observers. Rather, greater participation not only ensures greater dignity of all parties concerned, it enables stakeholders to flourish as valuable—and valued—contributors to the work of those boards. The stakeholder-engagement mechanisms present the nearest examples of “partnership” and, thus, inform this review on the possible.

As seen from the evidence, the level and form of civil society and other stakeholder engagement of those UN entities governed by executive boards vary widely, despite all boards sharing the same basic Rules of Procedure. Flexibility and innovation are required, in line with each organization’s history, needs, style, method of work and mandate.

#### *Proposing a “Stakeholder Advisory Board”*

The repertoire of stakeholder-engagement experience across the UN System now provides sufficient precedents to justify and argue for stakeholder engagement not only with UN Habitat management, but also institutionalized for stakeholders’ effective participation in the quadrennial sessions of the UN Habitat Assembly for its purposes. Such meaningful cooperation is all the more urgent in its Executive Board (EB), with its preponderant governance and close supervisory role over UN Habitat’s normative and operational performance.

This review concludes with a proposal to establish a “Stakeholder Advisory Board,” or EB+, meeting at least once a year as the EB and UN Habitat stakeholders. Such a Stakeholder Advisory Board is not envisioned as a body that replaces the EB or its members’ unique voting rights. Rather it would convene the stakeholder mechanism representatives with the EB once a year at least, with the outcome of that dialogue reflected in the decisions of the EB, as well as in the Assembly, and engendering continuous UN Habitat cooperation with stakeholders at all levels in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

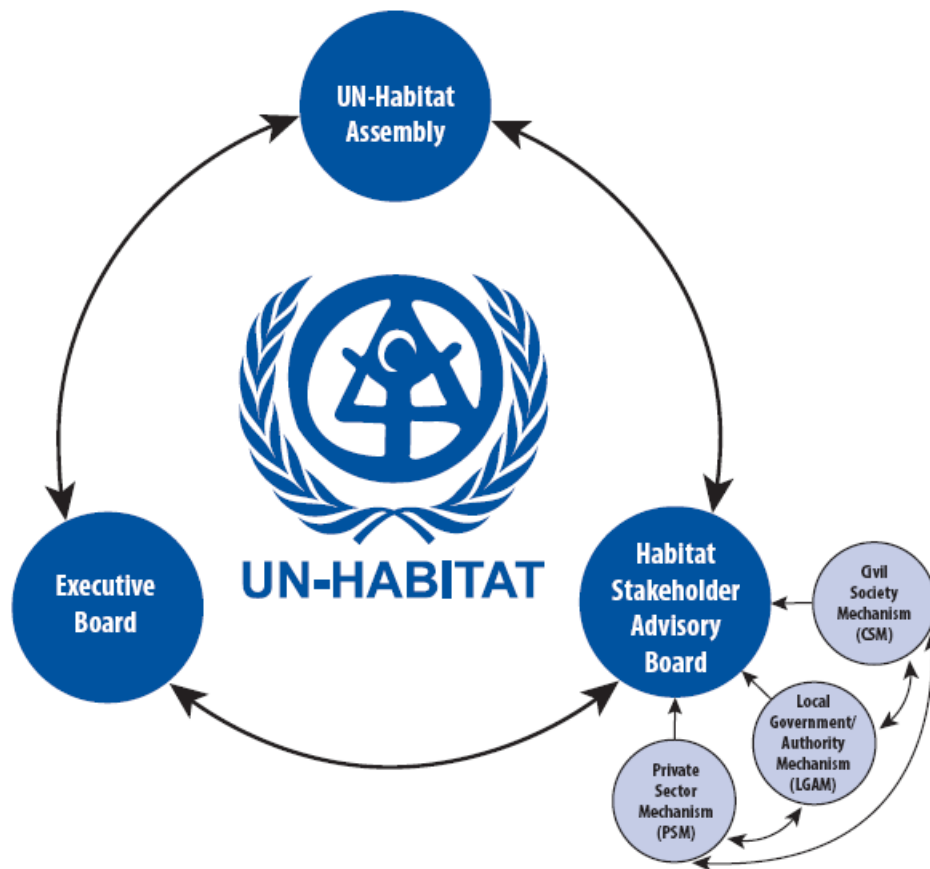
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<sup>7</sup> Synergy: The benefit derived from an interaction or cooperation of two or more sources, organizations, substances, or other agents to produce a combined effect distinct from and greater than the sum of their separate parts or effects. See *HICtionary of Key Habitat Terms A to Z* (Cairo: Habitat International Coalition, 2020), at: <http://www.hlrn.org/img/documents/HICtionary.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Sherry Arnstein, “A Ladder of Citizen Participation,” *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (July 1969), pp. 216–24, at: [http://www.participatorymethods.org/sites/participatorymethods.org/files/Arnstein\\_ladder\\_1969.pdf](http://www.participatorymethods.org/sites/participatorymethods.org/files/Arnstein_ladder_1969.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> See HIC, “Charting UN Habitat-Stakeholder Engagement,” *op. cit.*; HIC, “Milestones in UN Habitat’s Cooperation with Stakeholders: Forward and Backward,” May 2019, at: [http://www.hlrn.org/img/documents/Milestones\\_in\\_UN\\_Habitat\\_Partnership.pdf](http://www.hlrn.org/img/documents/Milestones_in_UN_Habitat_Partnership.pdf); and HIC-HLRN, “People-centered Partnership” @ 1st UNHA,” report of side event “Visions of People-centered Partnership” at the first UN Habitat Assembly, Nairobi, 27 May 2019, at: <https://www.hlrn.org/news.php?id=p25rZQ==>.

The components of the stakeholder-engagement mechanism would rationalize current bodies within three distinct-but-complementary structures of (1) civil society, (2) local spheres of government and (3) the private sector. Each would be self-organizing, as promised, and would be responsible for its own management, including partial responsibility for resource mobilization and management. The affiliation of their respective constituent organizations would require an express commitment to the principles and purposes of the UN Charter, as well as the principles and commitments of the NUA, as should government counterparts.



*General overview of proposed UN Habitat governance structure with stakeholder-engagement mechanisms, meeting with the Executive Board as the Stakeholder Advisory Board on the governance and policy business of UN Habitat at least once each year, and with the UN Habitat Assembly every four years to evaluate NUA performance.*

Within these broad categories, the stakeholder-engagement mechanism's three component structures would coincide occasionally in joint actions, forums and initiatives, as appropriate, and all would form equal parts of the UN Habitat's Stakeholder Advisory Board for purposes of deliberation. Meanwhile, the right to vote and its corresponding responsibility and accountability lie in the exclusive domain of the EB Member States and their government-appointed delegations, as remains the standard.

The manner of selecting stakeholder members would proceed in consultation with stakeholders and the UN Habitat Executive Director, and its formation must not wait for the delay of a UN Habitat Assembly meeting, the first of which cycles again only in 2023. The stakeholder-engagement mechanism should be operational within the following 12 months. Adopting a participatory stakeholder-engagement mechanism for UN Habitat requires a measure of mutual trust and faith that should be well deserved after more than four decades of the UN human settlements agency and activity.

The observations shared here should not be used as arguments to relegate stakeholder engagement in the future governance structure of UN Habitat to the Habitat Assembly only, or into another, if not parallel and distant, track that renders the UN Habitat's EB governance role an exclusive domain of the Member States and their government delegations. Such a restrictive move, tried by foregone UN Habitat Governing Councils, would not only overlook needed insight and squander indispensable social capital, but also effectively alienate natural and qualified stakeholders and civil society once again from UN Habitat.

### *Next Steps*

As a contribution of the volunteer Institutional Mechanism Working Group of the May 2019 Global Stakeholder Engagement Forum, this paper should be disseminated and debated among UN Habitat stakeholders and other interested parties for comment. While its promised appearance at the 10<sup>th</sup> World Urban Forum is an important step, the WUF is presently no forum for decision making. In advance of the forthcoming EB meeting, representatives of stakeholder groupings on the subject of engagement (i.e., at a level of *stakeholder participation*<sup>10</sup>) in the new governance structure of UN Habitat should meet and otherwise discuss the proposals emerging from this and other sources. Representatives of UN Habitat, the EB and Committee of Permanent Representatives should be welcome to join such meetings as part of a consultation process, respecting the principle of stakeholder self-organization as pledged by UN Habitat leadership.

Following a reasonable period of deliberation, a committee of State, UN Habitat and stakeholders of good will should then draft a Policy Note on the establishment of a "UN Habitat Stakeholder Advisory Board." This would be circulated for review by UN Habitat senior management and members of the drafting committee for the UN Habitat governance bodies' rules of procedure. These steps foresee an operational Joint Advisor Board, with a stakeholder mechanism of three equal parts, by mid-2021.

The full report "Toward an Institutional Mechanism for Stakeholder Engagement in the New UN-Habitat Governance" available at: [http://www.hlrn.org/img/documents/UN-Habitat\\_Stakeholder\\_mechanism\\_final.pdf](http://www.hlrn.org/img/documents/UN-Habitat_Stakeholder_mechanism_final.pdf), develops the proposals summarized in this Executive Summary, with a last section including recommendations and suggestions for moving forward. The creation of an open, participatory and democratic participation mechanism requires much more input and committed effort from future participants, including UN Habitat and Member States. Herewith, the Institutional Mechanism Working Group has fulfilled its commitment to propose a stakeholder-engagement mechanism in time for World Urban Forum 10, but remains open to new participants interested in bringing support, ideas, suggestions and other feedback.

For more information and/or to make your contribution to this working paper **by 15 April 2020**, please contact:

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<sup>10</sup> See Arnstein, *op. cit.*



## *Introduction*

In June 2018, the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) to UN Habitat finalized a proposal for the agency's new governance structure as requested by the General Assembly (GA) in December 2017.<sup>11</sup> That proposal represented a radical departure from the past, both expanding and deepening UN Habitat's governing superstructure. Whereas the previous intergovernmental supervision was distinguished by its simplicity: A Governing Council with 58 members functioning as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly and supported by an inter-sessional body, the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) to UN Habitat in Nairobi. The new proposal is much more complex, posing inherent challenges not to be underestimated for all the parties concerned.

The proposal sets forth a two-tiered governance set-up consisting of a UN Habitat Assembly with universal membership of all Member States of the United Nations, meeting every four years to review progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (NUA)—consistent with the interval called for in its para. 166, but running on a cycle beginning in 2019; that is, three years off the cycle foreseen in the NUA (beginning 2016, with the first review cycling in 2020). Under the current cycle, the first NUA performance review would take place first in 2023.

The Assembly will also provide the overall strategic policy direction for the work of UN Habitat. However, in the management sphere, its principal responsibility is to elect of the 36 members of an Executive Board.

That Executive Board (EB) now assumes the administrative oversight role and is entrusted with the bulk of the governance tasks related to UN Habitat within the four-year lapse between Assembly meetings. Convening in three sessions per annum, with the authority to review and approve the budgets and work programmes, and with provisions for special sessions and informal meetings, the Executive Board presumably would operate as other executive boards of the United Nations System,<sup>12</sup> as followed by other agencies with major global operational and normative activities such as UNDP and UNICEF.

Along with this new two-tier structure, the CPR proposal also retains a residual role for the former CPR to UN Habitat, which is to oversee the preparations of the quadrennial sessions of the Assembly, now called UN Habitat Assembly (UNHA). This structure addresses "The need for a dedicated executive board to increase Member State oversight of UN-Habitat's operations and to strengthen the accountability, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of UN-Habitat."<sup>13</sup>

By the end of 2018, the GA determined<sup>14</sup> that the governance structure would form another "hybrid," such as the one it adopted for UN Women in 2010, but in a category of its own. It is not a mere copy of the UN Women structure, as the proposal for UN Habitat represents much more of a departure from the past. In the case of UN Women, the "hybrid" governance structure joined a pre-existing body, the

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<sup>11</sup> Implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations Conferences on Human Settlements and on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), A/RES/72/226, 25 January 2018, at: <https://undocs.org/A/RES/72/226>.

<sup>12</sup> Operating as per GA resolution "Further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields," A/RES/48/162, 14 January 1994, at: <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/48/162>.

<sup>13</sup> Draft rules of procedure of the United Nations Habitat Assembly HSP/HA/1/8, 21 May 2019, para. 4(b), at: <https://papersmart.unon.org/sites/default/files/English.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> Implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations Conferences on Human Settlements and on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), A/RES/73/239, 17 January 2019, at: <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/73/239>.

Commission on the Status of Women, with an executive board that was already part of the governance experience of the UN Fund for Women, one of the major entities that evolved into UN Women.

This fusing of foregoing entities will not be the case for UN Habitat. Its rupture with previous governance practices would be much more profound, generating two “executive” entities, instead of one. This complexity by design will bring with it a whole array of challenges, including the need for rapid (and successful) institutional learning and adaptation not only on the part of UN Habitat, as the secretariat, but also for the Member States, their delegations and any stakeholder mechanism that would participate in this new governance structure.

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP), now UN Environment, also transformed from a Governing Council to an Assembly after 2012. However, that involved only the growing pains of expanding an existing structure to universal membership, not the creation of additional new governance organs. Rather the CPR proposal, now adopted by the GA, calls for both, not only expanding the governance structure to accommodate a universal Member State UNHA, but retaining the old CPR. While dissolving the old Governing Council, it formed a new Executive Board. It also assigns the task of determining the rules of procedure to the CPR.

These proposed oversight bodies have adopted their rules of procedure with the statutory supervisory and advisory committees of the GA.<sup>15</sup> The UN Habitat Assembly’s rules of procedure establish its relations with other entities, providing that “duly accredited representatives of local authorities, invited by the Executive Director and in consultation with their respective governments, where requested, or representing national or international associations or organizations recognized by the United Nations, may participate, as observers at public meetings, in the deliberations of the UN-Habitat Assembly and its intersessional organs.”<sup>16</sup> Duly accredited representatives of other Habitat Agenda partners may sit as observers at public meetings of the UN-Habitat Assembly and its intersessional organs. When the presiding officer of the body concerned invites, and that body approves, such observers may make oral statements on matters in which they have special competence.<sup>17</sup>

Designated representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) may sit as observers at public meetings of the UN-Habitat Assembly and its intersessional organs. Upon the invitation of the President and with the approval of the Assembly, they make oral statements on matters within the scope of its activities.<sup>18</sup> Like non-Member States and local authorities, NGOs may submit relevant written statements to be distributed by the secretariat to all delegations in the languages in which they are made available.<sup>19</sup>

UN Member States that are not members of the EB may participate in the deliberation at EB, meetings without the right to vote. Other UN agencies, international financial institutions, including by invitation. The EB may also invite other intergovernmental organizations and NGOs (in ECOSOC status of accredited

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<sup>15</sup> The Second (Economic & Financial) Committee and Fifth (Administrative & Budgetary) Committee, the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

<sup>16</sup> Decision adopted by the United Nations Habitat Assembly on 31 May 2019, HSP/HA.1/HLS.2, 24 June 2019, 1/1. Rules of procedure of the United Nations Habitat Assembly, Local authorities: Rule 67, p. 16, at: <https://oldweb.unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/K1902769-HSP-HA-1-HLS.2-Advance.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, Other Habitat Agenda partners: Rule 68.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, Non-governmental organizations: Rule 69.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, Non-governmental organizations: Rule 70, p. 17.

to UN Habitat) may also participate in the deliberations on matters related to their activities. However, only EB Member States retain the right to vote.<sup>20</sup>

The NUA recognizes the importance of stakeholders 30 times throughout the text.<sup>21</sup> With regard to NUA implementation, the NUA's Review and Follow-up section notes that "The process should take into account contributions of national, subnational and local levels of government and be supplemented by contributions from the United Nations system, regional and sub-regional organizations, Major Groups and other relevant stakeholders, and should be a continuous process aimed at creating and reinforcing partnerships among all relevant stakeholders and fostering exchanges of urban solutions and mutual learning."<sup>22</sup> However, the NUA defers the subject of stakeholder relations with UN Habitat to an independent panel to assess "The work of UN-Habitat with national, subnational and local governments and with relevant stakeholders in order to tap the full potential of partnerships."<sup>23</sup> While that assessment gave reasons why broader partnerships and greater resources are indispensable for UN Habitat's greater integrity and NUA-implementation success, it did not proffer a specific role or mechanism for local governments, civil society or other stakeholders in UN Habitat governance.

So far, these decisions and rules of procedures stand in a stakeholder engagement policy vacuum. The Stakeholder Engagement Policy that the GA requested of the new UN Habitat by February 2019<sup>24</sup> did not materialize. Instead, the Executive Director Maimunah Mohammed Sharif appointed 18 individuals from civil society, academia and local government to a Stakeholder Advisory Group in advance of the first UN Habitat Assembly and UN Habitat announced the holding of a two-day "Global Stakeholder Forum," just prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> UN Habitat Assembly. It also announced a separate one-day private-sector partnership event.

In matters so urgent and important as those called for in the NUA, SDGs and other global policy instruments, the Stakeholder Advisory Group (renamed as the Stakeholder Advisory Group Enterprise—SAGE) cannot supplant the purpose, inputs or engagement of a civil society mechanism that reflects public and plural interests. Nor does any appointed body carry the legitimacy of self-determined structure based on principles of critical thinking, free expression and democratic processes. This may have been evident in the Executive Director (ED) and Deputy Executive Director Victor Kisob addresses to the Global Stakeholder Forum the gathering of mainly civil society organizations calling for a "self-organized" stakeholder engagement mechanism.

The Forum participants complied with that suggestion by forming a nine-member volunteer Institutional Mechanism Working Group and the issuance of a joint declaration "Toward a New Stakeholder Compact for the New Urban Agenda." That declaration included a pledge to build on successful, inclusive and diverse platforms, networks and movements in order to engage effectively in the programs, policies and

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<sup>20</sup> Draft rules of procedure of the Executive Board of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, HA/HJSP/1/9, 21 May 2019, XIV. Participation of non-members: Rule 17, at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/K19/023/52/pdf/K1902352.pdf?OpenElement>, adopted by the EB on 30 May 2019. See Report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme on the work of its first meeting, HSB/EB/1/4, 20 June 2019, para. 6, at: <https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/HSP/EB/1/4>.

<sup>21</sup> NUA, *op. cit.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 162.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 172. See also Habitat International Coalition, "Commentary on the High Level Independent Panel's Report to Assess and Enhance Effectiveness of UN-Habitat," 05 September 2017, at: [http://www.hlrn.org/img/documents/HICComment\\_Panel\\_report-8pp.pdf](http://www.hlrn.org/img/documents/HICComment_Panel_report-8pp.pdf) and its summary, at: [http://www.hlrn.org/img/documents/HICComment\\_summary.pdf](http://www.hlrn.org/img/documents/HICComment_summary.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> Scheduled for discussion by the on 4 and 13 February 2019. Schedule of Work of the Committee of Permanent Representative to UN-Habitat, 1 January to 30 June 2019, at: [https://mirror.unhabitat.org/downloads/docs/12991\\_1\\_595611.pdf](https://mirror.unhabitat.org/downloads/docs/12991_1_595611.pdf).

outcomes of the UN Habitat Assembly and its bodies aligned with the UN Habitat Strategic Plan 2020–2025, further developing the Stakeholder Forum by the time of the upcoming World Urban Forum, in February 2020.<sup>25</sup>

In the continued absence of a UN Habitat stakeholder engagement policy, UN Habitat ED reported to the EB, however, that “The priority of UN-Habitat until the end of 2019...is to strengthen existing partnerships with United Nations entities, civil society and other stakeholders and to engage with new partners.”<sup>26</sup>

By the time of its resumed first meeting in November 2019, and at the recommendation of the ED,<sup>27</sup> the EB decided to establish an *ad hoc* working group on the subject, “with a view to agreeing, as soon as possible, on a draft stakeholder engagement policy and present it to the Executive Board for a consensual agreement and provisional implementation.” Such a policy would be subject to consideration and possible approval by the UN-Habitat Assembly at its second session, in 2023.<sup>28</sup>

### *Tunnel at the End of the Light*

UN Habitat has had a long, rich and pioneering history as an innovator in the inclusion of a wide range of civil society and local government partners and stakeholders in both its governance and program formulation and execution spanning several decades. In that course also, other progressive models of engagement with specialized implementation and policy bodies have emerged within the UN system. Together, these examples should inform the development of meaningful stakeholder engagement in implementing the NUA aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In preparation for the Second UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), UN Habitat had established formal categories of Habitat Agenda Partners (HAPs) with tasks and guidelines for work to implement the eventual Habitat Agenda. HAPs are based on the nine Major Groups and Other Stakeholders determined for the 1992 Environment and Development Conference at Rio de Janeiro and affirmed in Agenda 21, including: women, children and youth, indigenous peoples, non-governmental organizations, local authorities, workers and trade unions, business and industry, scientific and technological, community farmers.<sup>29</sup>

UN Habitat’s shining example emerged in the preparations for the 1996 Habitat II Conference, which was rolled out as a “conference of partners” and the first-ever global UN conference to provide for broad inclusion of local governments, civil society and other stakeholders in both the preparatory process and the deliberations of the conference itself. That close cooperation was reflected in the outcome Istanbul Declaration and Programme of Action: The Habitat Agenda. Throughout the text, the

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<sup>25</sup> ‘Toward a New Stakeholder Compact for the New Urban Agenda,’ Declaration of the First Global Stakeholder Forum of the First UN Habitat Assembly, Nairobi, 25–26 May 2019, at:

<https://www.hic-gs.org/content/Media/PDF/Final%20Stakeholder%20Declaration%20UHA%20280519.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> Progress report of the Executive Director on the implementation of resolutions and decisions adopted during the first session of the UN-Habitat Assembly, HSP/EB/1/8, para. 19, at: <https://papersmart.unon.org/sites/default/files/HSP-EB.1-8-%20EDs%20Progress%20Report%20on%20implementation%20of%20UN-Habitat%20Assembly%20Resolutions.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 28.

<sup>28</sup> Decision 2019/3: Implementation of normative and operational activities of UN-Habitat including resolutions and decisions of the UN-Habitat Assembly, in Decisions adopted by the Executive Board of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme at its resumed first session, HSP/EB/1/11, 20 November 2019, para. 5, at: <https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=ru/HSP/EB.1/11>.

<sup>29</sup> United Nations Conference on Environment & Development, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 3 to 14 June 1992 (Agenda 21), Section III. “Strengthening the Role of Major Groups,” at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/Agenda21.pdf>.

Habitat Agenda explicitly called for partnership among national governments, local governments, civil society and other stakeholders to address the challenges of urban development, good local governance and ensuring adequate shelter for all.

This was followed by the establishment of categorized Habitat Agenda Partner groups tasked with specific responsibilities in implementing the Habitat Agenda. Partner participation in the implementation of the Agenda was strengthened further by the inclusion of local governments, civil society and other stakeholders in the governance of UN Habitat by the new Governing Council's rules of procedure. These measures were innovative for the UN at the time, and the 2001 General Assembly further endorsed the establishment of the World Urban Forum as a partner engagement platform.

Facilitated by these enabling measures, UN Habitat's work with partners grew significantly throughout the following decade, which greatly increased the agency's reach and impact, and produced many successful program and activities to advance sustainable urbanization worldwide. That gave UN Habitat a global profile it did not previously have, within or outside the United Nations system. Given that rapid growth, from 2009 onward, UN Habitat attempted to structure and organize these growing networks in order to maximize their potential. UN Habitat now can boast more than 6,000 local, national and international partners with which it engages in various ways.

This process took the form of a partnership strategy, which went through several drafts. However, that never was implemented, due to the interregnum created after 2012, as the leadership of the agency became more and more focused on the preparations for the Habitat III Conference. Nonetheless, the expectation remains that the new Stakeholder Engagement Policy (SEP) would pursue—and expand—the partnership strategy development, building on all the positive stakeholder engagement and collaboration that UN Habitat achieved in the past, innovative ways to strengthen it in light of the new governance structures and NUA implementation through the UN Habitat 2020–25 Strategic Plan and beyond. Any stakeholder mechanism also should reflect the lessons of UN Habitat's past. Moreover, UN Habitat now has the further advantage of the learning from successful models of stakeholder engagement that have emerged elsewhere within the UN system over the past decade.

However, the role of partners and partnership mechanisms in the current governance of UN Habitat remains unclear and subject to much speculation and deliberation yet to come. The decisions on the new governance structure remain mostly silent about the role of stakeholders other than UN Member States.

The GA reaffirmed its guidance to UN Habitat to ensure multi-stakeholder partnerships, “establishing clear and transparent policies, financial and administrative frameworks and procedures, as well as planning guidelines for multi-stakeholder partnerships” and reiterates the States' position

“that the implementation of the New Urban Agenda contributes to the implementation and localization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in an integrated and coordinated manner at the global, regional, national, subnational and local levels, with the participation of all relevant stakeholders...throughout the process, including policymaking, planning, design, implementation, operation and maintenance, and monitoring, as well as the financing and timely delivery of services...”<sup>30</sup>

However, the (non-operative) preamble of the resolution also suggests a misunderstanding of the roles and functions of stakeholders where they are formally invited in the World Urban Forum (WUF). It

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<sup>30</sup> A/RES/73/239, *op. cit.*

reaffirms the WUF's role "as an advocacy platform for all stakeholders in the fields of human settlements and sustainable urbanization, based on its non-legislative nature..."<sup>31</sup> In fact, that structure is designed and defined *not* to be an advocacy platform, since it does not allow for decisions to be taken, neither on governance or policy matters related to UN Habitat. Advocacy takes place rather in the governance structure, while this aspect of stakeholder engagement suffers from further ambiguity in the absence of the corresponding policy and institutional mechanism.

Beyond the GA's blanket recognition of "all stakeholders in the fields of human settlements and sustainable urbanization," the resolution provides no guidance on "stakeholder engagement"—let alone "participation"—as to how to involve the indispensable stakeholders in the future governance-and-policy structures of UN Habitat.

### *UN Habitat and Partnership since 1976*

For the initial twenty years after the first UN Human Settlements Conference in Vancouver in 1976, UN Habitat had one main NGO/civil society partner organization, the Habitat International Coalition or HIC, founded by the participants of the global NGO Habitat Forum that took place in parallel to the Vancouver conference on an abandoned air field in that city. The relationship between UN Habitat and HIC over the course of those years can best be characterized as both contentious and cooperative, with HIC playing the role of an outside "watch dog" to ensure the integrity of commitments made by governments, in particular, to the impoverished and under-housed people of the world, in the Conference's plan of action their implementation under UN Habitat leadership.

The 1996 Habitat II Conference and its preparatory process ushered in a new phase in this dynamic. It was the first global UN conference that sought to bring in stakeholders, other than exclusive national governments, into its preparatory process and proceedings. The Preparatory Committees (PrepComs) recognizing subnational and non-governmental actors explicitly as partners in the deliberation and implementation process of its plan of action, the Habitat Agenda.

Building on the experience and criteria of the foregoing Environment and Development Conference at Rio de Janeiro in 1992, a wide range of stakeholder groupings were officially identified as Habitat Agenda Partners. In the habitat context, it gave a special prominence to local governments and their associations.

Subsequent Rio, creative attempts sought to transform the governance structure of UN Habitat and to bring the Habitat Agenda Partners into it along the lines of ILO's Governing Body. However, these stalled in the conference preparation and, as a result of the organizational upheavals and subsequent UN Habitat reforms, never were revisited. However, one positive step was taken: during 1999 the 20-member UN Advisory Committee of Local Authorities (UNACLA) was established as an advisory body to the Executive Director of UN Habitat, which held its first meeting in Venice, Italy in January 2000.

### *A First Step in Stakeholder Engagement in UN Habitat Governance*

The matter of stakeholder participation in UN Habitat's governance structure arose again at the conclusion of the UN Habitat reform process in December 2001, when the then Commission on Human Settlements was transformed into a Governing Council and a subsidiary body of the General Assembly.

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

With UN Habitat elevated from a *centre* to a UN *programme*, the GA confirmed the role of UNACLA and the recently established World Urban Forum was designated as a biannual meeting of experts.<sup>32</sup>

The issue of stakeholder participation in the new governance structure then re-emerged during the discussions among governments on the Rules of Procedure for the new Governing Council. What finally resulted was a limited form of formal participation for local authorities and civil society representatives in all the deliberations of the Council and its committees and sub-committees. Although far removed from the more-ambitious proposals following Habitat II, these inclusionary moves marked a break with the rigid rules of UN General Assembly practice and were pioneering steps for their times, steps which other UN governance bodies were soon to follow and even exceed in measure and depth.

## Stakeholder Participation in UN Habitat's Programme Activities Post-2001

In preparation for Istanbul+5, partnership plummeted into formal exclusion at the 2<sup>nd</sup> PrepCom meeting at Nairobi. In February 2001, the meeting of the Commission on Human Settlements failed to endorse the draft World Charter of Local Self-government, the product of a two-year global consultative effort, principally because of opposition by the USA, China, Iran and Egypt. The same Member States led an initiative to exclude—indeed evict—stakeholders from the deliberations. The new UN Habitat Executive Director then deployed UN security personnel in full riot gear to block any civil society or local government representative entering the plenary chamber. In a compromise brokered by Nordic State delegations, the Commission permitted only one statement before special Plenary Session on NGO participation, which HIC delivered.<sup>33</sup> Local government and civil society participation in UN Habitat policy and governance structures declines markedly thereafter, although UN Habitat continued to work with individual cities on projects and programs.

In the course of the ensuing decade, UN Habitat continued to expand its collaboration with partners and stakeholder groups at the program and operational levels, particularly within the framework of the two Campaigns on Secure Tenure and Good Governance and the implementation of the slum-upgrading and water-and-sanitation targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) 7: Ensure environmental sustainability. The various sessions of the World Urban Forum after 2001 brought together steadily increasing numbers of participants, ultimately reaching levels of between six and ten thousand.

Ultimately, however, that mega networking event has taken place without a measurable strategic, policy or programmatic impact on the agency and its direction, or on the performance of the Governing Council. Cooperation and partnership with women and slum dwellers organizations also increased during the post-2001 period. Youth and the support of youth organizations and activities also became an important theme of UN Habitat's work through its own designated Youth Fund.

Much of that rapid expansion of work with partners and stakeholders had an *ad hoc* air about it, lacking form, system and direction. Especially with regard to WUF, UN Habitat, in some ways, was overwhelmed by the scale of the response to its mobilization effort. On the other hand, despite the interlude of stakeholder exclusion created by certain State behavior, the biennial WUF gave credence to the self-

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<sup>32</sup> Strengthening the mandate and status of the Commission on Human Settlements and the status, role and functions of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), A/RES/56/206 in 26 February 2002, at: <https://undocs.org/A/RES/56/206>.

<sup>33</sup> "Statement of Habitat International Coalition" (the global NGO alliance on human settlements) before the special Plenary Session on NGO participation, Habitat II+5 Second Preparatory Committee, Nairobi, 21 February 2001," Endorsed by NGOs participating in the Habitat II+5 process, at: <http://www.hlrn.org/img/documents/Ist+5%20prepcom%20%20stmt.pdf>.



portrait of the agency as one that valued partnership and depended on cooperation with partners and networks of partners for its success.

### *Participation in Governance: From Enthusiasm to Stagnation and Frustration*

At the governance level, however, no commensurate increase in the quality of stakeholder participation could be perceived in the deliberative and decision-making processes of the Governing Council and its inter-sessional subordinate body, the CPR. Consultative assemblies by two major stakeholder groups, women and youth, held just prior to the sessions of the Council became regular features, but the stakeholders never were able to organize themselves into one strong collaborative voice, under one umbrella body of the type that HIC had been in the past, to push for their integrity and other concerns collectively within the Governing Council. The Council also made it difficult to expand the stakeholder role beyond the limited one given to them in Rules of Procedure.

As for local governments and local authorities, in particular, their enthusiasm began to wane markedly after the failure of UN Habitat's Governing Council to endorse the draft World Charter of Local Self-Government and to forward it to the General Assembly for its consideration. The World Charter would have been UN Habitat's first international convention. However, the subsequent decision of the Council to focus instead on guidelines for decentralization led to disillusionment on the part of local government organizations cooperating with UN Habitat and a lack of confidence in its capacity to advance their interests on the international stage.

The rumblings among stakeholders with what they felt was their limited impact on UN Habitat governance process and policies; the failure to develop the World Urban Forum into an effective consultative body; and UN Habitat's own need to give a sense of order, structure and vision to its partner cooperation at the normative and operational levels, led UN Habitat to exert an effort to put its house in order. By 2010, it formulated a new Partnership Strategy in consultation with all parties concerned. That effort was given additional urgency with the 2011 finding by the UN Office for Internal Oversight (OIOS) that UN Habitat's work with partners needed a cohesive framework, and requested that the agency prepare a Partnership Strategy, as a matter of urgency, to put order and direction into its work with stakeholders and other partners, both internally and externally, and at all levels.

### *From "Engagement" to "Partnership" with Stakeholders*

For one reason or another, the Partnership Strategy drafting process dragged on for about six years, with many interim inputs considered final, but ultimately returned for revision. Finally, UN Habitat management approved a pro-forma partnership strategy as an internal document in early 2016. While this development was primarily to comply with the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) request, it included the proviso that decisions of the upcoming Habitat III Conference most likely would require a new re-think on the matter. And this is what subsequently occurred with the move by the UN Habitat secretariat to initiate discussions on a new "Stakeholder Engagement Policy" for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda in January 2018.

What could not be anticipated then was the radical proposal for UN Habitat's governance—a complete revamp, in effect—that CPR ultimately tabled six months later,<sup>34</sup> within the first year of the posting the new Executive Director. That proposal provided the opportunity to re-visit the stakeholder participation in the governance structure, as well as at all levels of UN Habitat. New structures require new rules of

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<sup>34</sup> A/RES/73/239, *op. cit.*



procedure and a new discussion, per force, of stakeholders' place in those rules. This, in turn, also held the potential to stimulate additional impetus for further discussions on models of more-effective partnership with UN Habitat in the management and program spheres of operation, including within the framework of WUF.

The unspoken premise for undertaking such governance reform was to make UN Habitat attractive again to donor governments. Reform also could make the agency more attractive for the other stakeholders to re-commit and strengthen their cooperation with UN Habitat. Possibly more important is the potential to attract the support and cooperation of new stakeholders, particular major development and human rights NGOs, their networks and similar organizations focused on areas of work related to the NUA.

This latter prospect also could go far in filling the normative gaps in UN Habitat messaging and performance within the framework of three integrated purposes and pillars of the UN Charter. Ironically, the "outside" partners could help nudge UN Habitat toward living up to the human-rights-in-development approach promised in the Habitat Agenda and, now, in the SDGs and the longer-term positioning of the UN Development System.<sup>35</sup> This would require a deliberate effort to raise the profile, image and communication of UN Habitat, the effectiveness of the agency and the level of support, including financial support, for its efforts to lead and monitor the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. In essence, this could enable UN Habitat to become as a proper Charter-based UN agency harmonizing the humanitarian, sustainable development and human rights approaches, as the current global policy agendas call for.<sup>36</sup>

Similarly, governance reform at UN Habitat should be used to provide incentives for local spheres of government and their associations and organizations to increase their engagement with UN Habitat by participating more in the decision-making processes that govern the agency than was previously the case. This may require progressive step to overcome their skepticism, borne out of experience, that UN Habitat is not a player of sufficient weight or integrity to represent their interests and concerns within the United Nations system.

Such renewed engagement and support from local-government stakeholders seems essential to give political credibility to UN Habitat's claim to be the "city agency" and to lead the implementation of a UN plan of action that favors cities and towns, the New Urban Agenda. What would make such a tilt by local governments toward UN Habitat more likely, however, would be a context in which national

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<sup>35</sup> Repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: ensuring a better future for all," Report of the Secretary-General, A/72/124–E/2018/3, 11 July 2017, paras. 2 and 14, at: <https://undocs.org/A/72/124>; 2030 Agenda, *op. Cit.*, preamble, paras. 3, 8, 10, 19–20, 29, 35, 67, 74(e), Goal 4: Target 4.7, at: A/RES/70/1; "Independent Team of Advisors Findings and Conclusions," ECOSOC Dialogue on longer-term positioning of UN Development System in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 16 June 2016, pp. 2, 4–5, at: <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/qcpr/ita-findings-and-conclusions-16-jun-2016.pdf>; "Implementation of General Assembly resolution 67/226 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system," Report of the Secretary-General, A/71/63–E/2016/8, 31 December 2015, para. 9, at: <https://undocs.org/A/71/63>.

<sup>36</sup> Repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: ensuring a better future for all, A/72/124–E/2018/3, 11 July 2017, paras. 2 and 14, at: <https://undocs.org/A/72/124>; Independent Team of Advisors Findings and Conclusions, ECOSOC Dialogue on longer-term positioning of UN Development System in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 16 June 2016, pp. 72, 74, at: <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/qcpr/ecosoc-dialogue-publication.pdf>; ECOSOC Dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the UN development system in the context of the 2030 Agenda, UNDG key messages for Workshop 5, 13 April 2016, at: <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/qcpr/undg-key-msgs-functions-and-funding.pdf>.

governments and other important stakeholders also would increase their support for the organization as an agency that mediates spheres of governance and diverse interests.

However, the exclusive focus on cities and towns has its hazards also, requiring the current rediscovery of rural-urban linkages, in order to be operational. The narrowing of UN Habitat's scope under the current New Urban Agenda creates an existential departure from the more integral approach of the Habitat Agenda, which defined the "habitat" approach as "Cross-sectoral human settlements planning, implementation and governance approach that emphasizes rural/urban linkages and considers villages and cities as [points] on a human settlements continuum in a common ecosystem."<sup>37</sup>

If the promised new beginning accompanied reforms that would reflect greater integrity and bring with them a new confidence in the future of UN Habitat, stakeholders and other potential partners could bring a groundswell of enthusiasm and felt energy. While this is difficult to quantify, such atmospherics are equally essential for the ultimate success of any new undertaking of this type.

Ultimately, UN Habitat may have to completely re-brand itself, possibly along the lines of "Partnership with People for a Sustainable Habitat," or something similar, with an emphasis on human rights and corresponding State obligations. A more local and people-oriented approach and structure would valid such a slogan. Such a strategic partnership approach is also of utmost importance for a relatively small entity such as UN Habitat, in order to deliver on its mandate under the broad and ambitious NUA, as well as the related SDGs.

This would require a cultural transformation within UN Habitat. It was not borne out of the momentum created by a broad global social movement and is not automatically seen as their focal point or "parent" organization by all those active in sustainable urban development, or as "their" agency in the UN system. UN Habitat must try harder, therefore, and the starting point of such an effort should be a new inclusionary approach to stakeholders in the new governance structure. Its future may indeed depend on it, and this has to be understood and supported by governments.

## **Determining Channels of Engagement: Habitat Assembly or Executive Board?**

The governance determined by the GA creates two very different kinds of bodies. The large parliamentary body, the UN Habitat Assembly, while impressive with its universal membership, has only limited decision-making authority and oversight over UN Habitat. Its main functions appear to be reviewing progress in NUA implementation by the international community within the broader framework of the goals of Agenda 2030 and to make broad policy recommendations to UN Habitat, the UN system and the international community as a whole. Even in this function, it does not yet have a methodology for reviewing NUA progress, as indeed UN Habitat did not do for either the Habitat I Plan of Action or the Habitat II Agenda.<sup>38</sup>

Although the Assembly gives final approval to UN Habitat's strategic plans, which guide the agency's biennial work programs, those plans themselves are to be prepared in consultation with the Executive Board. It is to be assumed, with UN Habitat, which would also indicate that its approval by the Assembly would be a formal exercise with little or no change in their content as is customary practice in similar governance set-ups in the UN system, starting with the working relationship between the main

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<sup>37</sup> Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements [Istanbul Declaration] and The Habitat Agenda, A/CONF.165/14, 14 June 1996, para. 104, at: [http://ww2.unhabitat.org/declarations/habitat\\_agenda.asp](http://ww2.unhabitat.org/declarations/habitat_agenda.asp).

<sup>38</sup> See Habitat International Coalition, *Habitat III Basics* (2015), at: [http://www.hic-mena.org/publication\\_det.php?id=o2tk](http://www.hic-mena.org/publication_det.php?id=o2tk).

committees of the General Assembly and the Assembly as a whole. The principal decision-making role of the Habitat Assembly, as already pointed out, appears to be limited to the election of the thirty-six members of the Executive Board every four years.

Given the universal nature of the Assembly, it does provide a large tent that could also accommodate some sort of yet-undefined stakeholder participation, building on what were the practices of the Governing Council. This may give stakeholders the opportunity to report on their progress in implementing the New Urban Agenda, possibly influencing the recommendations under the broad policy guidance writ to be given to the Assembly. However, it is doubtful that Assembly meetings will provide the opportunity for stakeholders to offer any substantial inputs to the draft UN Habitat strategic plan for the reasons already cited above. Rather it can be expected that the Assembly meetings will largely provide a forum for the some review of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda with governments and other stakeholders submitting reports on progress achieved.

As noted, even this function has yet to be defined. Given the precedents, therefore, it is equally doubtful that this limited interaction every four years with a mechanism to review the implementation of the NUA would be satisfactory, sufficient or indeed of any practicality to keep stakeholders (and maybe even governments) actively engaged.

Here it is important to distinguish between the implementation of the New Urban Agenda *per se* and engagement and collaboration with UN Habitat, although these are presumed to be conceptually and operationally overlapping and interrelated. This leads to questions that would not even arise if UN Habitat were functioning well with clear policy frameworks consistent with the UN Charter and the NUA.

Effective governance reform to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and integrity of UN Habitat could envision transforming the World Urban Forum into inter-sessional event between meetings of the UN Habitat Assembly as part of an attempt to fill the functional void created by the long four-year gap in Assembly meetings. That and realigning the Assembly sessions consistent with the four-year cycle of the progress reviews set out in the NUA could help maintain needed momentum and avoid the current discontinuity. It could also hold the Agenda's stakeholder constituency tightly bound to the substance of the development agenda and enhance the quality of the Assembly's deliberations and stakeholder engagement with UN Habitat operations.

At this point it is not even clear what major role, if any, the UN Habitat Executive Director would have in those meetings. The role and purpose of stakeholders in Assembly meetings is even less clear.

Given the four year "governance gap" between sessions of the Assembly, it appears that this will be filled by the Executive Board meeting three times each year. By all indications, the Executive Board will be the center of gravity for the governance and oversight over UN Habitat and the implementation of its programmatic activities. Therefore, key stakeholder groups and other partners would turn to the EB for collaboration in UN Habitat governance. The EB is where the effectiveness and efficiency of that collaboration will be assessed, decisions will be made, and proposals for cooperation and new initiatives will come forth.

Resolution A/RES/72/239 emphasizes the importance of UN Habitat's collaboration with stakeholders other than governments in pursuit of NUA commitments and principles and to assess implementation progress. Such an intense and extensive collaboration, indeed the creation of thematic networks of cooperation with stakeholders is not only desirable, but indeed necessary given the small size of UN

Habitat's core staff relative to other UN entities with similar global mandates. If the agency is to have the necessary reach and impact as focal point, lead agency and custodian of development goals, it will need multiple partners for the NUA's implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

For all these reasons, it would seem logical and of considerable aid to the work of the EB to include UN Habitat stakeholders into its work, as well as to benefit from their views on how to maximize the relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness and durable impact of UN Habitat's work in carrying out its normative, operational, advocacy and monitoring activities. Such participation in the work of the EB also could provide an incentive for stakeholders to work with UN Habitat and to bring their organizational, intellectual, technical, political and possibly even financial resources to the table. That would require the EB to provide a forum for channeling the continuous political and policy engagement of stakeholders with national governments into the work of UN Habitat in a continuous fashion. The Assembly would not be able to do so.

Among the principal tasks of executive boards overseeing other UN agencies are the approval, review and evaluation of specific normative and operational programs. The participation of stakeholder representatives in EB sessions in suitable form would seem to be desirable. It would elicit diverse views and civil support leading to possible joint programs at the local, national and global levels, which likely would attract funding from donors, potentially including members of the Executive Board.

Such mechanisms of interaction between major stakeholder groups, including but not limited to the aforementioned Major Groups, with the Board could also provide useful inputs to the formulation of UN Habitat's periodic strategic plans and work programs. If the past practice under the auspices of the Committee of Permanent Representatives were to be continued, UN Habitat would provide a first draft for review by the Board, the stakeholders or their representatives could, for example, work directly with UN Habitat staff, or provide inputs to the Board directly. In any case, whatever means are chosen, it would certainly result in a better product, or at least a more-acceptable one, with greater buy in and commitment to the final outcome document. In the case of the strategic plans, such participation would also help to assure a subsequent final approval by the Assembly.

Another aspect of the work of the Executive Board for which the inputs and views of stakeholders may indeed be of value is in the evaluation of the activities of UN Habitat by providing critical outside assessment from operational partners who, in contrast to other outside evaluators, would have a much closer work experience with the agency. This would avoid the kind of self-congratulatory "self-evaluations" that many evaluation processes descend into in the UN system. Outside evaluation consultants tend to be employed by the very agency they are to evaluate, which can lead to conflicts of interest and reduced objectivity. Moreover, independent evaluators with little familiarity with the body they are assessing can easily be manipulated through selective access to information and informants. This has happened in UN Habitat in the recent past, and one of the reasons for the establishment of the Executive Board as a governance instrument for greater transparency and clarity through close, continuous and rigorous oversight.

Considering these lessons and factors, it seems that the EB is the structure on which UN Habitat stakeholders would focus their time and talents on matters of UN Habitat governance. While, the Assembly holds final approval authority over UN Habitat policies and plans, its structure and periodicity make it the channel mainly for stakeholders to review NUA progress on a quadrennial basis.

## Learning from the Working Methods of Other Executive Boards

Any stakeholder participation of the type elaborated in this paper would have to accommodate itself to the structure and working methods, on can even say the working philosophy, of Executive Boards. This section explores that context to envision an eventual stakeholder platform for UN Habitat's EB.

All executive boards have three main tasks: (1) to provide intergovernmental support, (2) supervision and (3) policy guidance, although the last may be shared with other UN entities and bodies. All hold three sessions per year: Two regular sessions and one annual session, of which the latter seems to be the more important.

Executive Boards made their debut as agency governance mechanisms in December 1993 when the GA converted the Governing Councils of the UNDP and UNICEF into thirty-six-member executive boards elected on the basis of regional distribution by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).<sup>39</sup> The functions of these Boards, as determined by the GA, form the template for the Boards established then, as well as for others established subsequently, with only minor variations. Each Executive Board shall serve the following purposes:

- (a) To implement the policies formulated by the Assembly and the coordination and guidance received from the Council;
- (b) To receive information from and give guidance to the head of each fund or program on the work of each organization;
- (c) To ensure that the activities and operational strategies of each fund or program are consistent with the overall policy guidance set forth by the Assembly and the Council, in accordance with their respective responsibility as set out in the Charter;
- (d) To monitor the performance of the fund or program;
- (e) To approve programs, including country programs, and projects with respect to the World Food Programme, as appropriate;
- (f) To decide on administrative and financial plans and budgets;
- (g) To recommend new initiatives to the Council and, through the Council, to the Assembly as necessary;
- (h) To encourage and examine new program initiatives;
- (i) To submit annual reports to the Council at its substantive session, which could include recommendations, where appropriate, for improvement of field-level coordination.<sup>40</sup>

Currently UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNOPS, the WFP and UN Women are governed by Executive Boards, with UN Women being the latest to join that list in 2010, but with a dual governance structure, as mentioned earlier, similar to that of UN Habitat. Other slight differences among the boards is their size. The Executive Board for UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS has 36 members. The Board of UN Women has six more members, representing the six top contributing Member States to the entity. Of the thirty six members of the Board of the World Food Programme (WFP), eighteen are elected by ECOSOC and eighteen by the Council of the FAO. Some Boards are supported by Advisory Committees.

A joint meeting of all the EBs takes place annually in New York, usually at the beginning of each year. The Executive Board of UN Habitat now takes part in that joint meeting. Executive directors of agencies,

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<sup>39</sup> Further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, A/RES/48/162, 14 January 1994, at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N94/023/09/PDF/N9402309.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 22.

programs and entities with executive boards are also members of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) of the UN. It is the UN's highest management body, consisting of the 31 organizations of the United Nations System, with the Secretary-General of the United Nations as CEB Chair. The members include 12 UN Funds and Programmes of the United Nations Organization, five Related Organizations<sup>41</sup> and 15 Specialized Agencies.<sup>42</sup>

Executive boards oversee some of the biggest operational players in the United Nations System, for which efficiency, effectiveness and accountability are keys to success in delivery to beneficiaries to the satisfaction of donors. Accordingly, executive boards were created as instruments to provide a streamlined, more “business-like” governance process that maximizes supervision, review and evaluation, and audit of programmed activities, approval of budgets and plans, as well as the initiation of new program activities. No plenary debate takes place in the EBs with political statements by governments and others. The boards adopt no resolutions, but only make concise decisions without preambular paragraphs, based on submitted reports, and on which preferably prior consensus has been reached in advance through informal discussions among the members of the board. Any future stakeholder contribution to the work of a UN Habitat Executive Board would have to conform to this style of work, requiring focus, preparation and the ability for quick collective consensus formation.

## UN Habitat Advisory Bodies: A Legacy of Two Decades

Over the past decades, the governing bodies of UN Habitat, first the Commission on Human Settlements, followed by the Governing Council after 2001, have established advisory bodies with the aim of facilitating the agency's work and mission. The main objective of these advisory bodies was to create a formalized platform in order to give advice on specific issues, give voice to a particular key stakeholder group and enhance and strengthen UN Habitat's networks worldwide. The aim has been to improve communications, feedback and exchange of experience, so as to strengthen the agency's mission and the capacity to execute its mandate, by facilitating the participation of civil society, academia, local governments and other stakeholders through engagement with UN Habitat management at the policy level, directly with its various substantive programs and other activities and with UN Habitat's governing body.

In crafting needed stakeholder-engagement advisory and participation mechanisms for the new UN Habitat, it is useful to take into account the two-decade-old experience of UN Habitat with advisory bodies, some of which are now defunct or extinct. Building upon these internal UN Habitat lessons will help to overcome any deficiencies and to improve upon them. This may require an ambitious process of rationalizing these bodies that have proliferated and accumulated over time into more manageable structures and complementary streams.

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<sup>41</sup> The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), World Trade Organization (WTO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO).

<sup>42</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), World Health Organization (WHO), World Bank Group (World Bank Group), International Monetary Fund (IMF), Universal Postal Union (UPU), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), International Maritime Organization (IMO), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). The Specialized Agencies work with the UN and each other through the coordinating machinery of ECOSOC at the intergovernmental level, and through the CEB at the inter-secretariat level.

## UN Advisory Committee of Local Authorities (UNACLA)

In 1999, the Commission on Human Settlements endorsed the establishment of a committee of local authorities as an advisory committee to the Executive Director of UN Habitat, which led to the creation of the United Nations Advisory Committee of Local Authorities (UNACLA), reflecting the importance given to local governments as implementing agents of the Habitat Agenda at Istanbul in 1996, as well as of Agenda 21, as well as the action plan of UN Conference on Environment and Development which took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The Office of the Executive Director initially provided the secretariat for UNACLA and its members are comprised of representatives of the major international and regional associations of local governments to provide advice to the head of UN Habitat on the implementation of the Habitat Agenda (until 2016) from their perspective, to exchange information and experiences among themselves and to facilitate the process of knowledge management on local governance matters between UN Habitat and the wider UN system and local and regional governments. Further the expectation was that the Committee would launch new initiatives with UN Habitat. The overall aim was to be to assure a successful implementation of the Habitat Agenda at the global, national, regional and local levels. Post 2001 the Chair of UNACLA as per the Governing Council's rules of procedure, took part in its deliberations as an observer with the right to address the plenary, making recommendations on policy matters before the Council to be taken up by Council members as part of their decisions and recommendations. In resolutions on various occasions on the human settlements program, the General Assembly has supported and endorsed the work of UNCLA since its establishment in 1999.

Since Habitat II, UN-Habitat had developed its working relationship with the international associations of cities and local authorities in the framework of a Memorandum of Understanding with the World Associations of Cities and Local Authorities Coordination (WACLAC) setting out mutual commitments to collaboration in a number of key policy areas related to the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. The preparation of the World Charter of Local Self-Government is one of these joint undertakings. The aim was to draw up an internationally agreed, adaptable framework for the practice of local democracy, as a vital contribution to the improvement of people's living conditions in all continents and regions. The Charter had been signed by 120 countries, including the Habitat II host Government Turkey. The implication of the signing of the Charter was for States to commit to maintaining independent local administrations. However, as cited above, the UN Habitat Governing Council reneged on that commitment in 2001.

Resolution 17/18 of the Commission on Human Settlements (1999) called on the UN Habitat Executive Director, to establish a committee of local authorities as an advisory body that would strengthen the international dialogue with local authorities involved in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.<sup>43</sup> The inaugural meeting of the United Nations Advisory Committee of Local Authority (UNACLA) was hosted by the City of Venice, Italy in January 2000, bringing together high-level participants representing a wide spectrum of mayors and leaders of global and regional associations of cities and local authorities.

UNACLA, has met twice a year and holds special events generally on the occasion of world summits and conferences, and was expected to define a positive and innovative vision of the future of the world's cities and to contribute intellectually and substantively to the definition and implementation of the then Global Campaigns on Secure Tenure and Good Urban Governance initiated and coordinated by UN-HABITAT.

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<sup>43</sup> Commission on Human Settlements Governing Council, Cooperation with partners: role of local authorities in the work of the Commission, resolution 17/18, 9th meeting, 14 May 1999, at: <https://mirror.unhabitat.org/content.asp?ID=778&catid=366&typeid=24>.

As the only advisory committee of local authorities and local authority associations to the United Nations, UNACLA has also served as interface between the world of local authorities and national governments at the international level, through practical global dialogue on substantive issues and the promotion of representative and participative democracy.

At the World Summit of Local Authorities on the Information Society held in Lyon, 4–5 December 2003, local authorities and representatives of local authority associations, requested the UN Secretary General to reinforce the role of UNACLA, in order to make the voices of cities heard by the institutions that contribute to the development of the information society.

UNACLA is a group of selected mayors and representatives of local authority associations especially chosen on the basis of their local, national and international commitment to engage in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. When United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) was created in 2004, it was established to represent and defend the interests of local governments on the world stage, regardless of the size of the communities they serve. Currently, UCLG nominates 10 of UNACLA's 20 members and the president of UCLG also chairs UNACLA.

The Executive Director of UN-Habitat, Dr. Clos, approved the new membership of UNACLA and invited the members for the Committee's meeting that was held in New York during the post-2015 summit on 27 September 2015. During the meeting, the members observed that the Committee should be used for building an institutional partnership and to further engage with the UN by having a work plan on the lines recommended by Dr. Clos, which included the establishment of a Habitat III Working Group to engage in the ongoing processes. The members agreed to strengthen the role of local authorities and their associations in the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and to make UNACLA an important ally for local governments within the UN system.

Based on the new membership and policy focus of UNACLA, the overall objective is for UNACLA is to serve as a complimentary mechanism for substantive and programmatic processes toward implementing the 2030 Agenda, Habitat III outcomes and other relevant milestones of the UN system in sustainable urban development. It also seeks to strengthen the capacity of the local authorities in addressing related challenges and taking advantage of the opportunities. It is also to be an inclusive participatory mechanism to ensure that the voices of the local authorities are well represented in these important global processes.

Based on the new UNACLA structure, the Committee's objectives are to:

- Ensure representation of local authorities and their associations in policy-making processes related to sustainable urban development processes;
- Serve as a complimentary political, policy and advisory mechanism to enrich the voice of local authorities and the local government associations in the implementation of Goal 11 of the 2030 Development Agenda, participation and engagement in Habitat III, and the New Urban Agenda;
- Give opportunity to local authorities and their associations to influence-Habitat's work program;
- Serve as the forum for inter-agency dialogue, consultations and sharing of best practices on sustainable urban development processes.

UNACLA is the convener of these efforts, while UCLG is the most-representative global organization of local authorities. UN-Habitat and UCLG signed a separate formal agreement in 2006 to collaborate on (a)



good governance, (b) international dialogue on decentralization, (c) global observatory of local democracy and decentralization, (d) localizing the MDGs and (e) revitalization of UNACLA.

The deliberations toward the post-2015 development agenda has accompanied new institutional developments. At the 25<sup>th</sup> UN-Habitat Governing Council Session in Nairobi, Kenya on 15 April 2015, the members decided that:

1. UNACLA membership would consist of 20 members from the UCLG and Global Task Force; i.e., the membership would become institutional.
2. The operations of UNACLA should be kept to the political and advisory.
3. UNACLA Reporting should be formalized, with a report every year to UN-Habitat ED, who will take it into account in his reporting to the UN Secretary-General and to the UN-Habitat Governing Council every 2 years.

Representatives of metropolises, peripheral cities, intermediary cities, regions, rural areas and small municipalities convened within the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments as an organized constituency at the Local Governments Forum of the First UN-Habitat Assembly in 2019. GTF is the umbrella network of 20 global organizations (including the UNACLA) with the objective of ‘bringing together the local government efforts to be recognized and empowered by the future UN Development Agendas, and to ensure the complementarity between the Post- 2015 Development Agenda and Habitat III processes.” The Global Taskforce delegation highlighted the value of UNACLA as a model to be enhanced in the governance structure of UN Habitat, and celebrated the recently presented UN Wide Urban Strategy.<sup>44</sup>

The Global Taskforce calls for:

- Creating specific spaces for consultation for local governments and stakeholders, such as two Executive Consultation Committees for dialogue with the EB on policy and programmatic matters;
- Enhancing the involvement of local governments and stakeholders in the design of the World Urban Forum and develop a worldwide campaign to promote engagement at the local, national and regional level in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.
- Multi-stakeholder and multi-level governance platform on urban development at national level to follow up the implementation of the NUA, fostering dialogues between ministries in charge of urban development and representatives of local and regional governments.
- WACLAC to become a significant and representative mechanism through which local and regional governments can provide political guidance and technical follow-up on the global sustainability agenda.<sup>45</sup>

The new focus, membership and reporting requirements of UNACLA would allow for institutional representation, which would enable the Committee to be able to better perform its political, policy and advisory role, and allow for the members to strategically engage with the Habitat III process, the new urban agenda and implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

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<sup>44</sup> UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination, High-level Committee on Strategy and Programmes, “System-wide Strategy and the Promotion of Sustainable Urban Development,” May 2019, at:

[http://www.uncece.org/fileadmin/DAM/RCM\\_Website/RCM\\_10.12.2019\\_Vienna/Item\\_4\\_UN\\_system\\_wide\\_strategy\\_urban\\_brief.pdf](http://www.uncece.org/fileadmin/DAM/RCM_Website/RCM_10.12.2019_Vienna/Item_4_UN_system_wide_strategy_urban_brief.pdf).

<sup>45</sup> Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, “Statement of the organized constituency of local and regional governments at the occasion of the First UN-Habitat Assembly,” Nairobi, 29 May 2019, p. 2, at: <https://www.global-taskforce.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/GTF%20Statement%20UN-Habitat%20Assembly.pdf>.

Outside the GTF are other prominent local organizations working toward the same mandate as well. One such example is CITYNET that was created in response to the needs of growing cities in the Asia Pacific and is focused in technical cooperation among its subnational government membership.

### Advisory Group on Forced Evictions (AGFE)

AGFE was established at the 19<sup>th</sup> session of UN Habitat's Governing Council following a recommendation to that effect at the First World Urban Forum in Nairobi in 2002 and was formally launched by the Executive Director in 2004. The AGFE's charge was to monitor forced evictions, particularly with regard to the urban poor and to provide alternatives such as titling for long term squatters, in situ upgrading and land management tools such as land adjustment and negotiated resettlement.

AGFE was composed of appointed experts in different fields of human settlements development (urban development, slum upgrading and housing, community participation and development, land law and human rights) serving in their individual capacity. They were actively involved at the national, local and grassroots levels in struggling against forced evictions in various parts of the world and in countries with greatly varying legal frameworks and socio-cultural norms. AGFE also had a special focus on women and children and on women's legal status with regard to housing, land tenure and land inheritance. AGFE received funding through UN Habitat's Global Campaign on Secure Tenure.

However, AGFE halted its activities only two years after its founding. As AGFE ceased to be active in 2006, and the Advisory Group began to disassemble as UN Habitat's political and financial support for it started to dwindle. Differences on strategies and tactics and the Campaign on Secure staff with the AGFE played a role, leading to a distancing between anti-eviction activists and their organizations from UN Habitat. Ultimately it was merged with the Campaign on Good Urban Governance into the World Urban Campaign, which had no related principles, normative framework or objectives.

Not only did this rupture alienate UN Habitat and its governing body from the pro-housing, pro-poor and human rights civil society organizations, it also created a disconnect between the agency and the human rights bodies and organizations of the UN and the work of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing of the Human Rights Council, who should, for obvious reasons, have a special working relationship with UN Habitat and its governing body.

The UN Habitat management's neglect of the Housing Rights Programme, formed jointly with OHCHR in 2002, also shed real and potential allies and stakeholders of UN Habitat within and outside the UN System. This devolution ended a potential stream of activities with great relevance to a core area of UN Habitat's mandate, its function as a UN Charter-based organization and core areas of the Habitat Agenda and New Urban Agenda. Instead, efforts and initiative on the human right to adequate housing ran on a parallel track, rather than being part of a coordinated UN Habitat strategy, also showing that UN Habitat had established no collaboration with the human rights bodies and entities of the United Nations on matters of related concern, not even through UN Habitat's Geneva office.

This is part of a consistent pattern which also undermines UN Habitat's claim to be the lead human settlements agency of the UN system. Certainly this matter has to be evaluated and repaired in the current revival of UN Habitat, not only within UN Habitat, but also by the Assembly, the Executive Board and any stakeholder-engagement mechanism. UN Habitat's normative and operative functions could only benefit from cooperation with the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as part of its

supervisory and system-wide collaboration, particularly in light the new Special Rapporteur's mandate, beginning in 2020.

## World Urban Campaign Steering Committee

The defunct Secure Tenure and Urban Governance campaigns merged into the World Urban Campaign, launched at the Rio de Janeiro 5<sup>th</sup> World Urban Forum in 2010. The new Campaign admittedly had no normative framework, goals, time frame or means of determining success. It remained heavily dependent on private-sector participation and sponsorship, and notably created explicitly “to generate private-sector interest and collaboration.”

The Campaign is self-described as coming about as a direct response to the need for partnerships among governments and civil society organizations, local authorities, the private sector, the research community, trade unions, parliamentarians, professional organizations, youth and women groups, in order to achieve sustainable urban development. The Campaign's partners and members adhere to a set of objectives called the Paris Principles:

1. Accessible and pro-poor land, infrastructure, services, mobility and housing;
2. Socially inclusive, gender sensitive, healthy and safe development;
3. Environmentally sound and carbon-efficient built environment;
4. Participatory planning and decision making;
5. Vibrant and competitive local economies promoting decent work and livelihoods;
6. Assurance of non-discrimination and equal rights to the city; and
7. Empowering cities and communities to plan for and effectively manage adversity and change.

The Steering Committee is the World Urban Campaign's governing body, and is comprised of UN-Habitat's partner organizations. The Steering Committee is an advisory body to the Executive Director of UN-Habitat and is responsible for establishing the campaign's goals and objectives, defining the activity strategies and annual work plan and setting the Campaign's governing procedures. The Steering Committee elects its Chair and Co-Chair every two years. The Steering Committee meets approximately every six months at different places in the world.

The Steering Committee's maintains a Standing Committee as the executive organ, and is comprised of up to 11 elected partners. The Standing Committee sets and approves the Steering Committee's agenda, reviews progress reports, lead partner applications, and approves expenditures. The Campaign allows for the creation of Sub-committees, which serve as working groups for Campaign activities, and are comprised of Steering Committee members.

The Campaign is supported by a Secretariat team within UN-Habitat responsible for coordinating and monitoring all activities of the WUC. The Secretariat's primary roles are to monitor, guide, and liaise with partners and committees in order to carry out agreed activities, to coordinate the Campaign's work plan and events, and to develop protocols and processes to match the Campaign's goals with partners' interests. The Campaign's coordinating project leader with the institutional memory and network of partners and members was reassigned to an unrelated function in UN Habitat in 2018 by the incoming Executive Director.

In this context, it is important to note that the General Assembly of Partners (GAP), a separate initiative to accompany the Habitat III process, stemmed from the World Urban Campaign. The UN Habitat Executive Director largely guided and funded throughout the Habitat II process. The GAP experience

provides an example of self-organization within a narrow scope. It decided not to take any stand or present recommendations in the New Urban Agenda negotiations,<sup>46</sup> but rather presented itself as a line-up of willing implementers of the eventual outcome, regardless of its direction and content. Nonetheless, the GAP eventually proposed a mechanism for monitoring the New Urban Agenda, an initiative that the Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development did not entertain. The GAP formally ended after Habitat III on 31 December 2016, and has not been continued after the previous ED's mandate ended.

## Youth Advisory Board (YAB)

In 2008, at the World Urban Forum in Nanjing that November, the first steps were taken to establish a Youth Advisory Board (YAB) with the aim to better integrate youth-centered human settlements-related issues into the strategic of UN Habitat. In 2009, the YAB was formally established at the 22<sup>nd</sup> session of the Governing Council of UN Habitat by resolution 22/4. A primary supporter of this move was the Government of Norway along with allied Member States.

The YAB consists of sixteen youth representatives between the ages of eighteen to thirty-two. Twelve of these are elected from the various world regions and four more are nominated representatives on special issues, including housing, post conflict societal reconstruction and youth with disabilities. The Youth and Partners Section of UN Habitat serves as the ad-hoc secretariat of the YAB. The YAB has advised the Executive Director and has taken part in the deliberations of the Governing Council.

## Advisory Group on Gender Issues (AGGI)

Following the fifth session of the World Urban Forum and resolution 23/1 of the Governing Council at its session in 2011, the AGGI was established under guiding principles of integrity, transparency, trust and accountability. Its role has been to advise the Executive Director on matters related to gender equality and women's empowerment by furnishing strategies, guidance and advice on policies, programs and fundraising at the global, regional and local levels. In 2013, the Governing Council had reaffirmed its commitment to the work of AGGI. In a new resolution, the GC emphasized the need for UN Habitat to systematically integrate a gender perspective in all of its activities. However, this development is the result of a long history of civic pressure on UN Habitat to adopt gender-equality principles, beginning with the Women and Habitat Network in the 1980s.<sup>47</sup>

AGGI is supported by a secretariat which is located in UN Habitat's Gender Equality Unit which is responsible for facilitating all communications between AGGI and UN Habitat. In addition, AGGI is supported by gender focal points in other work units of UN Habitat's headquarters as well as in the regional technical cooperation offices of the agency in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

AGGI was originally composed of eighteen members, currently there are thirteen, representing women's organizations, academia and institutes of research, the private sector, local government and policy and decision makers from Member States of the UN. Consideration is given to regional balance and

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<sup>46</sup> By decision of the GAP Executive Committee at its meeting in Berlin, February 2016. Eugenie L. Birch, "Stakeholders, Habitat III and the New Urban Agenda: The General Assembly of Partners Profiled," Intersessional Meeting of Stakeholder, New York, June 2016, at: <http://habitat3.org/engagement/general-assembly-of-partners/>.

<sup>47</sup> See Wandia Seaforth, *Gender Journey*: (Nairobi: UN Habitat, 2016), at: <https://huairou.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/UN-Habitat-gender-journey.pdf>; Tabitha Siwale and Carla Castañeda, *Gender and the Habitat Agenda: Engendering Our Human Settlements* (Dar-es-Salaam: Habitat International Coalition, Women and Shelter Network, 1999), at: <https://www.hlrn.org/img/documents/Gender&Habitat-II.pdf>.

professional background in the selection of members in a rigorous and transparent process in consultation with the Executive Director of UN Habitat.

## Global Land Tool Network

The Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) is a multisectoral alliance of international partners committed to increasing access to land and tenure security for all, with a particular focus on the improving living conditions of the poor, women and youth through facilitating access to, and use of land. The Network's partners include international rural and urban civil society organizations, research and training institutions, bilateral and multilateral organizations, and international professional bodies. Self-described as a network, rather than a stakeholder-engagement mechanism of UN Habitat or any other UN body, its secretariat is housed within UN Habitat and bears significant influence within the organization.

As an autonomous membership organization, GLTN nonetheless relies heavily on partnerships of GLTN members. It is built on the premise, value and “power” of partnerships and collaboration as a fundamental way of undertaking its work.<sup>48</sup> GLTN maintains a global scope and vision of needed improvement in the way land is managed across countries and communities. The collective inputs of different stakeholders and institutions engender change, develop inclusionary approaches and generate innovative solutions that sustainably deliver practical solutions for those who most need them. Since that cannot be achieved by individual organizations, no matter how powerful and well-funded, access to land and tenure security for all, including the poor and women, requires the aligned and well-coordinated action of all land actors.

GLTN Partners represent diverse sector groups, share in the core values of the Network and contribute to the achievement of the GLTN agenda and objectives. The Network sits within a broader land “ecosystem” that includes individual members, implementing partners, the GLTN Secretariat, as well as development partners.



<sup>48</sup> GLTN, “About GLTN,” at: <https://gltn.net/about-gltn/>.

GLTN partners are grouped into clusters based on the nature of their organization. Each cluster is led by two individuals of different organizations serving cluster co-coordinators of any gender, elected from among the members. The cluster co-coordinators are then nominated as the Partner Representatives to the GLTN Steering Committee. These representatives are also the cluster co-leads. GLTN currently maintains four clusters:

- International professional bodies
- International training and research institutions
- International rural civil society organizations
- International urban civil society organizations.<sup>49</sup>

The **GLTN Secretariat** is hosted by UN-Habitat and it is based in the Land and GLTN Unit at the UN-Habitat headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. The Secretariat is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the program and over-all Network coordination.

The **Individual Members** of GLTN are those individuals who registered on the GLTN website and join GLTN to be affiliated with the Network and receive GLTN updates and information, join e-forums and web discussions, when available, access e-libraries and participate in the open section of the biennial GLTN Partners Meeting.



The GLTN organizational arrangements were reviewed in 2018 and a new set of arrangements developed in response to partners' feedback. The Network now has an inclusive Steering Committee comprised of partners represented by the dual leaders of the four main clusters, development partners, and supported by the GLTN Secretariat. The Steering Committee is chaired by the Deputy Executive Director of UN-Habitat, Mr. Victor Kisob and the Vice-Chair is Ms. Mino Ramaroson of the Huairou Commission.

In addition, GLTN has organized Task Forces on thematic subjects such as the African Task Force on Land and the Land and Conflict Task Force. The latter has been instrumental in advising the UN Secretariat in

<sup>49</sup> For more-specific information on GLTN partners, see: "GLTN Partners," at: <https://gltn.net/gltn-partners-3/>.

the development of the Secretary General's Guidance Note on the United Nations and Land and Conflict.<sup>50</sup>

Another specialized effort hosted in GLTN is the Global Land Indicator Initiative (GLII), which develops measurable land indicators for land governance and channels expertise into the deliberations over the land-related indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). So far, land-related indicators in the SDGs, including 1.4.2, 5.a.1, 5.a.2, still remain in Tier II; i.e., without agreement, as classified by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on the Sustainable Development Goals. For these indicators, no data is yet reported to the UN Statistical Division.

Participation in this GLTN mechanism is restricted to persons appointed to the GLII. Therefore, it does not qualify among the self-organized stakeholder mechanisms of the UN System.

## Performance of the Advisory Groups

Although UNACLA has continued as an advisory body to the UN Habitat ED, its level of impact and contribution to the work of UN Habitat and to the work of its Governing Council have declined markedly over the years. A renewed, self-organized effort is underway. The active participation of local spheres of government in the preparations for and in the Habitat III Conference in Quito in 2016, especially on the part of UCLG, have provided an opportunity to boost local government engagement with UN Habitat and to re-energize UNACLA as an advisory body for the agency, the Executive Board and, beyond that, for the Habitat Assembly. UCLG and other associations most likely would welcome such a move as one of their stated goals is increased involvement and visibility in mechanisms of global governance, especially within the UN System. They most certainly seek a high-profile role in the implementation of the NUA for reasons that are self-evident.

However, such an invigorated engagement by local governments and their associations and by UNACLA would require a much stronger and more-detailed mandate for the local authorities advisory committee. The Global Taskforce statement of May 2019 lists some specific tasks and issues that UNACLA would deal with and confirm its designated and prominent role as their link with the UN institutional machinery responsible for sustainable urban development and urban governance.

The mandate would have to be expansive enough to motivate local government associations not to seek direct and close links with other UN agencies, bodies and departments, as has been the case over the past decades. Such a more robust role for UNACLA should be defined to include initiating new initiatives brokered by UNACLA between UN Habitat and local governments and their bodies, endorsed by the EB and reflected in UN Habitat's strategic plans and work programs, with progress monitored annually by the EB as part of its program review procedures.

This more-prominent role for UNACLA and local governments may also help to overcome past disillusionment with UN Habitat on the part of local government organizations, starting with abrupt decision of the Governing Council to stop the work on the World Charter of Local Self-government in 2001. That had been one of the principal reasons to establish UNACLA and for local governments to engage with UN Habitat in the first place.

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<sup>50</sup> UN, *Guidance note of the Secretary General: The United Nations and Land and Conflict* (New York: United Nations, March 2019), at: <https://gltn.net/2019/03/15/guidance-note-of-the-secretary-general-the-united-nations-and-land-and-conflict-march-2019/>.



The subsequent decline in engagement with UN Habitat was also exacerbated by differences and personality clashes between UN Habitat management and the UCLG leadership. During the Habitat III process, the Secretary-General of the Conference, who was also the UN Habitat ED and a former Chair of UNACLA when mayor of Barcelona, was successful in rallying the local government fraternity. It will now be up to the top management of UN Habitat to build on this, and the support of Member States and the EB, as well as of the Assembly.

Beyond that, a matter left unresolved for more than two decades needs to be addressed within the context of strengthening UNACLA and rallying local government associations around the NUA. That is UNACLA's and UN Habitat's relationship with the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), which emerged in 1990 with the implementation of Agenda 21 and the process toward the Rio Conference. A world-wide partnership among some of the world's most-prominent cities in the world, ICLEI, based in Germany and dedicated to promoting urban sustainability, should be a natural ally of UN Habitat. Instead, it has become a competitor and a very successful one at that, going by its high international profile, organizational ability and showcasing urban sustainable development options. In fact, many of the members of UNACLA are mayors of cities that are also members of ICLEI, which has links with UN DESA in New York, as well as with UCLG. This would be the moment to have a strong presence of ICLEI in UNACLA and move it into a partnership with UN Habitat and its governing bodies. Many past opportunities to do so were wasted. Such collaboration might also open funding opportunities for new joint initiatives from the sponsors of ICLEI, Germany and other major EU and non-EU European donors.

The **Youth Advisory Board (YAB)** has been one more successful initiatives of UN Habitat, as has the **Advisory Group on Gender Issues (AGGI)**. The YAB, in particular, has been an instrument to bring youth and youth organizations world-wide into the work of UN Habitat and to sponsor and suggest new initiatives, events and advocacy campaigns and studies, many of which have helped to raise the public profile of UN Habitat. The YAB, as well as AGGI, also have played a critical role in organizing awareness-raising events and youth and women assemblies at the World Urban Forum and at sessions of the Governing Council, with their representatives taking part in the deliberations of the body to the extent allowed by its more inclusive rules of procedure, including working with government delegations to draft resolutions for consideration by the Council as a whole. Both advisory bodies have been instrumental in ensuring that gender equality and youth, and youth and women empowerment have remained high on the agenda of the Council and prominent in UN Habitat's strategic plans and work programs. They also have ensured that gender and youth issues have been vigorously inserted in the various normative and operational projects and programs undertaken by UN Habitat as cross-cutting issues. The two advisory bodies have also been facilitators, through the their respective networks, of organized activities at the local, national, regional levels, often acting as links between government and other entities to generate support for UN Habitat, including lobbying for financial contributions for its work.

Servicing and providing financial support for these two bodies, however, has come with costs to UN Habitat and especially for the substantive units concerned, the Youth and Partners Unit and the Gender Equality Unit, especially for the costs of organizing the meetings of the two bodies. In contrast to UNACLA, whose members pay their costs for attending meetings, members of YAB and AGGI have to be completely or partially sponsored, and then there are additional costs when its members have to participate in other UN Habitat-organized events. These have become an increasingly onerous burden over the last few years, as UN Habitat's financial and human resources to support such work, including those of the Youth Fund, have declined. Therefore, it would seem prudent to possibly collapse the work



of the various advisory boards, into one, in order to reduce overall costs. Such a move, however, raises the question as to which unit, branch, division or office to cut, and which would be newly responsible to function as the one focal point for such a new consolidated body. It also raises the issue of a reliable funding source for its work, as possible donors prefer to support more-conventional projects, especially technical cooperation projects in the field, whose impact is direct, visible and can be more easily measured. The impact of catalytic instruments such as advisory bodies takes longer to be felt and, for this reason, they require regular audit and evaluation for their work to be fully appreciated as absolutely necessary by the wider donor community.

## Advisory Bodies and the New Urban Agenda

The NUA contains key transformative concepts, including a commitment to provide necessary support to appropriate financial mechanisms and legislation; an emphasis on the role of local and other sub-national government and governance practices; a vision of cities for all with meaningful participation by all social groups with no discrimination on the basis of gender, race or national origin, religion or culture; and an overall commitment to support and encourage stakeholder participation.

All of these, as well as other recommendations, make the NUA of great relevance to the work of the Advisory Bodies of UN Habitat. The Agenda's relevance to the work of UNACLA already has been noted. As for the others, the following may be briefly pointed to here:

### *Advisory Group on Gender Issues*

AGGI's goals and activities are closely related to the New Urban Agenda's commitments and principles, by aiming to re-address the way cities and human settlements are planned, designed, financed, developed, governed and managed so as to ensure to improve gender equality.<sup>51</sup> The NUA commits itself to ensure women's full and active participation and equal rights in all fields,<sup>52</sup> which is the core business of AGGI.

AGGI and the New Urban Agenda both promote age and gender-responsive planning and investment in human settlements<sup>53</sup> and adequate housing and basic services responsive to the rights and needs of women.<sup>54</sup> AGGI's work enhances and reinforces the NUA's overall commitment to support and strengthen national, sub-national and local government by encouraging those institutions to work closely with women and with organizations of women.

### *Advisory Board on Forced Evictions*

Forced evictions are a gross violation of human rights, in particular the right to adequate housing,<sup>55</sup> often the result of rapid urban development, armed conflict, infrastructure projects or energy generation, in particular dam construction. Up to the time it became inactive (although it was never abolished), the Advisory Group on Forced Evictions sought to address the structural causes of such universally prohibited displacements and to develop effective responses.

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<sup>51</sup> NUA, *op. cit.*, para. 5 and elsewhere.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 13c.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 13f.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 34.

<sup>55</sup> Common operative para. 1 of UN Commission on Human Rights resolutions 1993/77, "forced eviction" (1993), at: [https://ap.ohchr.org/Documents/E/CHR/resolutions/E-CN\\_4-RES-1993-77.doc](https://ap.ohchr.org/Documents/E/CHR/resolutions/E-CN_4-RES-1993-77.doc), and 2004/28, at: [http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/E/CHR/resolutions/E-CN\\_4-RES-2004-28.doc](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/E/CHR/resolutions/E-CN_4-RES-2004-28.doc): "Prohibition of forced evictions" (2004): "Affirms that the practice of forced evictions constitutes a gross violation of human rights, in particular the right to adequate housing;..."

In the NUA, national governments committed themselves to provide adequate housing and adequate standards of living for all, addressing all forms of discrimination and violence and to prevent arbitrary forced evictions,<sup>56</sup> which is also a legal obligation of Member States. Furthermore, the Agenda commits governments to promote security of land tenure for women and effective land administration systems.<sup>57</sup> Meanwhile, States bear a legal obligation to “take immediate measures aimed at conferring legal security of tenure upon those persons and households currently lacking such protection, in genuine consultation with affected persons and groups...”<sup>58</sup>

These commitments, as well as their corresponding State obligations, plus the overall emphasis given to adequate housing in both the Habitat Agenda and NUA should serve as sufficient to reactivate the function of this Advisory Group within a human right to housing approach on the part of UN Habitat, which would, as already described, have a salutary impact on the work of UN Habitat and the implementation of the Agenda and the related Sustainable Development Goals. It would also go far in realize UN Habitat’s mandate as a UN Charter-based organization, reaffirmed in the longer-term positioning of the UN Sustainable Development System, to operationalize human rights within its normative and operational functions.

#### *Youth Advisory Board*

The New Urban Agenda encourages collaboration and participation among all stakeholders and sub-national and local governments through an age and gender approach. Further the NUA encourages the empowerment of all levels of government to work closely with youth and improve their participation in urban and territorial development.<sup>59</sup> The New Urban Agenda also calls for the promotion of financing and budgetary systems based upon age and gender responsiveness in order to create approaches with universal impact and results.<sup>60</sup>

## Participation of Stakeholders and Advisory Committees across the UN System

Not all stakeholder-engagement entities operate in the same fashion. Some are more integrated into the decision-making processes and structures than others. However, the statutory basis for such engagement already exists in the Rules of Procedure of executive boards. For example, under Rule 16 of the Executive Board of the UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS states that “the Executive Board may also invite, when it considers it appropriate, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council to participate in its deliberations for questions that relate to their activities.”<sup>61</sup> This rule has been incorporated verbatim in the Rules of Procedures of the UN Habitat Assembly’s Executive Board adopted at the first UN Habitat Assembly.

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<sup>56</sup> NUA, *op. cit.*, para. 31.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 35.

<sup>58</sup> Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment No. 4: The Right to Adequate Housing (Art. 11 (1) of the Covenant), E/1992/23, 13 December 1991, para. 8(a), at:

[https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCESCR%2fGEC%2f4759&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCESCR%2fGEC%2f4759&Lang=en).

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 61.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, paras. 42, 48 and 138.

<sup>61</sup> United Nations, “Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, of the United Nations Population Fund and of the United Nations Office for Project Services” (New York: United Nations, January 2011), p. 9, at: <http://web.undp.org/execbrd/pdf/9719131e.pdf>.

## Appointed Stakeholder Mechanisms in the UN System

### UNDP Civil Society Advisory Committee (CSAC)

UN entities and agencies governed by executive boards are indeed characterized by extensive civil society partnerships, as well as partnerships with other key stakeholders. In fact, these stakeholders are often given prominence in their organizational profiles and self-portraits. In some of them, these stakeholders and partners have been given some type of organized institutional role in an organized form, such as the UNDP Civil Society Advisory Committee (CSAC), with fifteen members. Formed in 2000 with the overall goal to formalize the consultative process between UNDP and civil society actors at the global level, CSAC currently functions as the main institutional mechanism for dialogue between civil society leaders and UNDP senior management. By contributing independent perspectives and critical analysis on UNDP's work, the CSAC, according to UNDP's own assessment, has had a significant positive impact on the organization. Among others, it has resulted in a "strengthening of civil engagement of UNDP's policies and programme, as well as in greater collaboration between UNDP and a broad range of civil society constituencies." A 2008 evaluation by UNDP, however, also found that CSAC was less successful in acting as a catalyst for new program initiatives.<sup>62</sup> UNDP has since revitalized the CSAC with revised terms of engagement and new members.<sup>63</sup>

The CSAC meets annually in New York, usually in the early part of the year. Members serve on the Committee in individual and non-remunerative capacity for an average of three years. The membership reflects the priority areas of work of the UNDP, the majority are from women's, environmental, special needs and general development groups and organizations. Trade unions are also represented. The private sector and professionals are less so. In fact, the only private sector network established by UNDP is the one for Africa. The Civil Society Division of UNDP's Bureau for External Relations is responsible, inter alia, for facilitating the CSAC's dialogue and interactions with UNDP's Executive Board.

### UNICEF NGO Committee

UNICEF's main organized civil society partner is the sixty-member UNICEF NGO Committee. Based in New York, the Committee's members represent children's rights and development entities globally. Apart from interacting with UNICEF management on issues of mutual concern, CSO representatives can attend UNICEF Executive Board meetings. The NGO Committee for UNICEF especially also provides input to the Executive Board during its annual meeting.

Notably, the NGO Committee has a fifty year old history at UNICEF, going back to the days when UNICEF had a Governing Council, which leads one to assume that the practices with regard to representation and participation of civil society organizations of that Governing Council were carried over into the new Executive Board after 1993.

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<sup>62</sup> UNDP Global Inventory on Country-level Engagement with Civil Society: A Global Snapshot (New York: UNDP, 2008), pp. 4–6, at: [https://www.undp.org/content/dam/aplaws/publication/en/publications/democratic-governance/oslo-governance-center/civic-engagement/global-inventory-of-undp-engagement-with-civil-society-2009/Final\\_External\\_Inventory\\_Global\\_Snapshot.pdf](https://www.undp.org/content/dam/aplaws/publication/en/publications/democratic-governance/oslo-governance-center/civic-engagement/global-inventory-of-undp-engagement-with-civil-society-2009/Final_External_Inventory_Global_Snapshot.pdf).

<sup>63</sup> UNDP Strategy on Civil Society and Civic Engagement (New York: UNDP, 1 October 2012), p. 23, at: [https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/documents/partners/civil\\_society/publications/2012\\_UNDP\\_Strategy-on-Civil-Society-and-Civic-Engagement\\_EN\\_final.pdf](https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/documents/partners/civil_society/publications/2012_UNDP_Strategy-on-Civil-Society-and-Civic-Engagement_EN_final.pdf).

UNICEF also places emphasis on “knowledge-based” collaboration, something to keep in mind given the continued emphasis in past and recent General Assembly resolutions on UN Habitat on a future balance in the operational and normative activities of the agency.

UNICEF maintains relationships with numerous universities, research and policy institutes, as well as other knowledge-creating organizations, in order to share technical expertise. In addition to such collaboration at UNICEF headquarters and regional and field offices, the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre in Florence, Italy regularly conducts research in collaboration with other knowledge-based institutions. These relationships are typically formed in the context of specific areas of shared and may be formal and informal.

### UN Women’s Global Civil Society Advisory Group

UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women maintains an appointed Global Civil Society Advisory Group, which consists of representatives of stakeholders in priority areas of the specialized agency’s mandate. Its twenty-five members are selected—not elected—from gender equality networks, women’s and grassroots organizations, including youth and LGBT groups, development and social policy think tanks and academia, as well as indigenous people’s organizations and activists and male advocates of gender equality and women’s rights. Convened by the Executive Director, who reports on its work to the governing bodies, the Global Advisory Group helps UN Women to draw upon its diverse expertise, experience, outreach and knowledge to sharpen ideas and strategies for its advocacy initiatives, policies and programs.

In addition to the Global Advisory Group, national and regional civil society advisory groups have been established by UN Women, based on local priorities and practices, under the broad guidelines of creating a just, broad, balanced and effective body. Members of the groups maintain regular contact through a web-based platform.

In line with UN Women’s guiding principles regarding membership in CSAGs, members, including members of the Global Advisory Group, may belong to organizations that are implementing partners of UN Women. However, the goal is to avoid conflict of interest. The CSAGs, therefore, should not have any oversight, monitoring or decision-making role in UN Women’s program activities.<sup>64</sup>

UN Women also supports civil society participation in various intergovernmental processes, particularly in the Commission on the Status of Women, the top tier of UN Women’s two-tiered governance structure, which also appears to provide the primary platform for civil society input and participation in the headquarters operation of UN Women, if not actual governance. Thus, UN Women has continued practices already established when the Commission was a freestanding body under the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the other components of the present UN Women were either under the UNDP Executive Board (the UN Fund for Women), part of DESA or the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), a miscellaneous entity of the UN Secretariat.

Just as is the case of the UNDP Executive Board’s Rules of Procedure, UN Women’s Executive Board may also invite, when appropriate, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with ECOSOC to participate in its deliberations, on questions that relate to its activities, in an observer capacity.

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<sup>64</sup> UN Women, *Civil Society Advisory Groups (CSAG) Strategy*, Annex, p. 14, at: <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2016/civil-society-advisory-groups-strategy-en.pdf?la=en&vs=2147>.

Furthermore, all UN Member States not members of an Executive Board, as well as observer missions to the United Nations, may also participate as observers in meetings of the Board.

The **Office for Civil Society of the UN Women secretariat** serves a liaison function, coordinating the participation of civil society organizations and other non-governmental stakeholders. As the UN Women entity is only ten years old, the mechanisms for civil society are still evolving in practice, and may be modified over time based on the experience with its pioneering two-tiered governance process in light of evaluations to assess that process as was done in the case of the Civil Society Advisory Board of UNDP.

Apart from these examples of organized civil society participation in an advisory role drawn from organizations governed wholly or in part by executive boards, other examples are to be drawn from the wider UN system, beyond the main Specialized Agencies.

### *Advisory Committee of the UN Human Rights Council*

The highest intergovernmental human rights policy-making body in the UN System under the General Assembly, the UN Human Rights Council, has established its Advisory Committee at the Council's fifth session. The Advisory Committee (AC) functions as a "think tank" for the Council on thematic human rights issues and to provide expertise to it on request. The AC also has the remit to propose consideration and make recommendations for research into new areas within the framework of the Council's broad and global human rights mandate.

The Advisory Committee is composed of eighteen independent experts drawn mostly from academia, but also the diplomatic corps and other professional disciplines. They are nominated by governments on a regional basis and elected by the Council for a period of three years. The Committee meets twice a year, also drawing on the participation of civil society and other experts in public sessions at Geneva.

## Self-organized Stakeholder Mechanisms within the UN System

### UNESCO Governing Bodies and Partners

The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) is managed by two international and intergovernmental decision-making bodies of State representatives (a General Conference and Executive Board) and the UNESCO Secretariat, which houses the Director General at UNESCO headquarters at Paris. The members of UNESCO's international and intergovernmental bodies are elected by the respective bodies during the General Conference.

UNESCO also refers to its "family," apart from its headquarters, through which UNESCO Field Offices and nine Category 1 institutes and centers<sup>65</sup> implement. Moreover, the Organization implements its mission through the so called "UNESCO universe," which includes UNESCO National Commissions, UNESCO Chairs and University Networks, Category 2 centers and institutes under the auspices of UNESCO,<sup>66</sup> international networks, and nongovernmental organizations having official relations with UNESCO or are accredited to one of its Conventions. UNESCO also relies on a comprehensive and diverse set of

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<sup>65</sup> Category 1 Institutes and Centers are an integral part of UNESCO, and strengthen the capacity of Member States - particularly in developing countries.

<sup>66</sup> Category 2 institutes and centers work under the auspices of UNESCO not as legally part of the Organization, but associated through formal arrangements. They contribute to the implementation of UNESCO's programs through capacity building and exchange of information in a particular discipline or specialization.

collaborative relations and partnerships, including with the private sector, foundations and other international organizations, as well as development banks, to deliver its mandate. Such collaboration, including through the governance bodies, takes a variety of forms, comprising partnerships on the implementation of UNESCO's programme, resource mobilization, provision of specialized advice to the Organization and the wider development community, development of standards and policies, as well as advocacy in the areas of UNESCO's mandate.

### *UNESCO General Conference*

The General Conference comprises the representatives of UNESCO's 193 Member States. It is convened once every two years. Attendance is not limited to Member States, but includes also 11 Associate Members, Observers from non-Member States, as well as intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations. The General Conference defines the policies and the main lines of work of UNESCO. It also decides on the program and budget of the Organization.

The General Conference consists of the representatives of all UNESCO Member States meeting every two years. It is attended by Member States and Associate Members, together with observers for non-Member States, intergovernmental organizations and NGOs. Each State delegation has one vote, irrespective of its size or the extent of its contribution to the budget and appoint the UNESCO Director-General every four years.<sup>67</sup> Members of UNESCO's international and intergovernmental bodies are elected by the respective bodies during the General Conference.

### *UNESCO Executive Board*

The Executive Board ensures the overall management of UNESCO. It prepares the work of the General Conference and sees that its decisions are properly carried out. The functions and responsibilities of the Executive Board are derived primarily from the UNESCO Constitution<sup>68</sup> and from rules or directives laid down by the General Conference.

The Executive Board is constituted by fifty-eight members, who are elected by the General Conference for a duration of four years. The different regions of the world are represented in a balanced manner. The Executive Board meets twice a year, in spring and autumn, for two to three weeks each time. The EB also holds a brief session immediately after the General Conference.<sup>69</sup> It prepares the work of the General Conference and ensures that UNESCO's program, budget and the decisions of the General Conference are carried out properly.

Every two years the General Conference assigns specific tasks to the Board. Other functions stem from agreements concluded between UNESCO and the United Nations, the specialized UN agencies and other intergovernmental organizations.

The choice of these representatives is largely guided by the criterion of diversity of the cultures they represent, as well as their geographic origin. Intense negotiations may be needed to achieve such a

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<sup>67</sup> For more information on the General Conference, including Rules of Procedure, elections and the Working Group on Governance, see UNESCO, "General Conference," at: <https://en.unesco.org/generalconference/>.

<sup>68</sup> Signed on 16 November 1945, came into force on 4 November 1946 after ratification by twenty countries. It has since been amended 23 times, at: [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=15244&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=15244&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html).

<sup>69</sup> Executive Board, Rules of Procedure, Rule 1, at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001874/187481e.pdf#page=6>.

balance among the different regions of the world in a way that will reflect the universality of the Organization.<sup>70</sup>

The Board meets in private sessions when dealing with the following questions:

- Nominations for the post of Director General;
- Appointments to the Secretariat: the Director General informs the Members of the Board with regard to certain appointments, promotions or renewals of contract and reports on the proper application of the personal management system;
- Any other matters the Board may decide to examine in private meetings.<sup>71</sup>

The President of the General Conference sits *ex officio* in an advisory capacity (i.e., without a vote) on the Executive Board.<sup>72</sup> In the following cases a two-thirds majority of the Members present and voting is required:

- Reconsideration of proposals<sup>73</sup>;
- Consultation by correspondence<sup>74</sup>;
- Amendment of Rules of Procedure<sup>75</sup>;
- Suspension of Rules of Procedure<sup>76</sup>;
- Establishment, before each session of the General Conference, of the list of States not Members of UNESCO that are to be invited to send observers to that session.<sup>77</sup>

### **Stakeholders**

UNESCO works with a wide range of stakeholders, referred to as “partners,” in all of its fields of competence. Partnerships are seen as a key enabler for meeting global challenges and generating sustainable change and durable impact. Such stakeholder engagement is firmly embedded in UNESCO’s way of working at global, regional and national levels. By joining forces with its partners UNESCO leverages resources, expertise and competencies to promote all UNESCO’s ideals and values, led by the content of UNESCO Conventions, to achieve common development goals, and to strengthen visibility and impact of its actions. UNESCO offers a range of different entry points for partnerships.

### **Non-Governmental Organizations**

The UNESCO Constitution provides that the agency:

“may make suitable arrangements for consultation and cooperation with non-governmental international organizations concerned with matters within its competence, and may invite them to undertake specific tasks. Such cooperation may also include appropriate participation by representatives of such organizations on advisory committees set up by the General Conference.”<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> For more information on the Executive Board, see UNESCO, “Executive Board,” at: <https://en.unesco.org/executiveboard>.

<sup>71</sup> UNESCO, The Executive Board of UNESCO (Paris, UNESCO, 2010 edition), IV, 48, at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001874/187438e.pdf#page=23>.

<sup>72</sup> Executive Board, Rules of Procedure, Rule 9.1, at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000187481.page=9>.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, Rule 45, at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001874/187481e.pdf#page=17>.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, Rule 60, at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001874/187481e.pdf#page=21>.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, Rule 66,, at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001874/187481e.pdf#page=22>.

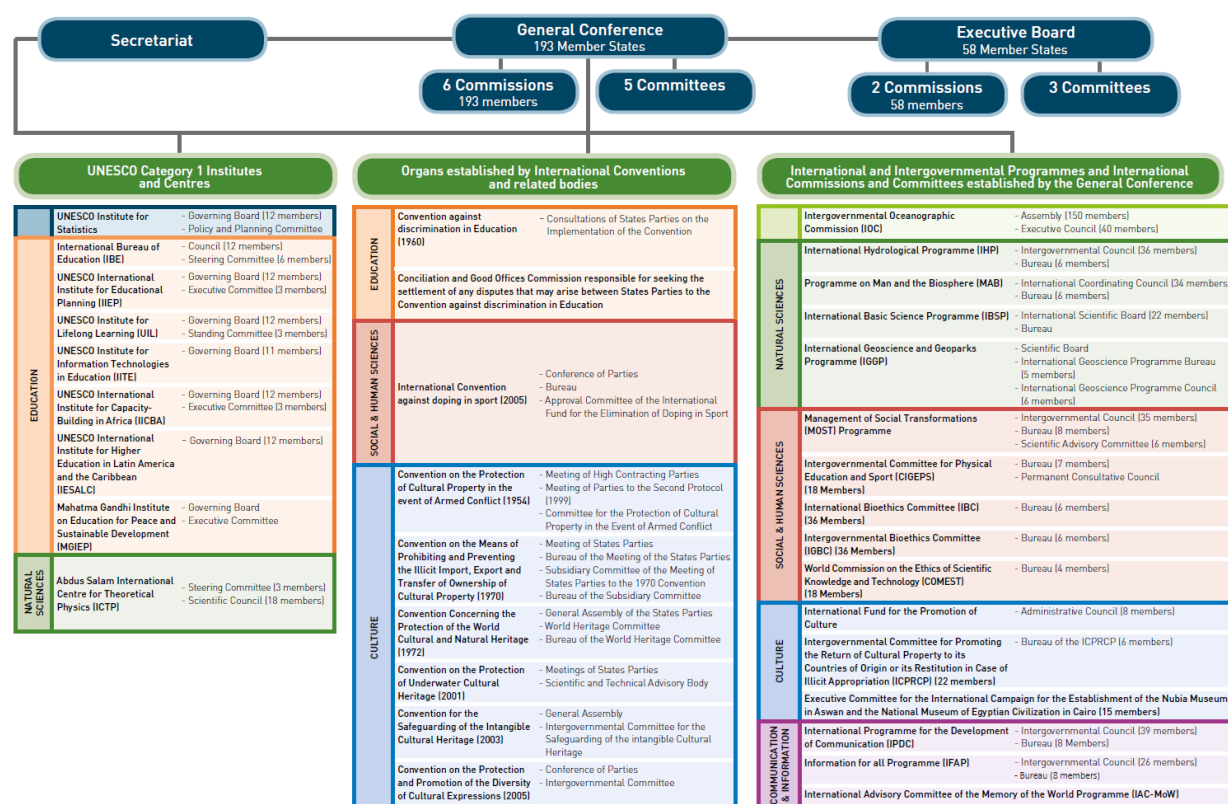
<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, Rule 67, at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001874/187481e.pdf#page=22>.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, Rule 51, at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001874/187481e.pdf#page=18>.

<sup>78</sup> UNESCO Constitution, *op. cit.*, Article XI.4.



Since its founding 75 years ago, UNESCO has sought to collaborate with NGOs as fundamental civil society partners for the implementation of the Organization's activities and programs. Over the decades, UNESCO has built up a valuable network of cooperation with NGOs having an expertise in its fields of competence (i.e., education, science, social and human sciences, culture, communication and information). Currently, UNESCO is enjoying official partnerships with 390 NGOs and 33 foundations and similar institutions.



*UNESCO organigram showing its implementing functions under the Executive Board and the normative functions under the UNESCO treaties within the purview of the General Conference.*

In addition to this formal framework, UNESCO has also been carrying out a range of activities hand in hand with nongovernmental partners not only at international and regional levels, but also at national level through agency-funded and State-funded projects. According to UNESCO, combining its expertise and resources with NGOs allows the Organization to:

- Create strategic alliances;
- Enhance efficiency and effectiveness of program/activity implementation;
- Strengthen visibility and impact of its action and presence, globally, regionally and at country level;
- Reinforce the implementation and monitoring of its normative frameworks;
- Enhance its capacity to reach all segments of societies that should be beneficiaries of its action;
- Multiply the effects of UNESCO's actions.

Civil society actors have played a major role in the adoption of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in 2005. And, over the last decade, their role has only increased, as countries design and implement new cultural policies.



As agents of change, civil society organizations can drive the implementation of the Convention to ensure that the concerns of artists and cultural professionals are heard and that they have the means to create, produce, disseminate, distribute and access diverse cultural expressions.

Civil society organizations can also influence global debates and processes by actively participating in the meetings of the governing bodies. Civil society organizations having interests in the fields covered by the Convention are invited to request permanent accreditation to the sessions of the governing bodies.<sup>79</sup>

The Civil Society Forum enables civil society organizations with interests and activities in the fields of the Convention to structure their participation, to define specific cooperation activities and to mobilize support for the preparation and presentation of reports to be presented to the Committee. The analytical and action-oriented report highlights activities and actions undertaken to implement the Convention and identifies concrete proposals and recommendations to inform the future actions of Parties.

The Civil Society Forum is held every two years, prior to the Conference of Parties.

### *Intergovernmental Organizations*

UNESCO cooperates with many intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) with which it shares goals and missions, emphasizing, in particular, its global priorities in Africa and toward gender equality. The Organization has strengthened and broadened its cooperation with IGOs, by concluding 87 formal agreements to reinforce its delivery through joint activities at country, regional and global levels.

UNESCO has renewed its collaboration and operational relations with the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), one of its longstanding partners and maintains close working relations with regional organizations, including the European Union<sup>80</sup> and multilateral development banks.

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<sup>79</sup> UNESCO, "Accreditation of Non-Governmental Organizations to provide advisory services to the Committee," at: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/accreditation-of-ngos-00192>.

<sup>80</sup> UNESCO, "UNESCO-European Union Partnership," at: <https://en.unesco.org/UNESCO-EU-Partnership>.

### *Private Sector Engagement*

UNESCO cooperates with a wide variety of private-sector partners such as business enterprises, including small and medium-size firms, national, international and multinational corporations, philanthropic and corporate foundations, financial institutions and private individuals to carry out its vast mandate. Current partnerships with the private sector range from fundraising to strategic partnerships. UNESCO is an official partner in a large number of collaborative relationships with the private sector intervening in various degrees from being involved in program delivery arrangements, providing policy guidance, technical assistance and expertise. These partnerships promote UNESCO's promote core ethical and programmatic values through advocacy and awareness raising and formalize an important common interest with the private sector in advancing education, science and cultural assets.

The various ways in which the private-sector partnership with UNESCO takes place include:

- Financing UNESCO's activities to achieve common development goals,
- Sharing core-business expertise,
- Dedicating staff time and/or seconding personnel to UNESCO,
- Strengthening project delivery through in-kind contributions,
- Sponsoring events, high-level conferences and International Days.

UNESCO's stated advantages to private-sector entities could apply also to stakeholders in other sectors also by:

- Benefitting from a strong image transfer by associating with a reputable international brand and a prestigious UN agency,
- Achieving greater visibility on the international scene,
- Gaining access to UNESCO's wide and diverse public and private networks and audiences,
- Taking advantage of UNESCO's role of a neutral and multi-stakeholder broker,
- Turning social responsibility policies into reality,
- Strengthening brand recognition and loyalty through good corporate citizenship,
- Boosting employees' motivation through hands-on experience in UNESCO's activities.

With the permission of the Chairperson of the commission or committee:

- Observers of Member States and of non-Member States may address the Board on matters under discussion.
- Representatives of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies may participate in the discussions of the Board and its subsidiary organs.
- Observers of intergovernmental or international non-governmental organizations and other qualified persons may be invited by the Board to address it on matters within their competence.
- Observers have no right to vote.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Executive Board, Rules of Procedure, *op. cit.*, Rule 30, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001874/187481e.pdf#page=14>, at: ; *Working with UNESCO Guidebook for Members of UNESCO's International and Intergovernmental Bodies* (Paris: UNESCO, 2019), at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000368533?posInSet=3&queryId=ce4204ee-8a03-47e5-a17f-0e57867537d5>.

## *Governance of UNESCO Conventions*

Unlike UN Habitat, UNESCO also embodies the normative function of monitoring and review of normative instruments in the form of treaties (i.e., UNESCO Conventions). These normative functions under the UNESCO treaties fall within the scope of the General Conference and its treaty-authorized bodies, while mandate and program implementation is within the functions of the Executive Board.

In its standard-setting role, UNESCO has adopted 37 international treaties (Conventions, Agreements and Protocols) open for signature, ratification and accession by States. In addition, UNESCO has produced 34 Recommendations and 12 Declarations and Charters.<sup>82</sup> Typically, these treaties are monitored and governed by two bodies: The Conference of Parties and the Intergovernmental Committee:

The **Conference of Parties** (Meeting of State Parties, General Assembly of States Parties, or Meeting of High Contracting Parties, as appropriate) is the plenary decision-making body and meets every two years and signatory Parties to make key management, operational and strategic decisions. Civil-society organizations wishing to participate in the sessions of the Convention's governing bodies are advised to submit one written request with the required documentation, explaining their intent to participate in both the sessions of the Conference of Parties and the Intergovernmental Committee.

The **Intergovernmental Committee** (or other-named thematic or Subsidiary Committee) works under the authority of the Conference of Parties to promote and implement the Conventions. Twenty-four Parties from all regions of the world, elected for a four-year term by the Conference of Parties, meet on an annual basis to ensure that the implementation of the Convention remains relevant in a constantly evolving world. On the request of the Conference of Parties, the Intergovernmental Committee can also develop and revise its operational guidelines.

The Intergovernmental Committee may invite at any time public or private organizations or individuals to participate in its meetings for consultation on specific issues in accordance with its *Rules of Procedure*.<sup>83</sup> A 2013 IOS audit has found that the monitoring and managing UNESCO Conventions is strained, with the support from the regular programme budget decreasing and the workload of the convention secretariats increasing. This has called for reducing secretariat efforts and expenditures and finding synergies across functions. This also points out the indispensability for supportive stakeholders in the Conventions' purposes to share the monitoring and implementation efforts, especially at the country level.<sup>84</sup> This has been met with serial efforts to reform the management of the Conventions within current constraints.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> UNESCO, "Monitoring of the Implementation of UNESCO's Standard-Setting Instruments," comprehensive Report by the Director-General on UNESCO's Standard-Setting Instruments, 40 C/INF.10, 29 October 2019, at: [https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000371307\\_eng/PDF/371307eng.pdf.multi](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000371307_eng/PDF/371307eng.pdf.multi).

<sup>83</sup> For example, see Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, 20 October 2005, Article 23.7, at: [http://en.unesco.org/creativity/sites/creativity/files/convention2005\\_basictext\\_en.pdf#page=119](http://en.unesco.org/creativity/sites/creativity/files/convention2005_basictext_en.pdf#page=119).

<sup>84</sup> Internal Oversight Service, Audit Section, "Audit of the Working Methods of Cultural Conventions, IOS/AUD/2013/06, September 2013, "Results of Audit," at: <https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/IOS-AUD-2013-06-EN.pdf>.

<sup>85</sup> For example, "39<sup>th</sup> session of the World Heritage Committee, 28 June–8 July 2015, at: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/sessions/39COM/>; UNESCO, "Synergies to protect World Heritage: Cooperation with other Conventions and programmes," <https://whc.unesco.org/en/synergies>; UNESCO, "UNESCO's Culture Conventions more important than ever," 27 September 2016, at: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1562/>.

*Participation of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to the session of the Conference of Parties*

In the case of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), for example, intergovernmental organizations (other than those referred to in Rule 2.2) and nongovernmental organizations with interests and activities in the field may be invited by the Conference to participate in its work as observers, at all its sessions, at a single session, or at a specific meeting of a session upon written request to the Director-General of UNESCO.<sup>86</sup>

*Participation of civil society representatives at the sessions of the Intergovernmental Committee*

In sessions of the Intergovernmental Committee, NGOs with interests and activities in the field of the Convention who meet a set of common criteria and wish to participate as observers to a session or all sessions are asked to submit a written request with accompanying documents to the Director-General of UNESCO.<sup>87</sup> Only NGOs which meet the criteria are eligible.<sup>88</sup>

**Expert Facility**

In addition to these governance roles of UNESCO partners, the agency also maintains an Expert Facility since 2011. This is an international pool of recognized experts (independent consultants, academics and researchers, governmental officials and civil servants, cultural operators, managers of cultural institutions or associations, etc.) who have relevant experience in designing or implementing policies to support cultural and creative sectors (e.g., publishing, visual arts, audiovisual/cinema, music, performing arts, media arts, design, etc.).

The Expert Facility may be solicited to support many different areas of the implementation of the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions such as: developing training materials; writing research papers; evaluating funding requests for the International Fund for Cultural Diversity; providing policy advice, trainings and capacity development; supporting policy monitoring activities; and advancing advocacy and networking opportunities. The experts are familiar with the UNESCO tools and training materials which they adapt to local contexts and use to deliver training and capacity-building services. This Facility supported developing countries during the period 2012-2014, through technical assistance missions, in their efforts to reinforce their human and institutional capacities and strengthen systems of governance for culture.

In February 2015, a renewed Expert Facility comprised of 43 international experts was created to support capacity development for the 2015–2018 period.<sup>89</sup> This renewal diversified geographical representation, gender balance and areas of expertise. This network of international experts was renewed for the 2019-2022 period, comprised of 42 international experts (26 women and 16 men from 35 countries) with cutting-edge expertise in issues related to creative industries, cultural

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<sup>86</sup> Rules of Procedure of the Conference of Parties, Rule 2.3, at: [http://es.unesco.org/creativity/sites/creativity/files/Conv2005\\_CoP\\_Rules\\_of\\_procedure\\_EN.pdf](http://es.unesco.org/creativity/sites/creativity/files/Conv2005_CoP_Rules_of_procedure_EN.pdf).

<sup>87</sup> Rules of Procedure of the Intergovernmental Committee, Rule 7.4, at: [http://es.unesco.org/creativity/sites/creativity/files/Conv2005\\_IGC\\_Rules\\_of\\_procedure\\_en.pdf](http://es.unesco.org/creativity/sites/creativity/files/Conv2005_IGC_Rules_of_procedure_en.pdf), and its Decision 1.EXT.IGC 5 (2008), at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0016/001611/161119E.pdf#page=12>.

<sup>88</sup> Role and participation of civil society to the operational guidelines of Article 11, Conference of Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, Second session, Paris, 15–16 June 2009, CE/09/2.CP/210/Res., p. 24, at: [http://www.unesco.org/culture/culturaldiversity/Resolutions\\_2CP\\_en.pdf#page=24](http://www.unesco.org/culture/culturaldiversity/Resolutions_2CP_en.pdf#page=24).

<sup>89</sup> UNESCO, “43 international experts join UNESCO’s Expert Facility for the implementation of the 2005 Convention,” 15 Apr 2015, at: <http://en.unesco.org/creativity/news/43-international-experts-join-unescos-expert-facility>.

entrepreneurship, cultural policy, cultural statistics and indicators, digital, artistic freedom, media diversity, trade, status of the artist, gender equality or intellectual property rights.

#### *Complaint Procedure*

Alongside the procedures laid down on UNESCO conventions, in 1978 the Executive Board of UNESCO established a confidential procedure for the examination of communications (complaints) received on the subject of alleged violations of human rights in its fields of competence, namely education, science, culture and information. This procedure is set out in 104 EX/Decision 3.3 of the Executive Board. Between 1978 and 1995, due to this procedure out of 440 cases recognized admissible 266 cases were resolved.

### International Labour Organisation and Tripartism

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) model of social dialogue and tripartite engagement has particular resonance in the context of UN Habitat. In 1997, the UN Commission on Human Settlements, then the governing body of UN Habitat, blocked a proposal to restructure the Commission into a similarly inspired tripartite legislative body of national governments, local governments and civil society. The history and operational culture of ILO differ significantly from UN Habitat, but nonetheless offers a useful base of comparison, especially in light of the current forward-looking proposal for the human settlement agency's stakeholder engagement mechanism.

Underlying the ILO's work is the vital cooperation among governments, employers' and workers' organizations in fostering social and economic progress through decent work. The UN's oldest specialized organization, having reached a century of operation in 2019, ILO's purpose is to ensure that it serves the needs of working women and men by bringing together governments, employers and workers to set labor standards, develop policies and devise social and economic development programs.

The very structure of the ILO reflects this, whereby workers and employers together have an equal voice with governments in its deliberations, demonstrating purposeful social dialogue in action. This methodology ensures that the views of the social partners are closely reflected in ILO labor standards, enshrined in treaties (ILO Conventions) and Recommendations, and commensurate policies and programs.

The ILO encourages this tripartism within its constituents—employers, workers and government representatives of ILO Member States. By promoting social dialogue between trade unions and employers both inside the International Labour Office, the conferences and procedures at the ILO headquarters at Geneva, and in the field, national policy on social, economic, and many other issues emerges.

#### *Main ILO Bodies*

The ILO accomplishes its work through three main bodies, comprising governments', employers' and workers' representatives. These include:

- The **International Labour Conference** sets the international labor standards and the broad policies of the ILO. Often called an international parliament of labor, the Conference meets annually in Geneva and is also a forum for deliberation on key social and labor questions.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> ILO, "About the ILC," at: <https://www.ilo.org/ilc/AbouttheILC/lang--en/index.htm>.

- The **Governing Body** is effectively the EB of the ILO. It meets three times a year in Geneva. It takes decisions on ILO policy and establishes the program and the budget, which it then submits to the Conference for adoption.<sup>91</sup>
- The **International Labour Office** is the ILO's permanent secretariat and focal point for International Labour Organization's overall activities.<sup>92</sup> It operates under the scrutiny of the Governing Body and under the leadership of the Director-General.<sup>93</sup>

The work of the Governing Body and of the Office is aided by tripartite committees covering major industries. It is also supported by Committees of Experts on such matters as vocational training, management development, occupational safety and health, industrial relations, workers' education, and special problems of women and young workers.

Like the FAO, the ILO holds periodic Regional meetings of Member States to examine matters of special interest to the regions concerned.<sup>94</sup>

### *Standards Supervisory System*

International labor standards, including Conventions and Recommendations, are upheld by a supervisory system that is unique at the international level and helps to ensure that States implement the norms and standards they adopt and ratify. The ILO regularly examines the application of standards in Member States and points out areas where they could be better applied. If any problems arise in the application of standards, the ILO seeks to assist countries through social dialogue and technical assistance to resolve them. This process is greatly aided by the inputs of the tripartite constituents. However, unlike UNESCO and the UN Human Rights System, this is a process largely closed to those tripartite constituents recognized in the ILO governance culture.

The ILO has developed various means of supervising the application of Conventions and Recommendations in law and practice following their adoption by the International Labour Conference and their ratification by States. The ILO has established two kinds of supervisory mechanism: The regular system of supervision and Special Procedures. The regular system of supervision is based on the examination by two ILO bodies of reports on the application in law and practice submitted by Member States and on related observations submitted by workers' organizations and employers' organizations. The regular bodies are: The Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations<sup>95</sup> and The International Labour Conference's Tripartite Committee on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> ILO, "About the Governing Body," at: <https://www.ilo.org/gb/about-governing-body/lang-en/index.htm>.

<sup>92</sup> ILO, "Departments and offices," at: <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/how-the-ilo-works/departments-and-offices/lang-en/index.htm>.

<sup>93</sup> ILO, "ILO Director-General," at: <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/how-the-ilo-works/ilo-director-general/lang-en/index.htm>.

<sup>94</sup> ILO, "Regional meetings," at: <https://www.ilo.org/global/meetings-and-events/regional-meetings/lang-en/index.htm>.

<sup>95</sup> ILO, "The Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations," at: <https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/applying-and-promoting-international-labour-standards/committee-of-experts-on-the-application-of-conventions-and-recommendations/lang-en/index.htm>.

<sup>96</sup> ILO, Conference Committee on the Application of Standards, at: <https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/applying-and-promoting-international-labour-standards/conference-committee-on-the-application-of-standards/lang-en/index.htm>.

Unlike the regular system of supervision, the three Special Procedures are based on the submission of a representation or a complaint. These include:

- A procedure for representations on the application of ratified Conventions,<sup>97</sup>
- A procedure for complaints over the application of—the failure to apply—ratified Conventions,<sup>98</sup>
- A special procedure for complaints regarding freedom of association through the Freedom of Association Committee.<sup>99</sup>

The **ILO Programme and Budget** set out the strategic objectives, allotted resources and expected outcomes for the Organization's work. These instruments are approved every two years by the tripartite International Labour Conference.<sup>100</sup>

The ILO sustains a vigorous system of application and review of norms. This function applies throughout the ILO's project development and implementation at the country level, as well as through its supervisory mechanisms at the International Labour Office. As a UN Charter-based specialized organization with a highly developed normative framework of binding Conventions and declaratory Recommendations, ILO distinguishes itself from UN Habitat, whose Governing Body descended to the lowest common denominator led by four Member States to reject further development of the World Charter of Local Self-government in 2001.

That would have been the first-ever international agreement for UN Habitat on the rights and responsibilities of local governments. The non-implementation of the Habitat Agenda since 1996 and the failure of the UN Habitat Governing Body or management to implement or report on the Habitat Agenda's implementation drove UN Habitat further from the model of the norm-based models of governance and stakeholder engagement of ILO and FAO. (See **Milestones in UN Habitat's Cooperation with Stakeholders: Forward and Backward** in Annex II below.)

## UN Environment's Stakeholder Mechanisms

The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) is UN Environment's governing body. Created in June 2012 to replace UN Environment Programme's 58-State-Member Governing Council, it currently has 193 members and meets every two years. The Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) is the inter-sessional intergovernmental body of the Assembly. The Committee is led by accredited Permanent Representatives to the UN Environment Programme, which account for 118 members. The CPR was formally established as a subsidiary organ of the former Governing Council (now the UN Environment Assembly) in May 1985.

The Committee meets on a quarterly basis led by a five-member Bureau elected for a period of two years. The Assembly is led by a Bureau and its President. The UN Environment Assembly Bureau assists the President in the general conduct of business of the UN Environment Assembly. The Bureau is

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<sup>97</sup> ILO, "Representations," at: <https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/applying-and-promoting-international-labour-standards/representations/lang-en/index.htm>.

<sup>98</sup> ILO, "Complaints," <https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/applying-and-promoting-international-labour-standards/complaints/lang-en/index.htm>.

<sup>99</sup> ILO, "Freedom of Association Committee," at: <https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/applying-and-promoting-international-labour-standards/committee-on-freedom-of-association/lang-en/index.htm>.

<sup>100</sup> ILO, "Programme and budget," <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/how-the-ilo-works/programme-and-budget/lang-en/index.htm>.



composed of ten Ministers of the Environment for a term of two years, and follows geographical rotations.

The UNEA undertakes the following functions:

- Setting the global environmental agenda;
- Providing overarching policy guidance and defining policy responses to address emerging environmental challenges;
- Undertaking policy review, dialogue and exchange of experiences;
- Setting the strategic guidance on the future direction of UNEP;
- Organizing a multi-stakeholder dialogue;
- Fostering partnerships for achieving environmental goals and resource mobilization.

UN Environment's governance structure also includes its **High-Level Intergovernmental and Stakeholder Advisory Group (HLG)**, mandated to provide technical advice and guidance as part of an overall assessment process conducted by the UNEA and UN Environment senior management. HLG's membership is comprised of Member States from the regional groups and five stakeholder representatives.

UN Environment has also created the **Global Major Group and Stakeholder Forum (GMGSF)**, which is an associated meeting of the Assembly and has recently witnessed an increased engagement on the part of the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGOS) who, since 2017, have self-organized the GMGSF meetings. In addition, UN Environment also encourages MGOS to take part in all the preparatory phases for the biennial Assembly sessions, CPR meetings in Nairobi and regional meetings to allow them ample opportunity to provide inputs into the preparations, including agenda setting.

Self-organized by MGOS accredited to UN Environment, this multi-stakeholder Forum is open to the participation of accredited and non-accredited civil society organizations, the private sector and Member States. (Organizations that are accredited to other UN Bodies, such as ECOSOC, will still need UNEP accreditation.) The Forum allows MGOS the opportunity to coordinate their input into both the Open-ended Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and the UN Environment Assembly itself. Stakeholders may also participate in the Science Policy Forum and other events that take place over the weekend prior to the Assembly.

Under Rule 67 of the UNEA's Rules of Procedure, meetings of the Assembly, its sessional committees and working parties and subsidiary organs, if any, are to be held in public unless the body concerned decides otherwise. If possible, such proceedings shall be broadcast to the wider public through electronic means.

Since its inception, UNEP has been guided by the following stakeholder engagement principles:

- a. Acknowledgement of the intergovernmental nature of UNEP processes: Decision making within UNEP remains the prerogative of Member States;
- b. Participation in decision-making processes: In line with the Rules of Procedures, UNEP will grant participation and access privileges to all accredited stakeholders;
- c. Access to information: Acknowledging the critical importance of disseminating and making accessible information concerning UNEP's work or information generated through its program as widely as possible;

- d. Transparency and accountability for mutual benefit: engagement with Major Groups and Stakeholders is based on the premise of mutual trust and benefit, transparency, responsibility and accountability;
- e. Respect for diversity of views and self-organization: UNEP acknowledges the diversity of views among its stakeholders and, in striving for greater openness and with a view to embracing the full spectrum of civil society actors, including the UNEP national committees, will ensure that those differing voices are heard, including those outside the nine Major Groups;
- f. Improvements to current engagement practices: UNEP will promote continuous improvement of its current practices.<sup>101</sup>

During the UNEA opening and closing plenary, Ministerial Roundtables, UNEA parallel themes, Committee of the Whole (CoW), informal side events, MGOS representatives are able, under certain restrictions, to make written and oral interventions, access all public sessions and meetings of the CPR, have designated seats, and access all public documents. Additionally, the Greenroom, a multipurpose venue, is reserved primarily for MGOS to organize side events. At the regional level, MGOS are able to contribute to agenda-setting and decision-making processes during the Regional Consultative Meetings, as well as through their UN Environment Regional Representatives.

The UN Environment CPR Bureau, as well as the UNEA Bureau, may call for informal meetings with representatives of MGOS. Meanwhile, MGOS also can approach the Bureaus for such meetings through the CPR Chair or the UNEA President.

The GMGSF and an improved high-level Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue during sessions of the Assembly have facilitated greater incorporation of MGOS points of views into the policy discussions and decisions of UN Environment than before. This has raised the expectation of a more-productive partnership with civil society in environmental policy development and project implementation as the outcome.

### ***FAO and the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty***

The principle stakeholder-engagement mechanism of the FAO is the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC). It originates from the World Food Summit organized in Rome in 1996 by the FAO with global civil society's interaction with ongoing global food and agriculture processes. The IPC has a long history of supporting small-scale food producers advocate their rights in international forums, and was a key player in the formation of the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples Mechanism (CSM) for relations with the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS). Since 2013, the IPC has been the official CSO partner of the FAO.

### **Milestones in the creation, development and current work of the IPC**

<b>1986</b>	Eighth round of the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) held in Uruguay (the Uruguay Round) led to the creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO), which facilitated corporate access to (financial) markets through international standard rules, removing many national social protections. The round included agriculture, intellectual property and dispute settlement.
<b>1994</b>	Uruguay Round multilateral trade negotiations conclude and are ratified in

<sup>101</sup> *Handbook for Stakeholder Engagement at UNEP* (Nairobi: UNEP, 2011), p 11, at: [http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/7449/-Handbook\\_for\\_Stakeholder\\_Engagement\\_at\\_UNEP-2015Handbook\\_for\\_Stakeholder\\_Engagement\\_at\\_UNEP.pdf.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y](http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/7449/-Handbook_for_Stakeholder_Engagement_at_UNEP-2015Handbook_for_Stakeholder_Engagement_at_UNEP.pdf.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y).

	Marrakesh, Morocco, including the WTO Agreement on Agriculture, enabling the gradual liberalization of agriculture. This, along with formation of the WTO, accelerated global coordination by civil society – small-scale food producer organizations in particular.
<b>1996</b>	<p>NGO Forum held in parallel to FAO's World Food Summit (WFS) in Rome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,300 delegates of food producer organizations from 80 countries</li> <li>• demanded a review of the Uruguay Round and a departure from both market-led solutions dominated by transnational corporations and from the policy framework created by the destructive Structural Adjustment Programs of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF)</li> <li>• counter-proposed new agenda based on human right to food and food sovereignty to overcome the social injustices rooted in the governance of food production and marketing</li> <li>• statement highlighted the principles of autonomy and self-organization, and the guiding principle of food sovereignty<sup>102</sup></li> </ul>
<b>2001</b>	<p>World Forum on Food Sovereignty held in Havana, Cuba<sup>103</sup> in parallel to WFS :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 400 delegates of food producer organizations from 60 countries</li> <li>• International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) became institutionalized as a space of coordination among different food producer organizations</li> <li>• IPC formally recognized by FAO through an Exchange of Letters</li> </ul>
<b>2004</b>	FAO-IPC collaboration leads to adoption of Right to Food Guidelines <sup>104</sup>
<b>2006</b>	IPC facilitates participation of thousands of small-scale food producers in various FAO processes, including International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD) in Porto Alegre
<b>2007</b>	IPC co-organizes the Nyéléni Forum, in Mali, to address the absence of global food policy coherence and a global body deliberating on food issues and regulation
<b>2006–2008</b>	Food price crisis put the governance of food and agriculture and food policy at the top of the official global agenda and opened another phase in IPC-FAO relations
<b>2008</b>	IPC organized Terra Preta <sup>105</sup> conference in parallel to FAO conference on food price crisis, calling for a paradigm shift. At the FAO conference, proposals by IPC, FAO, GRULAC and G77 sought a political response to the causes of the crisis and called for a profound reform of the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) to become an authoritative, inclusive forum for ensuring policy coherence in pursuit of food security and the human right to food

<sup>102</sup> See La Via Campesina, "What is food sovereignty," 15 January 2003, at: <https://viacampesina.org/en/food-sovereignty/> and "Declaration of Nyéléni", declaration of the Forum for Food Sovereignty, Sélingué, Mali, 27 February 2007, at: <https://nyeleni.org/spip.php?article290>.

<sup>103</sup> See "Information on NGO/CSO Participation in the WFS and their Involvement in the Follow-up in Pursuit of the WFS Goal," FAO Council, Hundred and Twenty-third Session, Rome, 28 October–2 November 2002, at: <http://www.fao.org/3/Y7827e/Y7827e.htm>.

<sup>104</sup> FAO, "Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security," adopted by the 127<sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO Council, November 2004, at: <http://www.fao.org/right-to-food/resources/resources-detail/en/c/44965/>.

<sup>105</sup> See Ben Powless, International Environmental Network (Mohawk Nation), Statement at the High-level Conference on World Food Security: The Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy, International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC): Terra Preta Forum, "Now Is the Time for Food Sovereignty," Rome, 5 June 2008, at: [http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/foodclimate/statements/powless.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/foodclimate/statements/powless.pdf).

<b>2009</b>	Reform of the CFS
<b>2010</b>	Establishment of the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) <sup>106</sup> for relations with the CFS, which replicated the regional and constituency structure of the IPC
<b>2013</b>	FAO Strategy for Partnership with CSOs <sup>107</sup> published, drafted alongside IPC; it operationalizes principles of autonomy and self-organization the technical and grassroots knowledge of CSOs participating in FAO processes, recognizing that their concerns and work often coincide with FAO's work and mandate
<b>2013—present</b>	IPC focuses on FAO plan of work, contributing to implementation of FAO and CFS policy instruments, negotiating and implementing the Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines, <sup>108</sup> bringing agroecology in the regular FAO program through two International Symposia and six Regional Dialogues, negotiation on the implementation of the Art. 9 of ITPGRFA <sup>109</sup> on the Farmers' Rights to seeds, contributing to the institutional debate on Digital Sequencing Information and facilitating CSO participation and priority setting in all the FAO Regional Conferences. Following the mandate of the last IPC General Meeting, IPC Working Groups started to open work stream in other forums such as the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) or the UN Human Rights System.

### *IPC Functions and Structure*

The IPC's institutional development has resulted in an operation guided by decisions taken in the biannual **General Meeting**, a space where international and regional organizations and representatives of regional processes update the IPC work plan and agree on the political lines developed around food sovereignty. Invited NGOs participate only as observers. During the meeting, the actions and achievements of the IPC's Facilitating Committee, Working Groups and Secretariat are evaluated.

**Facilitating Committee:** The Facilitating Committee (FC) is composed of 5 to 9 representatives of international/global organizations and regional process, with a constituency, gender and regional balance. The FC has the political mandate to organize the internal communication, prepare the meetings, control and monitor funds allocation, facilitate the IPC process, initiate (if needed), coordinate and monitor the WG, and take on the formal responsibilities. The FC is accountable to the General Meeting.

Following the decision of the last IPC General Meeting, the current FC is composed by an Operative Group, composed by three representatives of global organizations that have been particularly active in the IPC process, and a regional group composed by one representative from each IPC region (currently Africa, Asia and Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, Americas, Near East/North Africa) considering gender and youth balance.

<sup>106</sup> *Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism for relations with the UN Committee on World Food Security*, at: <http://www.cms4cfs.org>.

<sup>107</sup> FAO, *FAO Strategy for Partnerships with Civil Society Organisations* (Rome: FAO, 2013), at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3443e.pdf>.

<sup>108</sup> See *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication* (Rome: CFS, 2014), at: <http://www.fao.org/voluntary-guidelines-small-scale-fisheries/en/>.

<sup>109</sup> FAO, *International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, adopted at the Thirty-First Session of the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome, 3 November 2001, at: <http://www.fao.org/plant-treaty/en/>.

The three global organizations that have affirmed their availability and commitment to facilitate the work of the IPC are the International Indian Treaty Council, La Via Campesina and World Forum of Fisher Peoples.

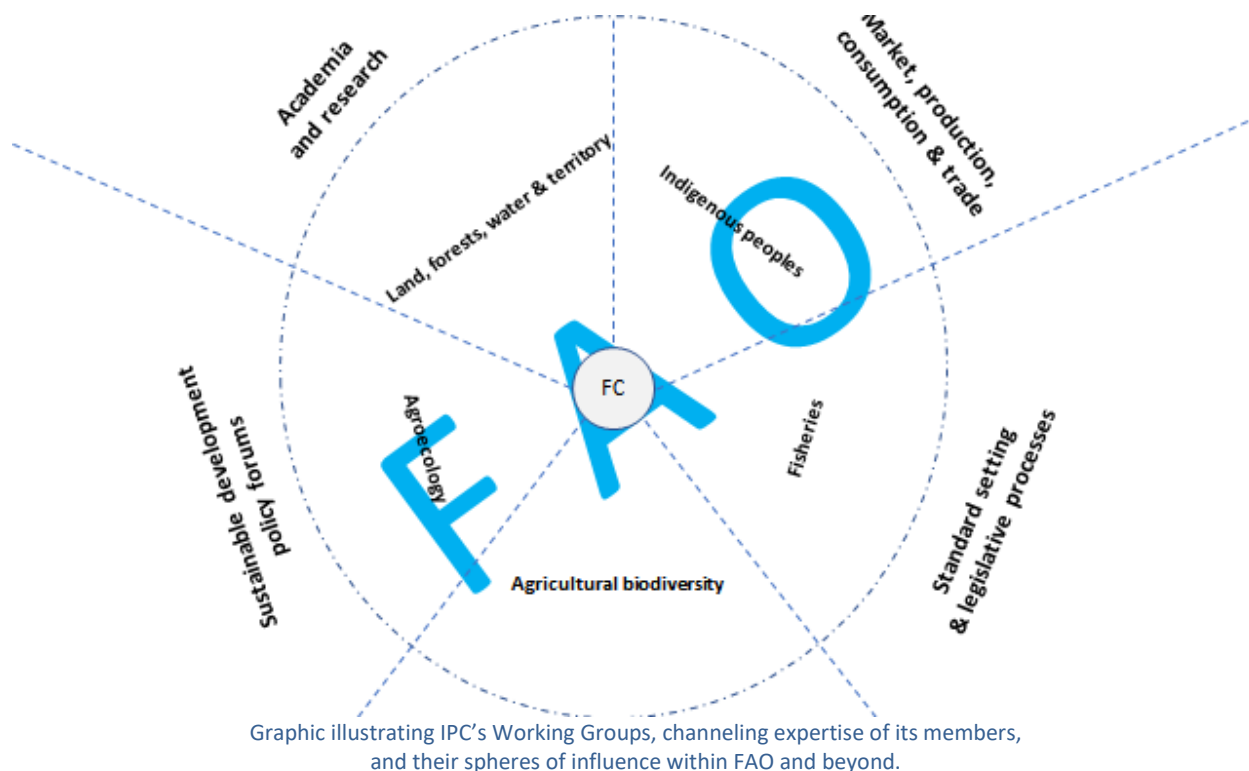
**Working Groups:** The IPC Working Groups (WGs) are endorsed by the General Meeting and, thus, have the legitimacy to operate with the full support of all the IPC organizations on a specific priority theme. WGs are open and flexible structures, formed on an ad hoc basis and with an open working methodology. The WGs must be led by the social movements (at least two different IPC organizations), but all the IPC organizations are invited to actively participate, with special encouragement for the participation of youth and women.

The WGs operate in coordination with the FC. They function with financial autonomy, within the oversight of the FC, and contribute to the general functioning of the Secretariat. The WGs report to the General Meeting, while information is regularly disseminated and circulated among regions and organizations and within the Facilitating Committee.

Each WG has selected a supporting NGO to facilitate the daily implementation of the work plan. Additionally, other NGOs can support the work of the WG. The WG can also be open to other organizations that are not part of IPC, pending a FC decision, as ratified by the General Meeting. Those WG will be denominated “IPC Plus WG”.

The current thematic WGs, based on agreed priorities by the General Meeting, are:

- Land, Water, Forests and Territory;
- Agroecology;
- Agricultural Biodiversity;
- Fisheries;
- Indigenous Peoples.



The **Secretariat** communicates with the FC on a regular basis, informing the IPC organizations. For daily and urgent matters, the secretariat contacts the Operative Group first, which communicates with, consults and/or informs the regional members of the FC whenever it is appropriate.

The Secretariat is shared between different regions following the decision of the IPC General Meeting. It is an operative structure that is mandated to organize communications via the web site, mailing lists, etc. and to fulfil an administrative role for financial issues related to the General Meeting, resource mobilization, support to WGs, etc. The Secretariat prepares the IPC biannual General Meeting.

The Secretariat is a shared responsibility between the Rome-based International Secretariat and the Regional Secretariats, which have been set up in the different regions on the basis of the ongoing regional processes.

The last IPC General Meeting gave the responsibility to the Rome-based organization Centro Internazionale Crocevia to operate the Rome-based Secretariat. It is in charge of facilitating the relations on a regular basis with the Rome-based UN agencies, in ongoing communication with and reporting to the Facilitating Committee.

The IPC has set up regional processes on all continents. The regional processes of the IPC follow the general principles and lines of actions agreed upon at the General Meetings. Regional organizations and all regional formations (branches) of the international organizations organize the process by setting up a coordination structure of all the different organizations at the regional level. The regional processes define the regional priorities and also facilitate the full participation of the regional organizations in the IPC Working Groups (WG) and the participation in all institutional regional processes where the IPC is involved.

## Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples Mechanism for relations with the United Nations Committee on World Food Security

A particularly successful example of stakeholder participation in decision making and policy formulation is found in the reformed UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS), established in 1974 as the United Nations intergovernmental body to serve as a forum for review and follow-up of food security policies, and reformed in 2009. CFS reports to the UN General Assembly through ECOSOC and to the FAO Conference through FAO's executive governing body, the FAO Council. CFS receives its core funding equally from FAO, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and World Food Programme (WFP).

CFS develops and endorses policy recommendations and guidance on a wide range of food security and nutrition topics. These are developed starting from scientific and evidence-based reports produced by the High-level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) and/or through work supported technically by FAO, IFAD, WFP and representatives of a CFS Advisory Group. CFS holds an annual Plenary session every October in FAO, Rome.

The vision of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) is to be the most inclusive international and intergovernmental platform for all stakeholders to work together in a coordinated way to ensure food security and nutrition for all. The rise in food prices in 2007–08, followed by the financial and economic crisis in 2009, highlighted the unacceptable levels of structural poverty and hunger around the world. CFS then underwent reform in 2009 to ensure that the voices of other stakeholders were heard in the global debate on food security and nutrition, by establishing mechanisms through which non-state actors can participate in policy formulation.<sup>110</sup> The reformed CFS provides a platform for discussion and coordination at the global level to strengthen collaborative action among governments, regional organizations, international organizations and agencies, non-governmental organizations and CSOs, food producers' organizations, private sector associations, philanthropic bodies and other relevant stakeholders in a manner that is in alignment with each country's context and need.

CFS maintains a Bureau comprised of 12 Member States,<sup>111</sup> and the Advisory Group made up of relevant UN bodies,<sup>112</sup> ten NGO participants in the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples Mechanism (CSM) for relations with the CFS,<sup>113</sup> International Agricultural Research Bodies,<sup>114</sup> International Financial and Trade Institutions,<sup>115</sup> the Private Sector Mechanism<sup>116</sup> and Philanthropic Foundations, all elected on a two-year basis.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Committee on World Food Security (CFS), "Reform of the Committee on World Food Security," Final Version, Thirty-fifth Session, Rome, 14, 15 and 17 October 2009, CFS:2009/2 Rev.2, at: <http://www.fao.org/tempref/docrep/fao/meeting/018/k7197e.pdf>.

<sup>111</sup> Currently, Afghanistan, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea, France, India, Indonesia, Mali, Mauritania, New Zealand, Russian Federation and the United States of America.

<sup>112</sup> Currently, FAO, WFP, IFAD, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food, UN Standing Committee on Nutrition (SCN) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

<sup>113</sup> Currently, Confederación de Organizaciones de Productores Familiares del Mercosur (COPROFAM), International Women's Alliance (IWA), World Forum of Fish Workers and Fish Harvesters (WFF), Arab Network for Food Sovereignty, Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et de Producteurs de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (ROPPO), Plateforme Regionale des Organisations Paysannes d'Afrique Centrale (PROPAC), National Farmers Union Canada, La Via Campesina, Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Organizaciones Campesinas (CLOC) and the International Indian Treaty Council.

<sup>114</sup> Currently, CGIAR System Organization.

<sup>115</sup> Currently, World Bank.

<sup>116</sup> Currently, International Agri-Food Network.

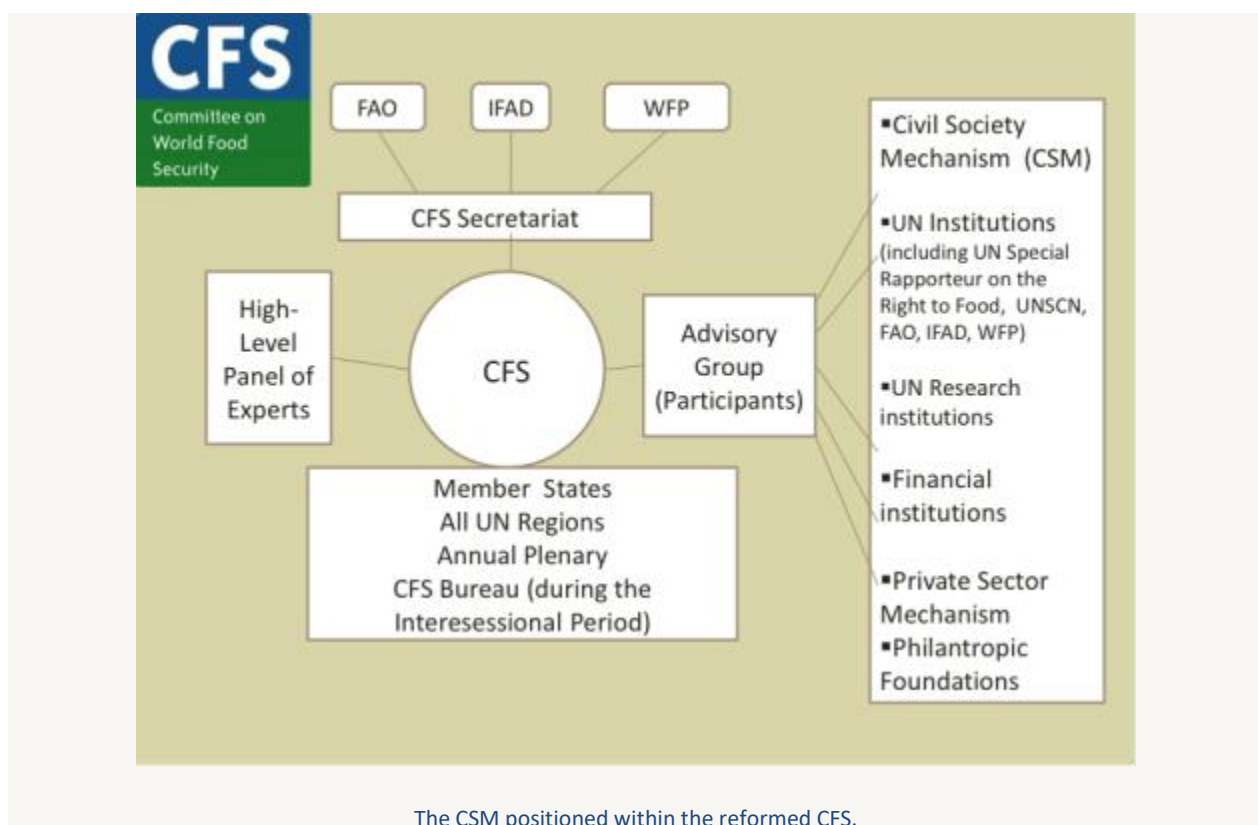
<sup>117</sup> Currently, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.



Achieving and maintaining legitimacy implies a perception by all relevant stakeholders that there is a value-added component. CFS identifies three elements as distinctive and unique to the CFS framework and contributing to its legitimacy:

1. The multi-stakeholder institutional structure
2. The regular inclusion of structured food security and nutrition-related expertise
3. The linkage of multi-stakeholder consultation and state of the art knowledge to decision making.<sup>118</sup>

The CSM is the most well-developed stakeholder mechanism for CFS. Founded in 2010, CSM is an essential and autonomous part of the reformed CFS. The CSM is an open and inclusive space and hence does not have formal members, but participating organizations. Every organization that belongs to civil society and works on food security and nutrition can join and participate. During the past years, several hundred national, regional or global organizations have participated in the CSM. Its purpose is to facilitate civil society participation in the policy processes of the CFS. The participating organizations, particularly those who organize small-scale food producers and consumers, have more than 300 million affiliated members from all continents.



<sup>118</sup> CFS, "The Committee on World Food Security: A Multi-Stakeholder, Evidence-Based Approach to Policy Making," at: [http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs1516/About/CFS\\_Multistakeholder\\_Approach.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs1516/About/CFS_Multistakeholder_Approach.pdf).

### CSM Structure

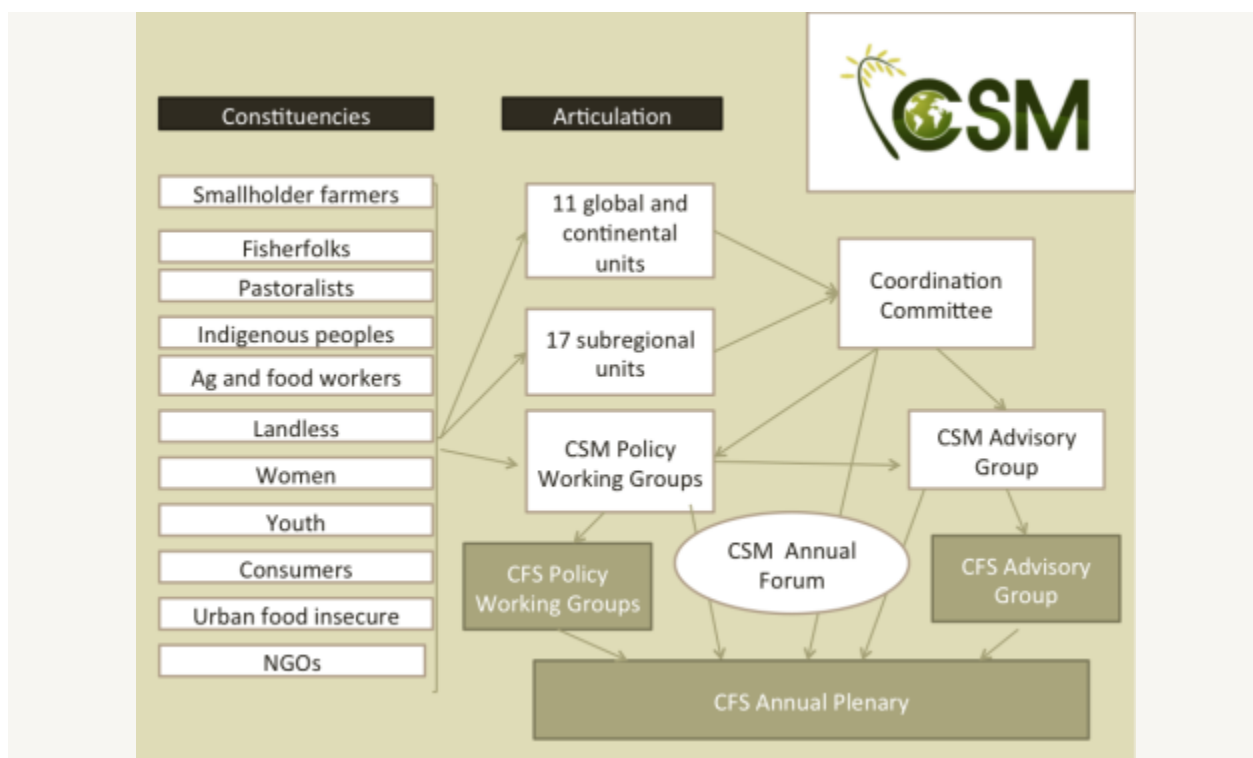
The CSM operation and governance provide for the participants to organize themselves through structures facilitating the social base through constituencies, geographical organization through global and sub-regional units and governance bodies. Participation of civil society organizations is organized through global and sub-regional units. The global units (constituencies) bring together the global and continental organizations and networks of each sector, while the sub-regional units bring together civil society organizations that have work on food security in the specific sub-region, from all constituencies.

The CSM's global social base is represented through 11 Constituencies:

Agricultural and food workers,  
Consumers,  
Fisherfolks,  
Indigenous peoples,  
Landless,  
NGOs

Pastoralists/herders,  
Smallholder farmers,  
Urban food insecure,  
Women, and  
Youth.

The CSM maintains 17 geographical sub-regions, categorized as: North America, Central America and Caribbean, Andean Region, Southern Cone, West Europe, East Europe, North Africa, Central Africa, East Africa, West Africa, South Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, West Asia, Australasia and Pacific.



Graphic depicting the CSM structure.

The CSM operates within a framework of agreed-upon principles including:

- Giving priority to the organizations and movements of the people most affected by food insecurity and malnutrition, recognizing that they are the organizations of the rights holders that are the subjects of their own development and also the most important contributors to food security and nutrition worldwide;
- Respecting pluralism, autonomy, diversity and self-organization, while trying to ensure a balance of constituencies, gender, and regions;
- Not representing the organizations that participate in it, but rather enabling them to represent themselves and articulate positions together with others as the CSM.<sup>119</sup>

The CSM's own self-organized governance structure includes:

A **Coordination Committee (CC)** of ten elected persons from among the participating organizations. All relevant political decisions within the CSM on internal and external issues are taken by consensus, if possible, otherwise subjected to a vote.

Eight **Policy Working Groups** are specialized in:

- Agroecology,
- Connecting smallholders to markets,
- Food systems and nutrition,
- Global food governance,
- Global strategic framework,
- Monitoring,
- Planning (the multi-year plan of work—MYPoW) and
- Food security in protracted crises.

**CSM Advisory Group** of eight members, elected within the CC every two years, attend the CFS Advisory Group meetings on a rotational basis. As its name suggests, the CSM Advisory Group advises both the CFS Bureau on its policy decision-making processes by consolidating, facilitating and sharing the CSOs common positions on CFS policy issues. In turn, the Group advises the CSM CC by informing its policy debate during the CFS inter-sessional period. The CSM Advisory Group meets for a face-to-face meeting prior to each Joint CFS AG/Bureau Meeting, in order to formulate common CSM contributions on each topic of the CFS AG/Bureau meeting agenda.

**Finance Working Group** is a sub-group of the CC elected every two years to oversee the financial and administrative aspects of the CSM operation;

**Secretariat**, operating within FAO offices to support daily CSM functioning, offering technical support to the CC, Advisory Group and Working Groups by facilitating the communication flow, ensuring the effective coordination of all CSM bodies and respecting of CSM organizing principles and internal functioning guidelines, administrating the financial resources and logistic arrangements. The Secretariat is staffed by a Coordinator, a Financial/ Administrative Officer and a Programme/Communication Officer. A professional and long-term team of collaborating interpreters and translators supports the

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<sup>119</sup> CSM Founding Document, at: <http://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Proposal-for-an-international-civil-society-mechanism.pdf>.

daily work of the Secretariat, by enabling the translation of all CFS documents and CSM messages and the interpretation of all meetings in Spanish, French and English.

The CSM operates in accordance with a set of internal policy guidelines and terms of reference, which it has developed as a function of its self-organization as an autonomous advisory entity.<sup>120</sup>

With CSM serving in its advisory and consultative roles vis-à-vis the CFS, the first outcome of the reformed CFS was the approval of the Tenure Guidelines in May 2012.<sup>121</sup> This first policy product was negotiated among CFS members in consultation with the CSM and its sister stakeholder-engagement platform, the Private Sector Mechanism. This new international instrument has been actively used since then by peasant, fishing and pastoralist organizations, indigenous peoples, the landless, women and youth, and civil society as a whole, to assert sustainable development and equitable access to, and use of land and other natural resources.<sup>122</sup> The deliberative processes in and around CFS have resulted in agreement toward of 19 major policy recommendations and guidance instruments.<sup>123</sup>

## Lessons to Be Learned from Practice in the UN System

All of this is reflective of a broader and progressive trend in the UN System, whereby those who will be drafting the rules of procedure for any new governance organs for UN Habitat must keep in mind and reflect in their work and outcomes. The United Nations has moved a long way since 1993, including agencies governed by Executive Boards. There is room for innovation beyond the strict verbatim reconfirmation of the 1993 Rules of Procedure for Boards. To do less would be a missed opportunity. Times have changed.

The range of examples of formal mechanisms for the engagement of stakeholders and their representatives in the policy formulation, governance and management of UN agencies, programs and other bodies in an advisory and expert capacity is certainly broad and varied as any sample clearly illustrates. However, independent of how they are structured in each case, they are part of a movement that has been accelerating within the UN System over the past four decades in parallel to, or possibly as a consequence of the UN's attempt to mobilize the world community in broad partnerships around

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<sup>120</sup> Civil Society Mechanism for the Committee on World Food Security, *CSM Guidelines on Internal Functioning*, at: [http://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/csm\\_guidelines\\_internal\\_functioning.pdf](http://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/csm_guidelines_internal_functioning.pdf); Divergent position on CSM Guidelines on Internal Functioning, at: [http://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/divergent\\_position\\_on\\_csm\\_guidelines\\_internal\\_functioning.pdf](http://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/divergent_position_on_csm_guidelines_internal_functioning.pdf); Draft CSM Guidelines for facilitating common policy positions and messages through the Civil Society Mechanism, at: [http://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/draft\\_guidelines\\_on\\_common\\_policy\\_positions\\_en.pdf](http://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/draft_guidelines_on_common_policy_positions_en.pdf); Terms of Reference for the Advisory Group members, at: [http://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Eng\\_Terms-of-Reference-for-Advisory-Group-Members-amended-May-2017.pdf](http://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Eng_Terms-of-Reference-for-Advisory-Group-Members-amended-May-2017.pdf); Terms of Reference of CSM Finance and Administrative Working Group Members, at: [http://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/eng\\_fwg\\_tor\\_criteria.pdf](http://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/eng_fwg_tor_criteria.pdf); and Draft Terms of Reference for the Coordination Committee, at: [http://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/cc\\_draft\\_terms\\_of\\_reference\\_en.pdf](http://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/cc_draft_terms_of_reference_en.pdf).

<sup>121</sup> *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security*, Committee on World Food Security, Thirty-eighth (Special) Session on 11 May 2012, at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i2801e.pdf>.

<sup>122</sup> See *ibid.*; *People's Manual on the Guidelines on Governance of Land, Fisheries and Forests: A guide for promotion, implementation, monitoring and evaluation* (Rome: IPC, 2016), at: <http://www.foodsovereignty.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/peoplesmanual.pdf>; and *Synthesis Report on CSO experiences regarding use and implementation of the Tenure Guidelines and the challenge of monitoring CFS decisions* (Rome: IPC, October 2016), at: [http://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/CSM-Monitoring-Report-VGGT-final1\\_EN-1.pdf](http://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/CSM-Monitoring-Report-VGGT-final1_EN-1.pdf).

<sup>123</sup> CFS, "Major products," at: <http://www.fao.org/cfs/home/products/en/>.

common development objectives in a systematic way. This trend has its genesis in the Habitat Agendas and, later the Millennium Development Goals and now the Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030. Therefore, it should be seen as only natural that the voices of civil society, in its broadest meaning, and local spheres of government also be heard and taken into account within UN organizations and their respective governing bodies.

As seen from the evidence, variations in the level and form of civil society and other stakeholder engagement also exist in the practices of those UN entities governed by executive boards, despite all boards sharing the same basic rules of procedure. Flexibility and innovation are called for, in line with each organization's history, needs, style and method of work and mandate. The repertoire of stakeholder-engagement experience provides sufficient precedents to justify and argue for stakeholder engagement not only with UN Habitat management, but also for stakeholders' effective participation in the quadrennial sessions of the UN Habitat Assembly, but also more urgently in its Executive Board, with its preponderant governance and close supervisory role over UN Habitat's normative and operational performance.

The Board will also have policy functions, the most important being the drafting of UN Habitat's strategic plans and the approval of the agency's biennial work programs and budgets, which are derived from those plans. The Board is also supposed to launch new initiatives and foster intra-agency collaboration on common goals. All of this not only requires inputs from UN Habitat management and staff, but also from stakeholders. UN Habitat staff, management and EB alike would certainly benefit from stakeholder views and experience, which can fill important normative and operational gaps.

The deliberative and advisory processes would not only lead to a higher quality of documents and outcomes, but such an inclusive process could engender the commitment and support from those same stakeholders, including through new joint initiatives to implement them, greatly enhancing impacts and the probability of success. These are conclusions that other agencies have already come to and put in practice, as described previously. Moreover, because of its peculiar history and relative size, UN Habitat, more so than most UN organizations with major normative and operational responsibilities, is dependent on the outreach of partnership networks to carry out those responsibilities under its ambitious mandate.

It should also be underscored once again that the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS, the template for the Rules of Procedure for other Executive Boards to follow, date from 1993, at a time preceding the Second UN Conference on Human Settlements took place, when the issue of civil society and other stakeholder participation and partnership in the workings and deliberations of UN organizations, and their governing bodies, as well as in UN conferences was still its infancy. It did not really gain traction until three years later at UN Habitat II, interestingly enough, with a plan of action that explicitly recognized the role of local governments and civil society partner groupings and others in its implementation. This led ultimately to the recognition of what were then unprecedented rights of "participation" by local governments and non-governmental organizations in the deliberations and decision-making processes of UN Habitat's governing body. However, that experience has not yet risen to the level of policy in UN Habitat and, as observed, has declined to a level of ambiguity in the new UN Habitat.

Nevertheless, over the years, even in the case of Executive Boards, the Rules allow for all stakeholders to "participate as observers." However, this imprecise formulation is also contradictory and obsolete,

since actual participation, by social science definition, refers to relations of partnership, delegation and democratic control never yet achieved or tried within UN Habitat.<sup>124</sup>

Partnership of non-governmental organizations in sessions of the UN entities' executive structures has been habitual elsewhere, most notably in the Rome-based agencies (FAO and CFS) to allow for structured interaction with representatives of civil society, the private sector and others that go beyond those reserved for mere mute observers. Rather, greater participation not only ensures greater dignity of all parties concerned, it enabled stakeholders to become valued contributors to the work of those boards. Such evolution since 1993 also has been actively encouraged by the highest offices of the United Nations more recently.

There is one caveat to all of this, however: It presumes that stakeholders, from civil society and elsewhere, are not only willing, but also able and sufficiently self-organized to make quality contributions and interventions in a manner that conforms to the style of work of executive boards and contributes something of value. Adopting a participatory stakeholder engagement mechanism for UN Habitat requires a measure of trust and faith that should be well deserved across the four decades of the UN human settlements agency and activity.

These observations should not be used as arguments to relegate stakeholder participation in the future governance structure of UN Habitat to the Habitat Assembly only, or into another, if not parallel and distant, track that renders the UN Habitat's Executive Board governance role an exclusive domain of the Member States and their government delegations. More specialized experience and expertise must be brought to bear to ensure effective policies and successful outcomes, including in critical matters such as the content and direction of UN Habitat's strategies and strategic plans and its work programs. Such a move would not only overlook needed insight and social capital, but also effectively alienate natural and qualified stakeholders and civil society once again from UN Habitat, precisely when the NUA urgently calls for building the kind of partnerships required for its implementation. UN Habitat and its Executive Board have little choice but to assume the challenge of crafting effective civil society, local government, private sector and other stakeholder engagement mechanisms at the highest possible level of *participation*. Otherwise, UN Habitat itself will be left behind.

## Recommendations and the Way Forward

After a review of the practices at other UN agencies and entities and having compared them with the practices at UN Habitat it is possible envision a way forward. It is recommendable that the anticipated new governance structure of UN Habitat with its Executive Board and Assembly support the creation of create one, rationalized "hybrid" stakeholder engagement mechanism toward participatory implementation of the New Urban Agenda. It would subsume within the mechanism, however loosely, combine the work of the UN Habitat advisory bodies on civil society, local government, private sector, gender and youth. As already precedent in the most-advance UN practice, civil society and private sector might organize separate components, while operating one to channel the input of local governments and local authorities. These components would intersect on occasion through the EB and Habitat Assembly cycles. The respective cycles would involve civil society, private sector and local governments/authorities in the EB's governance and policy-formation functions, while dedicating effort to develop methods and national reviews of NUA performance at each quadrennial UN Habitat

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<sup>124</sup> HIC, "Charting UN Habitat-Stakeholder Engagement," *op. cit.*

Assembly. The mechanism would assume the responsibilities of the dormant functions of the Advisory Group on Forced Evictions as housing, including secure tenure and displacement. The components of the mechanism would organize themselves around issues addressed in the New Urban Agenda. It may also assume thematic subgroups new to UN Habitat's stakeholder-engagement history, focusing, for example, on climate change, people with disabilities, LGBT and indigenous peoples.

The Rome-based mechanisms are the most-progressive model developed to date. However, given the importance of the local spheres of government and private investment for UN Habitat's mandate, it remains a special case and question as to how—or if—to integrate local governments and private sector into a common forum with civil society. The CFS, for example, treats private sector through a separate mechanism, but convened in a common policy-deliberation forum. Local governments and local authorities are especially relevant to NUA implementation and should be indispensable to the common forum, but perhaps need a particular treatment.

Membership in the new advisory body would be guided by a broad definition of civil society actors and stakeholder groupings to also include trade unions, business associations, institutions of research and professional associations and others, going beyond traditional definitions of CSOs to include all major NUA stakeholder groupings. These are defined by ECOSOC as the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGOS) in its 1992 formulation; however, but for NUA-implementation purposes, these groups could be augmented by additional “constituencies,” as suggested above.

Whether operating as a “platform,” or as a membership body, the components of the mechanism would have to determine their own governance and thematic system, structures and operational methods. Affiliation—whether as formal members or less-formal participants—would rest on declared adherence to the principles and purposes of the UN Charter, as well as the principles and commitments of the NUA, which latter instrument, perforce, incorporates adherence to the SDGs and other Agenda 2030 commitment. Any other criteria would be secondary and should be nonrestrictive.

## Stakeholder Advisory Board

The new governance and policy-formation body for UN Habitat would operate as a “Stakeholder Advisory Board,” or EB+. Meanwhile, the right to vote and its corresponding responsibility and accountability lie in the exclusive domain of the Member States and their government-appointed delegations, as the standard remains. The manner of selecting stakeholder members would proceed in consultation with stakeholders and the UN Habitat Executive Director, and its formation must not wait for the delay of a UN Habitat Assembly meeting, the first of which cycles again only in 2023.

Participants may be elected for a rotational period equal to the term of members of the Executive Board. This would provide for regular rotation of the membership, making the advisory board more inclusive and also ensuring that as many stakeholders as is optimally possible participate in the board over time. This would not only be a reflection of the democratic principles underlying the advisory board, but also practical given the broad range and number of NUA stakeholders, to avoid discontent and to keep them motivated and to hold coalitions together over the long run.

While the respective self-organized stakeholder structures will elect their own representatives to the Stakeholder Advisory Board, the ED, EB and Habitat Assembly should have the option of inviting exceptionally potential stakeholders to the Stakeholder Advisory Board who have an interest in the New Urban Agenda, but who are not currently collaborating with UN Habitat., but from whose presence the



EB, UN Habitat and the implementation of the NUA would benefit. These, too, would have to be subject to the requirement of a declared commitment to the principles and purposes of the UN Charter and the NUA. Their exceptional presence would be limited to specific meetings, so as not to create alternative and duplicative structure, but allow for newcomers to join their respective stakeholder mechanism.

Regional and gender balance would also be taken into consideration in stakeholders' election of representatives to the Stakeholder Advisory Board, who should be individuals with a high degree of competence and experience in their respective field of expertise. They should be experts in aspects of sustainable urban development and housing; human rights, including the human right to adequate housing; gender equality, youth issues, international organizations, sustainable development, environment and climate change, among other related fields. They should be drawn from a wide range of organizations and bodies, including international and national development NGOs, civil society organizations and women's groups, professional bodies, academia, business associations, municipalities and community-based organizations as well as others of relevance.

The Stakeholder Advisory Board would have its own mandate, agenda and rules of procedure and work plan aligned with the EB, as well as program specific outputs that may take the form of reports and statements and minutes and decisions of its meetings. It should have dedicated funds allocated to it to facilitate its activities and support UN Habitat and its management and staff in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. However, the respective components of the stakeholder-engagement mechanism should have the right and responsibility of raising operational resources from outside UN Habitat, and to report periodically to the EB.

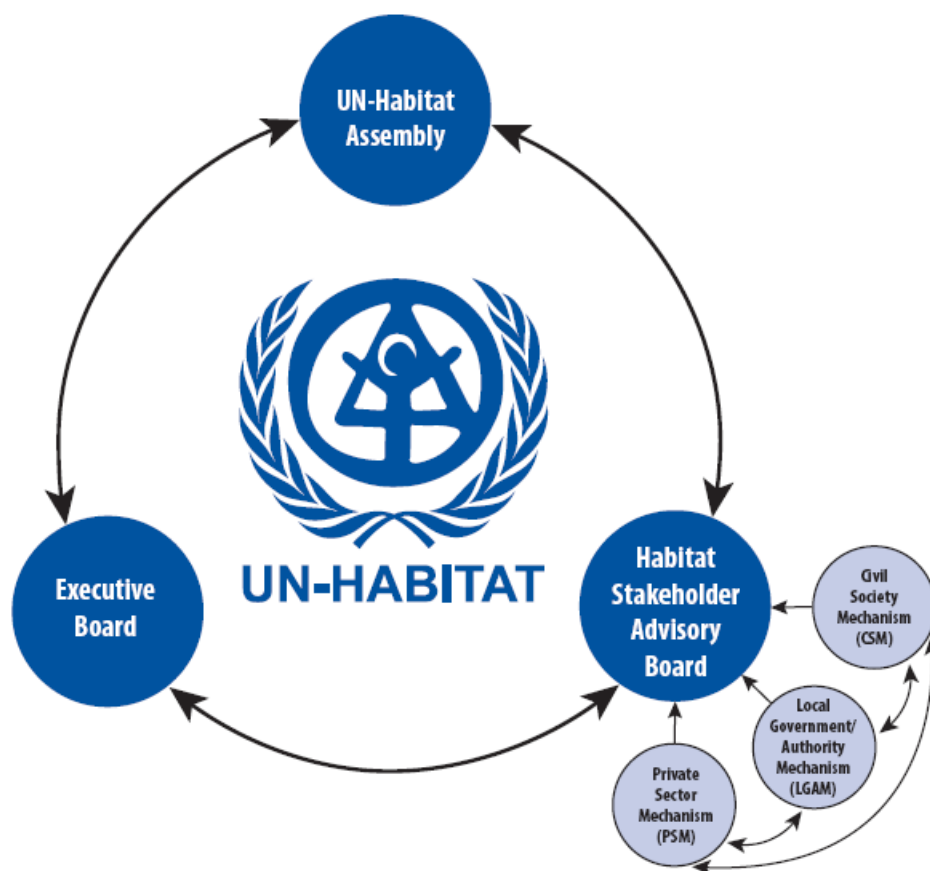
Such a stakeholder-engagement mechanism, as components of a Stakeholder Advisory Board, is intended to bring cross-fertilization and value added to the work of UN Habitat and its governing bodies. This would make a break with the past Governing Body and UN Habitat operations, which never adhered to the principles and purposes of the UN Charter's normative framework to bring the added value of a UN specialized agency to the work as never achieved before; that is, to distinguish it from inherent national self-interest of bilateral projects and private-interest enterprise. In order to achieve such a substantive improvement to UN Habitat performance, the Stakeholder Advisory Board meetings and interactions cannot descend into annual empty symbolic interludes and political rhetoric, as in previous Governing Councils.

Such value-added should start with providing feedback on the efforts of their respective organizations or networks of organizations to implement the New Urban Agenda and their assessment of the "way things are going" at the national, local and global levels from their own experience and points of view and to make recommendations on these matters. The Stakeholder Advisory Board should also provide feedback to UN Habitat on the agency's own work and critique it when required, offer remedies and alternatives in approach and direction to be considered for UN Habitat's work programs and strategic plans. All this would be fed in a continuous manner into the review and monitoring process of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda on which UN Habitat will have to report every four years to the UN Habitat Assembly.

Meetings of the EB+, operating as the Stakeholder Advisory Board, should also be used to foster cooperation, mutual learning, symbiosis and, above all, synergy among its diverse stakeholder members, to decide on new initiatives and advocacy and information campaigns. This is foreseen also to initiate fundraising drives in their respective home countries, all of which would be of interest to UN Habitat,

the Executive Board, the UN Habitat Assembly and specific components of the stakeholder-engagement mechanism as well).

It will be essential that the self-organized components of the stakeholder-engagement mechanism strive to be a competent and independent body and voice and not be coopted in any way by the management and relevant staff of UN Habitat. This and the activities just described would also make the Stakeholder Advisory Board a body of value to the work of the Executive Board, given the EB's frequency of interactions with UN Habitat, and to which the Advisory Board should provide a report on its work and attend the EB's annual session. To facilitate and make such interactions most fruitful, the work of the Stakeholder Advisory Board must be well documented, and any reports must conform in content and format to working methods of the EB and such reports may also contain recommendations for action and decision.



General overview of proposed UN Habitat governance structure with stakeholder engagement mechanisms, meeting with the Executive Board as the Stakeholder Advisory Board on the governance and policy business of UN Habitat at least once each year, and with the UN Habitat Assembly every four years to evaluate NUA performance.

Stakeholder Advisory bodies and similar bodies are already being used elsewhere in the UN system including, as briefly described, in UN Women, UNDP, UNICEF, UN Environment, the Human Rights Council and the FAO, with positive results. The distinction that likens the present proposal to the Rome-based models is the pledge by UN Habitat leadership to allow for their self-organization, the only vestige of a new stakeholder-engagement policy arising from UN Habitat to date. The aim should be to improve on this record in the case of UN Habitat. The creation of a Stakeholder Advisory Board would also lead to improvements in coordination, efficiency and effectiveness and improve the messaging of UN Habitat. A

body speaking with a joint voice would also have more influence over the work of the agency and be more likely to influence the work of the Executive Board and, beyond that, the Habitat Assembly as well, if and when required.

Given the contemplated diverse backgrounds of its members, the advisory body would not only be a place of symbiotic interactions, cross-fertilization of ideas and joint activities among them, but also give the Stakeholder Advisory Board the legitimacy, credibility and authority to speak on other matters such as Agenda 2030 and progress in the implementation of the SDGs, especially those of relevance to the New Urban Agenda as well as on other thematic areas of work of the United Nations such as human rights, humanitarian interventions, reconstruction and climate change. It should be underscored here that the existence of a Stakeholder Advisory Body will and should not preclude the collaboration in UN Habitat's programs and projects by individual stakeholders or stakeholder groupings not represented in the Stakeholder Advisory Board.

### Functions and Periodicity of Meetings

Keeping in mind the practice in other UN organizations, the Stakeholder Advisory Board, including the stakeholder mechanisms and the EB, would meet at least once a year for a multi-day period. The specific components and constituencies would meet initially among themselves to be joined later by representatives of UN Habitat management and the EB. The Stakeholder Advisory Body would require a single focal point at UN Habitat at an appropriate level in the organizational structure of the agency. Here examples from UNICEF, UN Women, UNDP and FAO might be instructive.

Just like in the case for UN Habitat, work of the Stakeholder Advisory Board will be subject to periodic audits and evaluations to assess the progress of its activities and the quality of its work and impact. Just as will be the case for UN Habitat, these evaluations and audits will not only be reviewed by the management of the agency, but also by the Executive Board.

The Stakeholder Advisory Board's role at the World Urban Forum would also be determined in the course of the Forum's expected reform to make it not just a forum for inter-actions, but also a body for "upstreaming" influence on policy and the direction of the New Urban Agenda.

Although Habitat III was highly successful in mobilizing stakeholder participation in the Conference and its preparatory process, this enthusiasm has not yet jelled into an organized force in support of the New Urban Agenda and UN Habitat, with differences continuing over whether this force should consist of several streams or one single body. The contest over these differences is reminiscent of what occurred at the beginning of this decade when the idea of a "Habitat Platform" was discussed as part of a first attempt to produce a comprehensive Partnership Strategy for UN Habitat in consultation with stakeholders and partners. If these differences are not resolved in the near future, it may be an option for the UN Habitat senior management to appoint the first Stakeholder Advisory Board from among stakeholders. However, this should be the last resort, since appointed bodies provide the lowest level of legitimacy and dignity for all parties concerned in a governance or policy-formulation process.

While these inter- and intra-stakeholder discussions continue, the opportunity may be lost to make informed decisions on such matters as advisory bodies must be made at the present moment of UN Habitat's General Assembly-mandated reorganization. The receptiveness to new and creative ideas and innovation on the part of UN Habitat is indispensable now. It is a moment that must be seized.

## Next Steps

This paper should be disseminated and debated among UN Habitat stakeholders and other interested parties for comment. While its promised appearance at the 10<sup>th</sup> World Urban Forum is an important step, the WUF is presently no forum for decision making. In advance of the forthcoming EB meeting, representatives of stakeholder groupings on the subject of stakeholder participation in the new governance structure of UN Habitat should meet and otherwise discuss the proposals emerging from this and other sources. Representatives of UN Habitat and the EB should be welcome to join such meetings as part of a consultation process, respecting the principle of self-organization as pledged by UN Habitat leadership.

Drafting of Policy Note on the establishment of a “UN Habitat Joint Civil Society Advisory Board” should follow and be circulated for review by UN Habitat senior management and members of the drafting committee for the rules of procedure for the governance bodies of UN Habitat.

## Annexes



## HABITAT INTERNATIONAL COALITION

### **Statement of Habitat International Coalition to the Executive Board of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, First meeting (resumed), Nairobi, 20 November 2019**

Madam Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Members of the Board, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for giving the Habitat International Coalition this opportunity to address the Executive Board.

HIC is one of the oldest global civil society partner organizations of UN Habitat, with a record of collaboration that stretches back to the origins of the agency. Currently, a member of HIC's Executive Board also participates in the Stakeholder Advisory Board or SAGE, established by the Executive Director of UN Habitat just prior to the first meeting of the Habitat Assembly in May of this year.

It has consistently been the position of the Habitat International Coalition that partnerships and partner networks are essential to the successful implementation of UN Habitat's mandate to support sustainable human settlements development and to improve the everyday lives of people in the world's growing cities and towns.

We have, therefore, been extremely concerned with the progressive decline in the level of engagement by UN Habitat with partners, and in the quality of that engagement, over the past decade, leading HIC to circulate a concise document illustrating this decline at the UN Habitat Assembly. HIC's concerns reflected those of the other stakeholders who participated actively in the Assembly and together we expressed our views to that effect in a statement to the plenary of the Assembly in which we underscored the need for the completion of Habitat's long anticipated and comprehensive partnership engagement policy, a policy that is urgently required.

HIC, and other partners of UN Habitat, are therefore disappointed, in fact dismayed, that in the Assembly in its decision 1/3, decided to delay the adoption of a partner engagement policy to the second session of the Habitat Assembly in 2023, where it may "possibly" be approved. This would be 12 years after the UN Office for Oversight Services (OIOS) called on UN Habitat in 2011 to urgently draft and operationalize such a comprehensive partners strategy, calls echoed by the UN General Assembly in subsequent resolutions.

It is our view, a view I am sure shared by others, that the continued absence of such a comprehensive partnership policy will seriously undermine the ability and the effectiveness of UN Habitat to lead the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and of relevant sustainable development goals of Agenda 2030.

Given the size and resources of UN Habitat relative to the dimensions of its mandated responsibilities under the New Urban Agenda and Agenda 2030, success will undoubtedly be dependent on robust

networks of influence, networks of support and networks of solidarity, and it is our hope that the current restructuring of UN Habitat will provide for the ways and means to empower and encourage the agency to proactively seek to build such networks as part of a comprehensive and strategic policy.

It is also our hope that the Executive Board, as the inter-sessional decision-making body of the Assembly, will address the implications of the continued absence of such a comprehensive partners policy and to take constructive steps to remedy it and to contribute to its speedy finalization, beginning with the further detailing out of the participation as observers by partners as per the Board's Rules of Procedure so we may assist the Board, in a manner to be determined, to undertake and carry out its responsibilities.

In this regard, we should like to inform that HIC and other Partners have established an informal working group after the Assembly to survey the partner engagement practices of other UN programmes and agencies, including those with Executive Boards, leading to recommendations to contribute to the finalization of the Partner Engagement Policy of Habitat. We would be most glad to share the outcome of this survey once it is completed.

To conclude, we should like, on behalf of the Habitat International Coalition, to assure you and all the members of the Board of our full support in the execution of your demanding responsibilities.

Thank you for your attention.



## Annex II: Milestones in UN Habitat's Cooperation with Stakeholders: Forward and Backward



# HABITAT INTERNATIONAL COALITION

### Milestones in UN Habitat's Cooperation with Stakeholders: Forward and Backward

**1976:** Habitat Forum takes place parallel to the First UN Conference on Human Settlements (Vancouver BC), leading to formation of Habitat International Council (later, Habitat International Coalition). [Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements and The Vancouver Action Plan](#), with emphasis on “active participation of all governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations concerned in policy formulation and [national human settlements] strategy development...” [A.5(c)iii].

**1978–92:** Habitat International Coalition (HIC) is the sole global umbrella NGO support group of UN Habitat. UN Habitat keeps HIC outside decision making, reflecting general UN practice.

**November 1992:** UN Habitat holds first-ever consultative meeting between local governments and other stakeholders and national governments in preparation for the upcoming Habitat II Conference in The Hague, hosted by Government of The Netherlands.

**April 1994:** Second Meeting of the Preparatory Committee for Habitat II agrees on framework and rules on procedure and participation to make Habitat II first “UN Conference of Partners.”

**1994–95:** UN Habitat, as secretariat for Second UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), promotes establishment of inclusive government/local government/civil society National Habitat Committees to prepare for Habitat II.

**June 1996:** Habitat II becomes successful “Conference of Partners” and model for conferences to follow. Local governments, civil society and other stakeholders make commitments to implement outcome, as reflected in the Habitat II global plan of action: [Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements and The Habitat Agenda](#).

**1996–97:** UN Habitat establishes formal categories of Habitat Agenda Partners (HAPs) with tasks and guidelines for work to implement The Habitat Agenda. HAPs are based on the nine Major Groups and Other Stakeholders determined for the 1992 Environment and Development Conference at Rio de Janeiro ([Agenda 21](#)), including: women, children and youth, indigenous peoples, non-governmental organizations, local authorities, workers and trade unions, business and industry, scientific and technological, community farmers.

**1997:** UN Commission on Human Settlements (CHS), then the governing body of UN Habitat, blocks proposal to restructure the Commission into a tripartite legislative body of national governments, local governments and civil society, inspired by ILO model.

**1999:** After two-year restructuring process, CHS, endorses establishment of UN Advisory Committee of Local Authorities (UNACLA), the first-ever such advisory body.

Commission selects two themes out of The Habitat Agenda on the basis of which it launches two campaigns on Secure Tenure and Urban Governance. Each join efforts of both local and national governments, civil society and other stakeholders to advocate adequate shelter for all and participatory urban governance, respectively.

CHS also endorses work toward the World Charter of Local Self-government, the first-ever convention-like international agreement on the rights and responsibilities of local governments.

**2000:** UNACLA holds its first meeting at Venice.

With strong support from UN Secretariat and national governments, especially South Africa, civil society and other HAPs, **Millennium Declaration** commits to “significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers as proposed in the “Cities without Slums” initiative [para. 19] and as Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Target 7, also for achieving water and sanitation targets, with UN Habitat as the lead agency.

**2001:** CHS meeting fails to endorse the draft World Charter of Local Self-Government, the product of a two-year global consultative effort, principally because of opposition by USA, China, Iran and Egypt.

At Habitat II+5 Second Preparatory Committee (PrepCom), UN Habitat Executive Director (ED) deploys UN security in full riot gear to block any civil society or local government representative entering the PrepCom plenary chamber. HIC delivers **the only civil society statement** allowed before Special Plenary Session on NGO participation. Local government and civil society participation in UN Habitat policy and governance structures declines markedly thereafter. UN Habitat continues to work with individual cities on projects and programmes.

At Istanbul+5 special session, UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopts **A/RES/S-25/2**, upgrades UN Habitat to a *programme* and the CHS to a Governing Council (GC), and calls for UN Habitat to operationalize a Habitat Task Management System (never implemented) and recognizes UN Habitat as the specialized agency serving as focal point for human settlement development in the UN system. UNGA also confirms UNACLA’s role and endorses World Urban Forum (WUF) as a “non-legislative technical meeting of experts” to convene government representatives, local governments, civil society and other stakeholders to discuss pressing global human-settlements challenges on an equal footing in the intervening years when the GC does not meet, the outcome of which to be reported by the ED.

**2002:** Outcome of 1<sup>st</sup> WUF leads to inclusion of housing and basic services in the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Rio +10) at Johannesburg, South Africa.

**2002 onward:** UN Habitat strengthens ties with other UN specialized agencies, especially UNDP (Habitat Programme Managers initiative) and humanitarian sector, invited to join Geneva-based Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) for humanitarian-assistance coordination, developing ties with related Geneva-based international NGOs. UN-Habitat signs Memorandum of Understanding with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to commence cooperation under the auspices of a joint UN Housing Rights Programme, which a 2013 evaluation recommended be relegated to the UN Habitat Project Office.

**2003:** First GC meeting adopts rules of procedure, allowing local government and civil society representatives to participate in the all GC committees and sub-committees (without a vote), a novelty in the United Nations.

**2004–10:** Expansion of civil society and other stakeholder collaboration in governance and generally in programme formulation and implementation.

**2004–06:** UN Habitat establishes Advisory Group on Forced Evictions, but ceases work two years later, alienating many pro-poor housing civil society partners and advocates of the human right to adequate housing from UN Habitat.

**2006 onward:** Youth and Women Assemblies prior to WUF sessions and GC strengthen civil society voice in discussions and decision making.

**2007:** Utilizing the Human Settlements Foundation's unique authority to mobilize funds on private financial markets, GC authorizes a pilot Experimental Reimbursable Seeding Operations (ERSO) to provide seed capital to small community-based lenders in developing countries, with UN Habitat as financial intermediary.

**2008–09:** Fourth WUF (2008) leads GC to endorse Youth Advisory Board (2009). Youth and Women's Assemblies established.

**2009:** UN Habitat begins work on a partnership strategy to better organize and structure its rapidly expanding collaboration and cooperation with partners and groups of stakeholders at all levels, from governance to programme formulation and implementation.

Work on Partnership Strategy goes through several drafts, but not completed until end 2015. Endorsed by senior management but never implemented or disseminated.

**2009:** GC's intersessional Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) begins discussions in Nairobi on improved governance options for UN Habitat, recommending to UNGA in December 2018.

**2010:** Fifth WUF consultations lead to GC resolution to establish Advisory Group on Gender Issues (2011).

**2010:** Defunct Secure Tenure and Urban Governance campaigns merged into World Urban Campaign at 5<sup>th</sup> WUF "to generate private-sector interest and collaboration."

**2012:** New senior management restructures UN Habitat with a business model focusing on income from donor and recipient country-driven projects and programmes and away from normative work. Gender, youth, human rights and climate change become cross-cutting issues. Financial base of UN Habitat begins long decline.

As a consequence of restructuring, experimental ERSO activities suspended and Finance Division dissolved.

UN Habitat Geneva Office, established in 1978 to support work of humanitarian agencies and bodies and Geneva-based international NGOs (among other tasks) closes, and remaining staff move to Barcelona to engage in other activities

**2012 onward:** WUF ends the practice of endorsing a consensus report, focuses instead on networking, information exchange and host-country showcasing with little impact on UN Habitat or GC policy. Nonetheless, the **2013 GC** invites States and HAPs to "reform the regulatory and institutional frameworks for urban planning, to recognize the urban poor as stakeholders and to promote strategic partnerships with local governments in urban planning processes" progressively.

**2014 onward:** Organized policy dialogue with groups of partners declines as UN Habitat focuses on operational activities.

UN Habitat leadership overtly dismisses The Habitat Agenda, the habitat approach and its enshrined human rights obligations in favor of a *tabula rasa* instrument of only “urban” development.<sup>125</sup> The narrower scope effectively marginalizes non-urban stakeholders. However, the draft, despite the UN Habitat investment in The Habitat Agenda *amnesia*, ultimately evolves to define a more-integrated and more-practical “territorial” policy approach, catching up to its Habitat Agenda predecessor.

UN Habitat leadership instrumentalizes the World Urban Campaign to create the spin-off General Assembly of Partners (GAP), which collaborates with Habitat III Secretariat in supporting a GAP “executive” leadership that homogenizes Habitat III inputs consistent with UN Habitat leadership’s vision and takes no substantive position, even and especially on issues related to UN Habitat’s normative framework, the human right to adequate housing and/or its principal and most-persistent gross violation: *forced eviction*.

**2014:** Habitat III Conference preparations begin. Habitat III Secretariat is nominally “firewalled” from UN Habitat. Nonetheless, UN Habitat develops its own top-down, partner-selection-and-engagement strategy of UN-conference participation through GAP.

**2016:** National governments formally endorse Habitat III draft Plan of Action at New York, months prior to convening the 1<sup>st</sup> “UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development” at Quito, Ecuador, in October. Civil society and other stakeholders hold showcasing side events in the form of a WUF, as well as three major “alternative” forums. Without further negotiation, governments formally declare the New Urban Agenda (NUA) already agreed at New York in June–July.

**2017:** Assessment of UN Habitat called for in NUA brings only modest results, and this is reflected in the UNGA resolution on the subject in December of that year. In same resolution GA requests CPR to UN Habitat Nairobi to elaborate new governance options and an action framework for NUA implementation in close collaboration with governments, local authorities, civil society and other stakeholders across the UN system. UNGA resolution *A/RES/72/226* encourages collaboration between UN Habitat and local authorities through UNACLA only.

**December 2017:** Just prior to leaving UN Habitat on 31 December 2017, ED makes WUC management changes, putting its future in doubt.

**January 2018:** Before arrival of new ED, senior UN Habitat management operationalizes *A/RES/72/226*, contacts selected civil society groups and other stakeholders to join “focus group” to comment on UN Habitat’s draft Stakeholder Engagement Policy (SEP). First meeting of Group set for WUF 9.

**February 2018:** UN Habitat convenes unproductive focus group meeting on SEP on the side of 9<sup>th</sup> WUF at Kuala Lumpur.

**June 2018:** CPR in Nairobi finalizes findings and recommendations on new UN Habitat governance structure, recommending a two-tiered configuration that consists of a UN Habitat Assembly with universal membership and a thirty-six member Executive Board (EB). CPR calls for active engagement of local authorities and other stakeholders in UNHA and subsidiary bodies, in accordance with SEP currently under discussion by Member States.

**June–July 2018:** UN Habitat completes draft of its 2020–25 Strategic Plan, the first after Habitat III, and submits it to CPR review. With no known participation of local authorities or stakeholders as per

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<sup>125</sup> HIC, “Restoring Human Rights and Habitat to the Habitat III Process and New Habitat Agenda: PrepCom3 Update on the Indispensable Process and Content of the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development,” (2016), at: <http://www.hic-gs.org/document.php?pid=6851>.

A/RES/72/226 guidance on the NUA action framework, the UN Habitat plan does not prioritize monitoring, review or evaluation of NUA implementation progress to the extent that UNGA requested.

**July–November 2018:** UN Habitat continues work on SEP with no visible inputs from local governments/authorities and/or civil society and other stakeholders, and without regard or response to input from partners (HAPs or GAP) and the local-government constituency.<sup>126</sup>

**December 2018:** UN Habitat Senior Management informs that SEP completed, but circulates no draft.

UNGA adopts [A/RES/73/239](#) on 20 December 2018, endorsing the new, three-tiered governance structure and requests CPR to draft rules of procedure to be adopted at the 1<sup>st</sup> UN Habitat Assembly (UNHA) session in late May 2019, making no mention of rules of procedure for the Executive Board, a subsidiary body of the new UNHA. Its operational paragraphs omit mention of local governments/authorities, civil society and other stakeholders.

After adoption of resolution, UN Habitat management requests senior staff to nominate (by 5 January 2019) civil society and other stakeholder organizations with whom they are currently working as candidates for membership in a UN Habitat Stakeholders Advisory Group of 22 members to be appointed by the ED.

**February 2019:** CPR begins work on UNHA rules of procedure, apparently with unclear input, if any, from stakeholders. UN Habitat Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) appointments expected prior to May 2019, which is supposed to meet and endorse both rules of procedure and SEP.

**March 2019:** Draft rules of procedure for both UNHA and EB completed at the end of the month, in sum, reducing partner and other stakeholder participation level in UN Habitat policy and governance.

UN Habitat website features a [partnership strategy 2017–22](#) that is out of date and disconnected from earlier drafts.

**March 2019:** UN Habitat and its governance structure are on track to reverse many of the gains in local authorities, civil society and other stakeholder cooperation since 1996, and do not comply with the UNGA guidance in [A/RES/72/226](#). Local authorities, civil society and other stakeholders seek support of concerned governments to reverse the trend before and at the 1<sup>st</sup> UNHA session in May 2019.

UN Habitat announces a two-day “Global Stakeholder Forum,” just prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> UNHA without serious stakeholder consultation. It also announces a one-day private-sector partnership event.

**April 2019:** UN Habitat rejects HIC-proposed “Visions of People-centered Partnership” side event at 1<sup>st</sup> UNHA session. UN Habitat issues invitation letters to 18 individuals appointed to pan-stakeholder SAG.

**May 2019:** HIC issues open letter to UN Habitat ED and CPR Members, inquiring about the status and consultative process of the long-promised SEP. HIC and other stakeholders express concern for the UN Habitat’s opacity. HIC proposes an open process toward self-organized constituent mechanisms that draw on lessons learned and other successful models within the UN system.

**May 2019:** UN Habitat hosts “Global Stakeholder Forum” over two days before 1<sup>st</sup> UN Habitat Assembly. UN Habitat. ED scheduled to present SEP without consultation or vetting with stakeholders and partners concerned, and without convening SAG.

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<sup>126</sup> “Integrating the engagement of local governments and stakeholders in UN HABITAT Statement of the General Assembly of Partners and Global Taskforce,” with American Association of Retired Persons, Habitat International Coalition, Habitat Norway, Huairou Commission and United Cities and Local Governments, 22 October 2018, at: [http://www.hlrn.org/img/documents/20181022\\_GAP\\_and\\_GTF\\_STATEMENT\\_.pdf](http://www.hlrn.org/img/documents/20181022_GAP_and_GTF_STATEMENT_.pdf).

### Abbreviations

<b>BC</b>	British Columbia
<b>CHS</b>	Commission on Human Settlements
<b>CPR</b>	Conference of Permanent Representatives
<b>EB</b>	Executive Board
<b>ED</b>	Executive Director
<b>ERSO</b>	Experimental Reimbursable Seeding Operations
<b>GAP</b>	General Assembly of Partners
<b>GC</b>	Governing Council
<b>HAP</b>	Habitat Agenda Partners
<b>HIC</b>	Habitat International Coalition
<b>HLRN</b>	Housing and Land Rights Ne

<b>IASC</b>	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organisation
<b>MDG</b>	Millennium Development Goal
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>NUA</b>	New Urban Agenda
<b>PrepCom</b>	Preparatory Committee
<b>SAG</b>	Stakeholder Advisory Group
<b>SEP</b>	Stakeholder Engagement Policy
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNGA</b>	United Nations General Assembly
<b>UNHA</b>	United Nations Habitat Assembly
<b>WUF</b>	World Urban Forum

## Annex III: Charting UN Habitat-stakeholder Engagement (graphic)

### Methodology for Measuring UN Habitat-Stakeholder Engagement \*

<b>Stakeholder participation</b> Stakeholders are able to negotiate with decision makers and have real influence on planning, policies and programmes.	<b>8. Democratic control:</b> Stakeholders have the final decision-making power over planning not the officials. <b>7. Delegation:</b> Powerholders negotiate with stakeholders, not the other way around. Sometimes in hostile environments, parallel community groups can be formed with veto rights and negotiation between the groups facilitated. <b>6. Partnership:</b> Power is distributed between powerholders and stakeholders by negotiation through structures such as joint policy boards, advisory councils and planning committees. Power structures inside the community of concerned parties is transparent and well-functioning, and communities are supported with economic means for leaders to cover the expenses of the community's own agents and representatives (technicians, lawyers, and community organizers and leaders).
<b>Tokenism</b> Stakeholders are allowed to access information and express their views, however, without any guarantee that the voice of concerned parties will be considered in the plans.	<b>5. Placation:</b> Concerned parties are included in planning by having representatives on planning committees. Positive results are achieved when adequate technical assistance and community coherence are present to advocate priorities. However, the final right to decision making over plans, policies and programmes remains at the official level. <b>4. Consultation:</b> Sounding out concerned parties, as through surveys, meetings and public hearings, is crucial for planning, but is combined with other forms of participation to ensure that the information gathered truly reflects the needs and priorities of stakeholders and is used in the decision making. <b>3. Informing:</b> Knowledge sharing with stakeholders on rights, responsibilities and options enables participatory planning, but is not limited to merely producing and publishing information. Instead, dissemination becomes a channel of interaction and negotiation in an early planning stage when stakeholders still have the possibility to influence decisions and outcomes.
<b>Nonparticipation</b> Stakeholders have no substantive role or formal channel in influencing decisions or corresponding actions that affect them.	<b>2. Therapy:</b> Participation is transferred to group therapy, taking the focus away from important matters related to community and stakeholder planning. <b>1. Manipulation:</b> Concerned parties are placed in forums such as advisory committees to "prove people's involvement in a programme," but without any real power to influence. <b>0. Exclusion:</b> The absence of a strategy, mechanism or facility for stakeholder engagement or participation.

\* Adapted from Sherry Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (July 1969), Pp. 216-24.

### Participation

The term "participation" of citizens or stakeholders is often used without attention to the requisite of distributing citizens' or communities' power in relation to decision-making authorities. Non-participation is the way of power holders claiming inclusion of people without any real objective of enabling stakeholder participation.

The need to redistribute decision-making power through a participatory model led Susan Arnstein to propose a ladder of participation with eight levels of citizen/stakeholder engagement. Added here is also the level of Exclusion, which is the absence strategy, method, mechanism or practice of engaging stakeholders concerned or affected by official decisions, plans, programmes and projects. Taking levels 1 through 8 as progressive steps, they redistribute decision-making power more equitably and, thereby, operationalize the principle of greater participation = greater dignity for all parties.

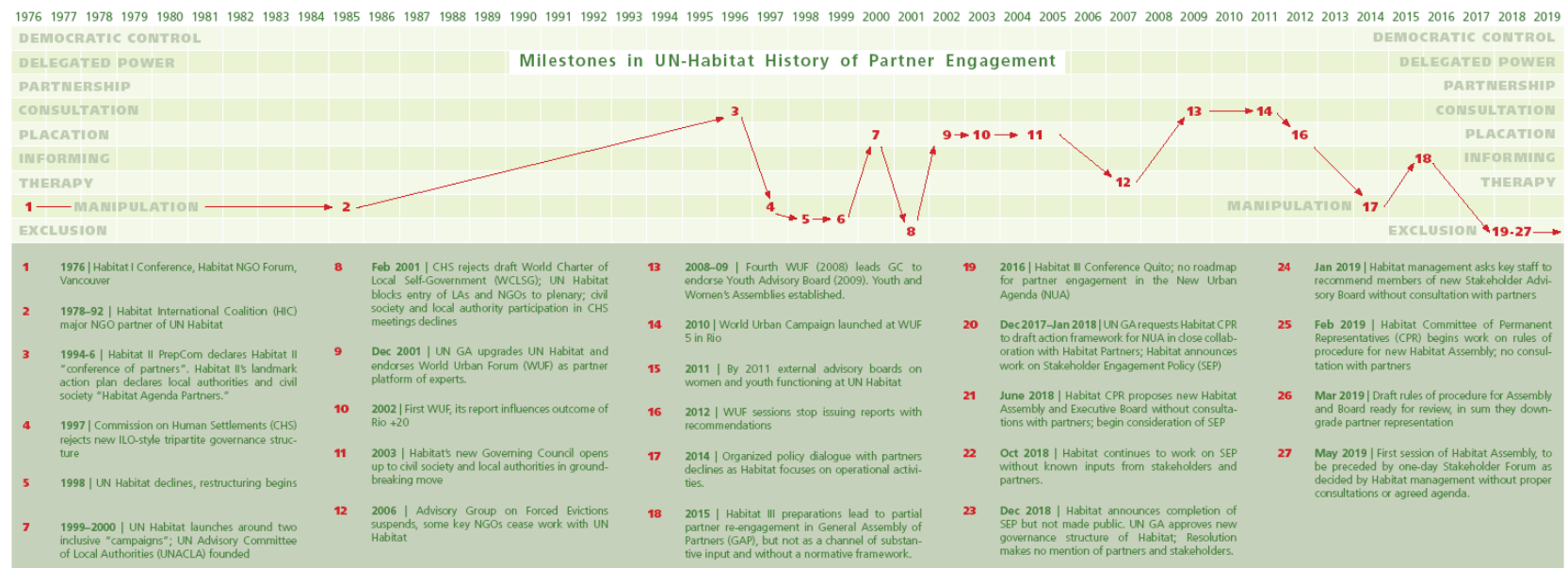
In the context of UN Habitat planning and operations or SDG and NUA implementation, monitoring and evaluation, often political and ideological agendas may operate, even when not immediately apparent. Sensitivities between and among parties make it important to understand the motives of power holders and include stakeholders in genuine participation in order to succeed in executing the complex tasks and commitments set out in global policy frameworks.

### Charting UN Habitat-Stakeholder Engagement



Habitat International Coalition





## Annex IV: 'Toward a New Stakeholder Compact for the New Urban Agenda,' Declaration of the First Global Stakeholder Forum of the First UN Habitat Assembly



# THE FIRST GLOBAL STAKEHOLDERS FORUM

*Harnessing Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships to Foster Innovative Urban Solutions*

## **'Toward a New Stakeholder Compact for the New Urban Agenda'** Declaration of the First Global Stakeholder Forum of the First UN Habitat Assembly

### **Our Preamble**

We, the participants at the first Global Stakeholders Forum held during 25 and 26 May 2019 on the eve of the first UN Habitat Assembly at Nairobi, recalling the historic and indispensable role of partners in sustainable human settlement development since 1976, hereby commit ourselves to innovative and more effective cooperation in delivering sustainable urbanization and development.

We draw on the voices of more than 200 diverse Forum participants, including women, indigenous peoples, youth, older persons, people with disabilities, grassroots organizations, civil society, national and subnational governments, trade unions and workers, professionals, researchers, academia, foundations, business, media, slum dwellers and faith-based communities, from different regions working on sustainable development areas and capabilities.

We enthusiastically applaud the Member States and UN-Habitat for their recognition of the need for strong stakeholder engagement in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda toward achieving the SDGs, Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework and other global policies for sustainable urban development and environmental protection, and regional agreements such as African Agenda 2063 and Asian Vision 2035.

We commit to eradicating all forms of inequality and barriers to equitable governance and development in human settlements, as practiced especially against women, female-headed households, youth, children and other marginalized groups such as the poor, stigmatized ethnic groups, older persons and people with disabilities and workers in the informal economy.

We will work toward inclusive, prosperous, vibrant and sustainable human settlements, by improving the quality of lives, safety, livelihoods, affordability, and accessibility of all by realizing rights to land, property and other economic assets, secure tenure, adequate housing, transport, mobility, education, health, essential infrastructure and basic services, especially in conflict- and disaster-affected regions.

## **Our Approach**

We, as an integral part of the State, recognize the State's individual, collective, domestic and extra-territorial obligations to respect, protect and fulfill all human rights, in particular, the full and progressive realization of the human right to adequate housing and habitat-related human rights.

We will work constructively and collaboratively with Member States, UN-Habitat and other global, regional, specialized agencies and subnational governments to establish, operationalize and sustain stakeholder engagement to channel our diverse and many voices to the UN-Habitat Assembly and other UN-Habitat bodies.

## **Our Agreements**

We are guided by our universal values of equity, openness, equal partnerships, subsidiarity, gender equality, human rights, accountability and transparency, which should be reflected in the Stakeholder Engagement Policy being developed by UN Habitat and Member States.

We agree to engage in collaborative action among ourselves and partners, including with Member States bearing individual, collective, domestic and extra-territorial obligations and commitments to implement the New Urban Agenda, achieve the SDGs, and fulfill other global agreements related to habitat.

We endorse the co-creation of policies, programmes, frameworks, monitoring-and-evaluation efforts related to the global agreements.

## **Our Commitments**

We will be pro-active in seeking and imparting information, and using technology, innovative finance, and other opportunities to use established and new channels of participation.

We will enhance capacities and synergies between and among all stakeholder groups by sharing our deliberations equitably, transparently and effectively.

We will contribute evidence-informed and practical guidance for policy and implementation.

## **Our Expectations**

We envision the realization of cities for all, referring to the equal use of cities and human settlements seeking to promote inclusivity and ensure that all inhabitants of present and future generations without discrimination of any kind.

We envisage cities that are habitable, safe, healthy, accessible, affordable, resilient cities and human settlements that foster prosperity and quality of life for all. We note the efforts of some national and local governments to enshrine this vision, referred to as "the right to the city" in their legislation, political declarations, and charters.

We seek adequate support from Member States and other parties for meaningful stakeholder partnership within the UN Habitat governance and operational structures.

## **Our Steps Forward**

We are organizing to reformulate stakeholder roles and responsibilities underpinned by innovative approaches, inclusive practices and reciprocity among all parties to resolve critical urban and rural human settlement planning, development and governance challenges.

We will build on successful, inclusive and diverse platforms, networks and movements at global, regional, national, and especially at the local level.

We will engage effectively in the programs, policies and outcomes of the UN Habitat Assembly and its bodies aligned with the UN Habitat Strategic Plan 2020–2025.

We welcome the new Stakeholder Advisory Group Enterprise (SAGE) to advise the UN Habitat Executive Director on strengthening partnerships for sustainable urban development.

We will strengthen and further develop the Stakeholder Forum to implement the principles and commitments of this declaration leading up to WUF 2020.

## **Annex V: HIC Proposal for a Mechanism to Organize Civil Society Participation in UN Habitat and NUA Implementation**

Public-interest civil society and nongovernmental organizations, their networks and social movements propose the establishment of a civil society mechanism to facilitate participation in the operation and meetings of UN Habitat, the UN Habitat Assembly and New Urban Agenda (NUA) implementation. The most-compatible model derives from the experience of the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) established by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) following its 2009 post-crisis reform process. The CSM has operated successfully for a decade and recently undergone an evaluation to capture lessons learned, which we consider here to guarantee the effective participation of civil society with UN Habitat and NUA implementation.

In principle, the establishment of such a mechanism should seek to guarantee that:

1. The constituents include public-interest civil society organizations (CSOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), their networks and social movements with relevance to issues of habitat and human settlement planning, development and governance, particularly organizations representing and upholding the interests of people who suffer most from various forms of inadequate housing<sup>127</sup> and their underlying social and economic determinants.
2. The criteria for inclusion of public-interest CSOs, social movements and NGOs will ensure their visible and effective participation, equitable geographic representation and social diversity, with particular attention to the categories of organizations mentioned above belonging to the traditional Habitat Agenda Partner constituencies of: NGOs and CBOs, trade unions, academics and researchers, human solidarity groups, indigenous people, (small-scale and family) farmers, women, and children and youth. In addition, they would include the LGBTQI community, older persons, persons with disability, and grassroots groups.
3. The civil society mechanism will be distinct from other Habitat Agenda Partners and constituencies representing private, professional and government agendas and interests.
4. Public-interest CSOs, NGOs and their networks and social movements will be invited to establish autonomously a global mechanism for habitat and human settlement planning, development and governance consistent with the purposes set out in the UN Charter that functions as a facilitating body for consultation and participation throughout the calendar of UN Habitat and NUA partner meetings and events.
5. The civil society mechanism will submit a proposal to the UN Habitat Assembly within a reasonable time and facility for deliberation. The proposal will elaborate how its constituents intend to organize their consultation and participation in a way that ensures broad and balanced participation by gender, region, constituency and type of organization. The activities of the mechanism could include:
  - (a) Broadly disseminating and regularly exchanging relevant information, analysis and experience;
  - (b) Developing common positions and input to UN Habitat and NUA-related forums and programs, as appropriate, consistent with established UN procedures for NGOs;
  - (c) Communicating orally and in writing with UN Habitat and UN Habitat Assembly, its Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) and Executive Board (EB), as appropriate, through its organizing committee representatives designated by an internal, self-organized process within each civil society category;

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<sup>127</sup> “Adequate housing” is defined in Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment No. 4 “right to housing” (1991), at: <http://www.hlrn.org/activitydetails.php?id=o25laQ==>.

- (d) Convening a civil society forum as a preparatory event before the UNHA, CPR and EB meetings, if so decided by the civil society mechanism;
- (e) Monitoring and following-up the recommendations to, and decisions of UN Habitat, UNHA, CPR and EB between the respective sessions;
- (f) Equitably sharing the deliberative occasions and spaces with other UN Habitat and NUA stakeholder mechanisms.

## **Annex VI: “Visions of People-centered Partnership”: HIC-HLRN at the first UN Habitat Assembly, Nairobi, 27 May 2019**

NAIROBI—On 27 May 2019, Habitat International Coalition – Housing and Land Rights Network organized a side event at the first UN Habitat Assembly (Nairobi) in collaboration with UN Habitat’s stakeholder Youth Caucus. The inter-active event sought to collect participants’ “Visions of People-centered Partnership” with UN Habitat in the implementation of the “New Urban Agenda” (NUA) toward the Sustainable Development Goals.

In the Youth Tent, HIC-HLRN presented the outcome of its review of stakeholder partnership with UN Habitat in a graphic. It charts the ups and downs of that relationship, particularly with civil society and local government stakeholders, in the UN Habitat policy spaces since 1976. HIC-HLRN has projected that pattern upon a “ladder of participation,” applying social science criteria to measure the degrees and quality of civic engagement in policy decision making and implementation.

HIC Board Member Ify Ofong (Women in Development and Environment, Nigeria) opened the session, and HIC former president and Wisdom Keeper (Davinder Lamba (Mazingira Institute, Kenya) welcomed the participants. Davinder shared the HICstory of advocating strong and effective partnership of diverse civil society organizations and municipalities since UN Habitat’s inception 43 years ago.

Joseph Schechla, coordinator of HIC-HLRN in the MENA region, presented the methodology and chart of UN Habitat stakeholder-engagement milestones, then opened the floor for the participants to express their visions of people-centered participation to be channeled to the Concept Committee that has emerged from the previous weekend’s Global Stakeholders Forum, and through the Stakeholder Advisory Group newly appointed by the UN Habitat Executive Director.

The comments and questions from the participants were critical of existing stakeholder-engagement structures and aligned with the UN General Assembly’s call for UN Habitat to rationalize its stakeholder-engagement policy. The participants reflected on the UN Habitat advice for stakeholders to self-organize their engagement mechanism, which also coincided with HIC’s proposal for a self-organized civil society mechanism for UN Habitat. More specifically, the participant observations and recommendations called for:

**A thorough evaluation of civil society’s cooperation with UN Habitat, considering the interactivity within UN Habitat policy spaces toward creating and developing effective civic-engagement structures and processes in the NUA-implementation period.**

**Re-thinking civil strategy to ensure the regular engagement of grassroots groups and communities affected by housing- and habitat-development projects, including small-scale farmers and indigenous peoples as Habitat Agenda Partners that have been alienated by the narrowing of the foregoing Habitat Agenda in the “New Urban Agenda” and corresponding Habitat III processes.**

**Taking heed of the historic lessons learnt and experiences of the “wisdom keepers” and human rights defenders in civil society through their habitat struggles over the past decades.**

**Advocating alternatives to the trend of commercialization/commodification of basic human needs and services in the local and national spheres, which has become a detriment to people’s right to an adequate standard of living and livelihood even greater than typical corruption.**



Expanding opportunities to collaborate and engage with local government and municipalities, which—like civil society—have been excluded intermittently from the global policy processes, notably in UN Habitat’s history.

Recalling the UN Charter as a central reference, in order to hold UN Habitat and its offices to their duty of integrating and simultaneously operationalizing the Charter’s three purposeful pillars: human rights, sustainable development and peace and security.

Orienting the new self-organized stakeholder mechanism(s) accordingly to build stakeholder capacity and to distribute and complement efforts, building on lessons learnt, while continuing to reinforce engagement with UN Habitat in the future.

Ensuring that any new stakeholder-engagement mechanism(s) enable free and critical thinking to be expressed to UN Habitat governance structures without forcing consensus or homogenizing messages to the lowest common denominator by mixing self-interested stakeholders with public-interest and plural-interest civil society organizations.

Applying the repeatedly learnt lesson that top-down appointed stakeholder bodies of self-representing individuals invariably fail to achieve legitimacy, credibility or relevance among constituents.

Reviewing and comparatively analyzing current stakeholder mechanisms across the UN System to arrive at one, or a hybrid model that best suits the diverse civil society among the multiple stakeholders and purposes of UN Habitat and the NUA. This recommendation coincides with the expectation that the Stakeholder Engagement Forum’s Concept Committee producing a proposal for the engagement mechanism(s) to be presented at World Urban Forum 10 (2020).